

it as he walks.

A little further on, Ghost's back, looking at the wood pigeon in Bear's hand with interest. I point her out to him.

"Oi, Ghost!" he shouts. "Paws off our pigeon! We're going to have the best lunch ever today!"

The pigeon is, literally, the best lunch we've ever tasted.

Bear makes the fire and I prepare the bird. I pluck the white feathers from its breast and cut open the skin. I break apart the ribcage to carve out two oval pieces of flesh – purple and surprisingly neat and unbloodied. The bullet must be somewhere in the head or neck, I reckon. The chunks of meat are unblemished.

We skewer them on sticks and sear them over Bear's fire and the pigeon tastes of all of it. All the flavours of the forest – rich and earthy – and the burning wood. And of survival too. That's what it tastes of most of all. It tastes like survival.

Everything is different after the pigeon. It's not just the meat in our stomachs, it's something else. I'm different. It's like a lion has woken inside me, only it's not a lion, it's our lynx cat, Ghost. There was danger and she didn't flee. She warned us. Stayed with us.

I used the gun too. I killed and Ghost still came back.

Even the way we move through the landscape feels different. At first we were on top of it, stumbling through it, fighting it to make our path. Now we're part of it. We've

gone to earth, moving through it, with Ghost following after.

We're a pack, though I think it's dogs that run in packs. There was probably some word once, some cat equivalent, some lost word. Every day she allows herself closer, brushing up against us, stretching out her nose to breathe in our scent.