

She doesn't understand, but somehow it's helpful to say it anyway. For the words to be out loud. It makes it real – finding him. If I say his name, he's somewhere here. Except he's not and at some point the cat starts washing herself – stretching out a leg and licking leisurely between each webbed toe.

Bear's disappeared and I hate the Wild tonight. I'm cold and I think of him colder. I'm hungry and I think of him hungrier. I'm scared and I think of him scared and crying and this is the worst thing of all. The worst thing I've ever felt.



I'm not in the tent, but outside it, curled at the mouth of the sleeping bag, even though I don't remember lying down at all.

There's a faint beam of early sun and the lynx is standing a few metres away, the black tufts on her ears up like antennae. Her head's turned to one side. She's listening.

I want to yell Bear's name – make him hear me – but all day yesterday I called and there was nothing. Today I have to try something else.

I leave the note in the middle of the clearing and I follow her. The cat knows where to go. I see it – not just in her ears and her glassy unblinking eyes, it's the alignment of her muscles. She's lowered her body to mirror the ground and her legs stretch out slowly, deliberately, one after another.

Maybe she's just following some rabbit or hare but I follow her anyway. And every so often a noise sounds out