

knees to my chest for warmth, trying to fall asleep, and then later too, in my dreams, I'd thought about it some more, and the prey had become this impossible deer that I'd not known how to kill or whether I had the heart to anyway. I hadn't thought much at all about the trap being empty.

"We have some snack bars left," I say. "I'll get you one!"
"I don't want a bar. I'm sick of bars," Bear says. Though he eats it, a Summer Strawberry, and then asks for another.

There's no ignoring the growing noise in our stomachs. It turns out that snack bars, despite the calories and protein they claim to contain, don't actually meet all your hunger requirements. And we won't even have any of them left soon, not the rate we're getting through them. The problem isn't just being out here, it's being out here and having to walk so many miles each day and stay warm. It burns up all the energy you've got.

"We could eat conkers," Bear suggests. "Like the squirrels. I've got some in my pockets."

Bear's collecting everything. He knows the trees from what he gets from them – acorns from the oak, helicopter wings from the sycamore, cones from the alder and pine, and hanging seeds like fat bunches of keys from the ash.

Conkers are his favourite, from the horse chestnut. I can see why he wants them – these big shiny nuts that fall from a tree with leaves like handprints. It's hard not

to pick the conkers up. To feel them, glossy, in the flats of your palms.

"I'm not sure you can eat conkers." The squirrels are eating them, or something is, because you find these half-chewed ones, but I don't remember ever reading anything about humans eating them. Sweet chestnuts you can eat, it's there in the name, and hazelnuts too, but we haven't seen any of those. "We could try acorns," I say hopefully. "I'm sure they're edible."

I remember something about acorns in one of the books – soaking them in hot water to get rid of the bitterness and make them easier to digest. Yet soaking involves water and we don't have enough. It's another reason to head to a river.

"I've got acorns too," Bear says, fumbling in his pockets. "But only a few. We need to find an oak tree!" He's already getting up.

"Wait. Let's pack first. We can get some on our way. We need to keep moving."

Bear's face falls. "I like it here."

"We're on a journey, Bear," I prompt gently. "To Mum, remember."

"She should have come and got us," he says, screwing up his face crossly.

"She'll be so proud when we show up. She did this journey too, remember?"

"How many more miles? Is it still more than a hundred?"