

The Wolf

by Anonymous

The air smelled of grass and rain. The stars shined above me, but the great fire showered The Thicket with a marvelous silvery light. Despite the delightful atmosphere of a summer night, I knew without even seeing or hearing that it was moving between the trees. The Snake hissed with displeasure and the The Tiger disappeared. It was hunting for me. I knew it was better to not look, and even less to think of it. If you acknowledge it, it will smell you. It will see you. It was searching for me and now I just couldn't return to The Barren to leave. I had to press on through the Thicket and hope to escape if I flung myself into The Craggs or find The Tall Cairn and pray for a escape. I had two chances that I better take and I began to move forward. Slow but without pause like a snake in the grass. My movements were steady and my senses keen. I would not let it catch me.

My movements were small every time, but always taken with caution. I went from tree to tree, wary of absolutely everything that might move nearby. I sometimes moved behind a boulder or on top of a tree, expecting to catch a glimpse of the damn thing in the distance only for it to be right around the corner next time. Damn...Stop thinking about it! Focus on moving and staying out of sight. I kept advancing, keeping my mind steady and visualizing my objective. I knew the way and I knew I would find the exit. I just needed a bit more to arrive. Then...the sudden snapping of a branch took my thoughts off track and I stopped immediately. No, it couldn't be this close! I resisted the urge to turn my head to look what might have caused the disturbance and I kept on moving with my neck stiff. My heart began to race and I picked up the pace a little bit. I needed to hurry and get out of here quickly!

As my steps increased in speed, my thoughts became more frantic. I looked above at the stars hoping to get my bearings, but I saw I was still trapped in The Thicket and way off my destination. And even if this was supposed to be a setback, I was not

ready to give up and stop to become easy prey. I only saw it once, but I knew very well what it could do. That single moment struck fear in me every time I remembered it...but it was enough to spur me into action. But now I had to focus. Run to The Crag and fling yourself over. Once that's done, you will escape it and the night will be over.

The air changed and I could smell it. The crisp scent of fresh ice floated in the air. It was getting close and a sudden chill crept up my spine like the hand of winter filling my body with cold. The confidence in my plan was beginning to crumble and I had to move immediately. It was terribly close and right now it was a do or die situation. My legs started to move without thinking and carried me off like a fleeting gale. I didn't have to look, and I mustn't look. Right now I knew that The Wolf was terribly close. I could almost feel its ravenous nonexistent gaze on me. I could picture its fangs glistening like fresh blades eager for murder. My heart raced and my soul quivered. I felt as if my heart, despite beating savagely into my chest, sunk into icy waters.

The grass yielded before me and the wind caressed my cheeks. I jumped, I raced, I cursed when I fell and I got up once more. But no matter what...I felt it getting close. The frigid smell of frost. The odd, barely perceptible whisper in my ears. The furtive figure in the corner of my eye. The tingling in the back of my neck. I was not going to fall and I kept pressing on against all hope. And soon, I saw a glimmer between the trees...The Light of the Horizon was there! The Crag was just a bit further away and I would escape it! That sight fired up my spirit and I made a mad dash for it. I moved swiftly, reacting quickly to whatever obstacle that I could find in my path. But as my objective was in sight, my hopes were quickly dashed.

My legs began to grow horribly numb and I began to lose my speed, moving in a clumsy manner as much as I could before coming to an abrupt stop. The horrible cold began to grow. I felt how it crept up my flesh with ferny fingers like it grows on a window on winter. I could barely move my arms or even resist now. It was right there, in front of me...But I was too foolish and slow

to get there. Now I could only hope that the gods would spare me the worst. I didn't dare look once I sensed something around me, but I knew that night has come for me. And unfortunately, it was going to devour me.

I woke up. A sudden jolt of lightning bringing me back to the waking world. My breath was ragged and labored. My throat felt parched and strained. The cold sweat on my back was a thin layer of ice and my heart raged like a blast furnace in my icy chest. I shivered with the fright, still present in my mind, and I felt the urge to get out of bed. But the cold forced me to huddle among the lukewarm blankets as my body ached for warmth. The rain outside led a merciless assault against the roof of the house and the drops crashed constantly against the windows. The candle by the table filled the room with queasy light, casting timid shadows over the walls. I knew what happened despite how hard I tried to push it out of my mind. The memories were like a fresh wound, still bleeding and aching. But one that, hopefully, time would heal. The Wolf has sunk its fangs in me and even now I could feel it gnawing at the back of my mind, tearing apart my thoughts. Black bile begun to rise in my soul, bubbling tar that poisoned my thoughts one drip at a time.

Even now, the Wolf that ravages minds was here. In the dark corners of the room, its fiery eyes and jagged teeth showed an evil smile that mocked me. And it wasn't going to let me go.