



Running for his life

The passage below is an extract from 'Wolf Brother' by Michelle Paver, the first book in the 'Chronicles of Ancient Darkness' series.

Torak crashed through alder thickets and sank to his knees in bogs. Birch trees whispered of his passing. Silently he begged them not to tell the bear.

The wound in his arm burned, and with each breath his bruised ribs ached savagely, but he didn't dare stop. The Forest was full of eyes. He pictured the bear coming after him. He ran on.

He startled a young boar grubbing up pignuts, and grunted a quick apology to ward off an attack. The boar gave an ill-tempered snort and let him pass.

A wolverine snarled at him to stay away, and he snarled back as fiercely as he could, because wolverines only listen to threats. The wolverine decided he meant it, and shot up a tree.

To the east, the sky was wolf grey. Thunder growled. In the stormy light, the trees were a brilliant green. Rain in the mountains, thought Torak numbly. Watch out for flash floods.

He forced himself to think of that – to push away the horror. It didn't work. He ran on.

At last he had to stop for breath. He collapsed against an oak tree. As he raised his head to stare at the shifting green leaves, the tree murmured secrets to itself, shutting him out.

For the first time in his life he was truly alone. He didn't feel part of the Forest any more. He felt as if his world-soul had snapped its link to all other living things: tree and bird, hunter and prey, river and rock. Nothing in the whole world knew how he felt. Nothing wanted to know.