

he says in a voice that makes it clear it's a deal-breaker.

I nod. "But we made a start. A really good start."

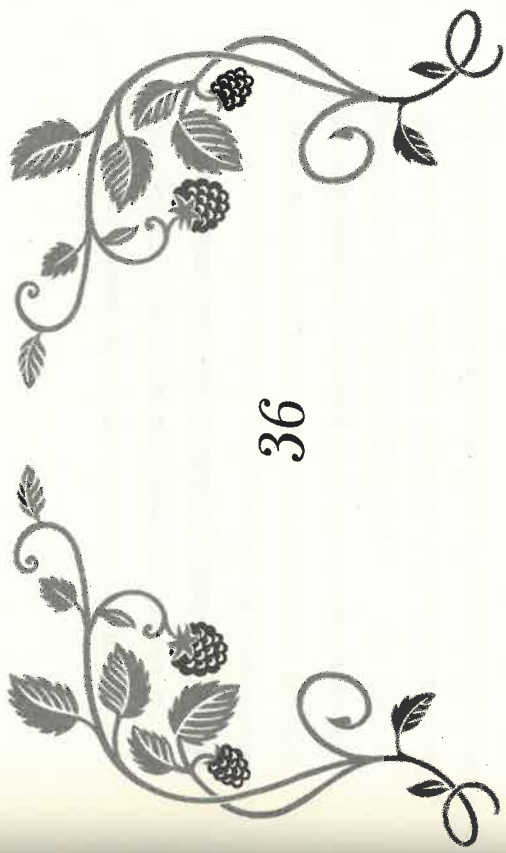
"Ghost's gone. I don't want to leave without saying goodbye."

"She could find us again, if she wanted to. She did before."

He grunts.

"Bear!" I say, pleading now, putting the straps of his bag on, over his shoulders and then attaching the trap back under my rucksack so it hangs down behind me again, uselessly.

Maybe it was the lynx's fault we didn't catch anything. No rabbit or squirrel is going to come near a wild cat. Still, I circle the forest looking for the yellow eyes. For the first time last night, I thought I heard a wolf howling.



I run through the day's goals in my head – get water, find food, cook the acorns, make camp again, set the trap and actually catch something this time. All while walking as many miles as we can and not getting spotted by drones.

Bear appoints himself acorn-finder and gathers them as we go.

"I'm not sure how many acorns you can actually eat, Bear. That's probably enough now," I say irritably. Every time he bends down, he's making us slower. And it's not like we don't have enough to carry.

Bear kicks up the leaves with more ferocity. "I'm really hungry, Juniper."

"Ravenous? Famished?" I play, but Bear stares at me coldly.

"I want a snack bar."

"Not now, Bear. We have to eke them out. Make them last.