

Void

Her eyes fluttered open and she was filled with a sense of apprehension. She had no idea of what woke her. Quietly, she left her bed to check on her family. The house seemed too silent, but she dismissed it; it was night after all. Opening the door to her parents' bedroom, she looked toward the bed to see the sheets on the floor and no one in the bed. Starting to panic, she opened the doors to every room, finding no one. Running outside into the humid summer night, she saw every door on the block ajar. The street was perfectly silent with no noises other than crickets faintly chirping.

She briskly walked towards the dark forest that stretched behind the neighborhood, hoping to find people there. Nearing the entrance to the woods, she heard a branch snap and muffled footsteps.

“Hello? Is anyone there?”

Instead of responding, the footsteps became louder and closer. Backing up, the girl scanned the gloomy forest for signs of life. Finding nothing in front of her, she turned around, eyes trailing slowly around her.

When she had turned around completely, she spotted a looming figure several yards away. Something about the unnaturally long limbs and cocked head screamed danger. The figure slowly stretched out its skinny leg and traveled two yards in a single stride. The girl backed up quickly and the figure followed. She ran. She could hear the bounding footsteps of the creature, but she refused to look over her shoulder. Dodging trees and ducking under branches, she pushed herself to sprint as fast as she could. She strained to hear the footsteps. Hearing nothing, she glanced over her shoulder at exactly the wrong time. The girl's foot hit a rock and down she

went, arms flying. She tumbled down a small hill. Looking up, the girl found herself in a clearing.

A lone park bench covered in ivy sat in the center of the clearing, inviting. Hundreds of fireflies illuminated the area in an ethereal way. Her knees brushed against the long soft grass as she stood. Her feet moved of their own accord and she hovered over the bench. The girl wanted to stay there forever. She watched as a firefly landed on the bench and burst into flames. It happened so quickly that the girl was unsure if she had seen it at all. But, as she gazed at the bench, another burned. A feeling of dread crept over her. She left, going the opposite way of the way she came.

After some time, the girl came across a large hill. It was rocky and looked like it would be a dangerous climb. She decided not to climb it. She turned back the way she came and noticed that figure standing at the edge of the forest. The girl stared at it for a couple of seconds before deciding that she would be climbing the hill after all.

As she clamored up the hill, the girl couldn't help occasionally glancing at the shadowy being climbing below her. The way its long limbs spread across the rock, searching for handholds, reminded her of a spider. She climbed faster; she didn't like spiders. When she reached the top, she realized there was nowhere to go. Just as she was about to climb down the other side, she heard a voice.

"I can save if you jump." The voice did not seem to come from anywhere specific. The girl looked over at the edge, watching the approaching creature and she jumped a leap of faith into welcoming arms.