

Everything's crazy in my head and I can't work it out. Slow down. Slow down. Look. There must be things that will tell me. Clues. People don't just disappear. But Bear did. He's gone. Just him and the clothes he was wearing. Even his coat is still here.

I overslept. The dark of the forest kept me sleeping and stole Bear away.

"Bear! Bear!"

I need to be methodical. Check all the routes out of the glade. Maybe he left a trail. Pebbles or crumbs. That's the best I can come up with. If there are broken twigs or indentations to follow, to track him, I can't see them. I don't know the signs. I read the wrong books and all I can think of now are the fairy tales. They were cautionary for a reason. Never go into the woods alone. Never go at night.

We came anyway, even though we knew the wolves were real. What if all the rest is real too? It's all real now he's missing. Losing Bear was always the biggest thing I had to fear.

I stumble out into the trees and then turn back to our tent, then turn in the opposite direction and do it again. Then a few degrees to the side, and repeat. Out to find him, and back, and all the time I'm calling and he's still not answering. Only the noises of the forest – the wind in the canopy, a fox like a human scream.

For some reason, despite how scared and scary I must seem right now, the lynx is still here. Sometimes she comes

and stands just a few steps away. If I stopped for a moment, if I crouched low, or put my hand out, I reckon she'd come right up to me. But I don't need her now. I needed her last night, or first thing this morning, or whenever it was that Bear left the tent and went out alone. So much for being our watch cat.

The sun moves up into the sky and starts falling again and I still haven't found him. The only answer to my cry is Bear's name, echoed back to me. Empty.

At some point there's a cacophony in the sky. Geese. A whole formation of them flying overhead. South.

"Bear! Bear!" My throat is raw but I go on, still circling the space where our tent is, going out into the trees and then back to the tent, where I've left a message on a flat stone. A page of my sketchbook, weighed down with pebbles. A drawing of him sat on the stone, where I so want him to be, and the words 'Wait here!'

Sometimes the lynx is here and sometimes she isn't. At one point there's a sound and I know it's Bear and I turn to him and I don't know whether I'm going to scream at him or kiss him, but it's not him at all. It's the cat again. She's traipsing over our strewn-out things, looking for a place to settle.

I pick up a stick to throw at her, furious that she's not my brother. But I don't throw it. I sit next to her, talk to her.

"Bear's missing! He's gone! We have to find him."