

The Void

A sharp crack filled the void, echoing through my ears. Like the snapping of dry bones, the branch I had stepped on snapped in two. I cringed.

It was 2 AM and I was alone in the Cryptowood Forest. It had rained the day before and my feet were slick with dark, viscous mud. Every pore in my body felt damp from the fog that hung over me. The moon stood silently, pouring its soft glow over my face. I had no idea where I was.

I remember being at a party in one of the estates. It was a huge building filled with screaming eleventh graders all drinking booze and flirting with each other. I was in my element.

Eventually, tales of the creature that wandered this lonely forest were spread throughout the party, the snapping of twigs and its whispering through the soft wind that flowed around the town. I was drunken with intrigue, the pull of mystery bringing me in, leading me closer to the dark forest.

I and a group of fellow adventurers travelled into the forest.

Then, something happened. A mysterious, unfortunate thing.

We walked silently together as a group, listening to the wind and the sounds of our breathing, hoping for the slightest whisper. Slowly, our breathing began to disappear, until only my cold, raspy voice was left. Turning around, I saw the souls of long-forgotten teenagers, thought to have succumbed to the pull of a bright future in countries far away. I watched as they slowly faded from existence, sobbing and gesturing to me. Their sadness seemed to call to the forest, with every creature stirring, every blade of grass fluttering from the depression that overcame them. These souls lead me to it. The creature.

Suddenly they disappeared leaving me wondering my fate. Then the whispers began to coalesce from the shadows.

I've been travelling for hours, jumping at every noise, at every scampering rodent rummaging through the leaves to prepare for hibernation.

The thick thistles of the trees stabbed me as I slid down an escarpment wandering through the unfamiliar terrain.

My thoughts dwindled as I froze in place. I watched in despair as the translucent water began to cloud with blood. I turned slowly, my eyes tracing the path of the blood along the stream. My stomach dropped to my knees. I could see its long claws, its slim body and huge head, its face a void of nothingness; of despair.

I watched as its neck craned towards me, seemingly gliding through the air. I heard its spine snap as it picked its long arms back up from the ground and began to swing them towards me, reaching for my soul. The creature grew closer at an alarming rate, but I couldn't move. I stared into its eyes, seeing the countless possibilities my life could have been, seeing the choices I could have made, the people I could have met. I could see the potential of the souls it had taken. The fear it had caused.

A light seemed to pulse from the void that made up its face. Blood dripped from it, splattering the water and sending the putrid scent up my nostrils. Its breathing was ragged, and as it drew closer I could see the detail of its pale flesh, the rips and tears as it reached for me, as it tore itself apart.

Finally, I screamed. A scream that echoed from every pore of my body, reaching out for help. I didn't want it to end this way. The problems I had caused, the people I abandoned, the memories I tried to drink away. I had so many things to do.

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Ripping my legs from the mud, I ran down the valley, away from the whispers, away from my thoughts. I ran from my fear. I ran for help.

My doctor diagnosed me with depression a month later, after I reached out on a whim of bravery.

This monster who haunts us has killed many, but I overcame it. The souls that led me to him were guiding me on my way to victory, not to my death. My older brother cared about me, even after what I've done. He helped me face my fears and led me to recovery.

The danger and sadness I had felt was overtaken by the love and care of others and has led me to become a better, happier person.

The void can be filled.