

LOST

It was dark; the sun had yet to rise. A man and his son trekked through the forest.

The man shifted his gaze through the trees, but the boy appeared more interested in the rocks on the ground than his surroundings. He kicked a few pebbles while his father crouched down to check a set of animal tracks.

The man turned around after an investigation of the prints, only to find his son gone. The boy had decided to follow the rocks instead of his father. His attention left the stones as a bird cried above him, and he realized his father was no longer ahead of him. He was all alone, save for the eerie feeling of being watched.

He called for his father, but the only response was wind whistling through the trees and the bird's call. The boy rose, and the bird hushed. He believed he had silenced the bird, but he soon realized that the quiet had spread throughout the forest.

The boy called for his father again. No response.

He wanted to leave, but noise now surrounded him. It wasn't the bird, nor his father, nor the wind. Growling sounds reverberated off trees, and within the shadows glowed countless eyes.

The boy was scared, and he was running before he knew it. The creatures were upon him. He tripped, and at that instant, he knew it was over.

Face to the ground, the boy expected to be ripped apart, but after no pain ensued, he dared to look around. Towering above him, a beast, larger than the creatures that pursued him, challenged them to attack. They hesitated, for none wished to fight the massive beast. The creatures melted back into the shadows, and when all were gone, the beast stepped back from the terrified boy.

The beast sat, waiting for the boy. It made no noise, but the boy could now hear the bird in the distance. The sounds of the forest were returning, and as they did, the sun's light peeked through the trees.

The beast lied down, and the boy stood. He took careful steps away from it, but stopped when it

rose. It did not seem interested in attacking, and instead took strides in the opposite direction, only to pause and look at the boy. The boy stood, perplexed by the beast, but with time, he moved towards it. It, in turn, paced further away, and once more regarded him.

There was more of this careful movement before the boy followed the beast. After a time, the beast stopped, and the boy stood behind it, confused. It moved aside and gestured towards a clearing. There, standing in the middle of the glade, was the boy's father.

Without thought, the boy ran past the beast and cried for his father, who turned to see his lost son. The man embraced him, and the two cried.

The boy wanted to thank the beast, but when he turned around, there was nothing there.