

Nightly Beasts

Night, he was told, was when all the frightful beasts appeared. They were the creatures of nightmares, and of dark fairytales told by the firelight. Stories of dragons and ghouls plagued these stories, which he had been raised with his whole life. But he was not afraid of these.

It was a full moon tonight, perfect for a walk in the woods outside his cottage. Perfect for finding beasts, to show he was not afraid. They were real, he knew, but not to be feared. The glow of a pale night illuminated his path, following footprints as he searched. Maybe tonight he would find a banshee, screeching mournfully of lost days. Or werewolves; full moons were key to finding werewolves. A goblin or two could stumble across his path, with a hostage elf as they scurried into the familiar shadows. Even a meager troll, with its incessant bridges and riddles, would be welcome tonight.

Alas, the only noises he heard

were the rustlings of the trees, and the cries of owls. But he was not afraid. The beasts would find him soon, and he still would show no fear.

Whether it was eternity or an hour, he didn't know. But ahead of him was a lake, clear and haunting in the moonlight. The water was still, unmoving as if it had merely been painted on a canvas. It reflected brightly in the uncommon nightlight, beckoning as he stood on the edge. Monsters got thirsty too, he thought. Maybe they would be here.

So he sat himself on the edge, gazing wistfully at the glistening stars above. Did mere creatures watch these stars too, or were they too wrapped up in the lore of old to pay attention to reality?

After awhile, he noticed something in the liquid pool before him. Leaning over the edge, a pale face came into view. Its skin was white, lighter than the chilling color of the moon, with hair sharing the same shade as a raven's wings. It stared at him, gleaming green eyes merging

with the water, ripples distorting the face of the monster staring back at him.

It was about to scream in terror, but he ran away before he could see it.

He heard it crying as he ran, the sound reaching his ears no matter how far his feet carried him. That beast's chilling voice sounded remarkably like his own.

The noise finally ceased, after eternity in an hour, replaced by his ragged breaths as he ran home. The tales in the dead of night, the nightmare fiends that hid in these woods, none of them could compare to the chilling pale face that screamed at the lake.

Back at that small lagoon, the water was once again clear, save for the reflection of trees and the heavenly lights above. There had been another reflection, not too long ago, but it hadn't lasted long. If the still waters could think, it would probably wonder why the human boy had left so suddenly after staring at his own face in the pool.

What Night has Brought

The lonely one has walked through, mournfully dragging the dark.

The painter has rushed by, dabbing the sky with white dots.

The runner has paced through, leaving sudden cracks and movement on the forest floor.

The baby has crawled by, adding a hush to the night, and a gurgle to the creek.

The pained survivor has stepped through, barely moving at all, and bringing in the depth of cold.

The love struck couple has lingered on, sending bursts of stardust to the sky.

The writer has come through, adding thoughts to the wind, and legends to the stars.

The person who can see, but can't talk, whisps by, leaving silence with the night. While the children prance by, leaving dew drops here and there. And the tears from your first loss fall, speaking a chant of rain.

I have come through, watching and wondering at it all. And soon I will leave... that one bright silver star is where I left my soul.

All this makes night. All this makes life.

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