

Except for the rain that's been crashing for hours and the house-shuddering wind that howls through the darkness outside, it's an ordinary evening at your cabin. Then comes a knock on the door. You're not expecting anyone. You look through the peephole, but the condensation from the wet night air has fogged it to uselessness. So you simply open the door and... nothing.

You can hear the wind around the house, but not through the open door. A pitch-black night lay before you, concealing all from sight. You call out into the darkness, but get no response. *Something's not right*, you think, tired and confused. With a subconscious sense of curiosity and daring, you step into the darkness.

Everything stops. An eerie silence surrounds you, leaving you alone in the cold darkness. With a shrug, you turn around, but there is no door. Your cabin is gone, replaced by the inky black around you. Your pulse quickens. Reaching into your pocket, you produce a small lighted keychain. You press the power button, but the light does nothing. The darkness consumes the light, allowing only a faint glow near the LED to be seen.

By now, all tiredness is gone. You begin to shudder, consumed by fear. You reach out around you, searching for any point of reference. Then, you feel the air move behind you. Your shirt waves with faint ripples as you freeze in place. You turn off the keychain and turn around. Everything is dark. *Only wind*, you tell yourself as you take quiet, shallow breaths.

Just when you begin to calm down, you hear a sound. Holding your breath you listen. Above the thud of your heart, you hear what seems to be a distant screeching off to your right. You turn your head. There is something in the distance, a faintly glowing object. The object, more like a purple splatter of ink, moves smoothly through the darkness, changing shape as it

goes. As it moves, it creates a screeching sound similar to two pieces of metal being grated together.

You stand completely still, your thoughts shattering. Your head follows the object as it moves. The object is keeping it's distance, but the screeching increases. Your head whips around as you realize that there is another one of the ink creatures. You turn with just enough time to see it rush towards you. Out of your jumbled thoughts, you get one message: *RUN*.

You sprint off, evading the creature. However, it keeps up the chase. You stumble through the darkness, occasionally hitting trees. After what seems like forever, the screeching sound fades. You look around you, unable to detect any trace of the creature. With your legs burning, you press forward, looking for any sign of civilization. You continue walking until you trip over something on the ground. You thrust your arms out as you fall forward, instinctively closing your eyes.

You manage to break the fall with your arms, but you stay on the ground. With your heart pounding, you try to calm yourself. With a huff, you open your eyes, about to move forward. You stare up with a dazed look. The darkness is gone, and the sky is filled with clouds, illuminated by a bright, pale moon. You look around at the setting. The area is filled with dead trees, their leaves decaying on the forest floor.

Nothing around you looks familiar. *I should never have accepted that forest cabin getaway*, you think as you stand. You look back from where you fell, noticing something that fills you with unease. Behind you is the same black curtain that was outside of your door. However, the darkness is moving. It slowly approaches you, blocking anything behind it from sight. Your

efforts to calm yourself prove to be in vain as you bolt forward. You dodge around trees, again searching for any sign of civilization.

In the distance, you can see light shining around the trees. You following the glowing rays. After several minutes of walking, you come upon a town. The faint street lights illuminate the road before you. The town is silent, and dead. You continue down the street, scanning the area for someone who you can ask for help. When several houses had passed, you look farther down the cracked street. A person wearing a police uniform approaches you. You smile and begin to walk faster, However, when you take several more steps ahead, you hear a resonating cracking sound. A section of the road gives way, and you fall into a hole. A crumbling sound fills your head, before you black out.

When you wake, you are lying on what feels to be a bed. You open your eyes and see plain forest-green sheets. A throbbing pain permeates your head, causing you to groan. You shift your position in a useless effort to become more comfortable. Then, you hear someone rise from a chair behind you. Through your head's throbs, you can hear a deep, powerful voice.

"Ah, you're awake. I was starting to worry. You hit your head pretty hard when you fell into that hole. I managed to pull you out and treat your injuries. I don't recall seeing you before. How'd you end up here?"

You groan, straining to turn your head to see the speaker. The strain proves to be too taxing, so you abandon your efforts to move.

"I was staying in a cabin, but I encountered this darkness. I became lost, but I stumbled onto this town. Can you help me get back to my cabin?" You manage to respond through the pain. You then hear the person behind you sigh.

"I'm sorry, but you can never go back."