Bones shatter and sinew snaps.

My day started like any other. With a nightmare.

Everywhere around me was a thick and inky darkness. I could see perfectly fine, but every direction I looked was an endless void. I hear a vibrating noise behind me. I turn around, and Mark is there, laying on the dark ground with his back to me.

“Mark? What are you doing? Where are we?” I try to ask him. My voice comes out quiet and muffled, like my head is in a bubble. Mark doesn’t move at all. I call out to him again, yelling this time, but my voice doesn’t come out any louder. I hear the vibrating again. Suddenly I’m next to him, but I don’t remember walking. Mark is fast asleep.

“Mark!” I try screaming his name in his ear to wake him up, but it still comes out quiet. I crouch down to shake him awake, but my hands feel like jelly and I can’t grab onto his shoulders. I try to hit him, but I can’t even make a fist, and my punches are sluggish and barely make contact. I hear the vibrating again. Mark is gone, and further ahead of me is a figure. He is huge, he had to be at least seven feet tall. He had some sort of animal skin draped over his shoulders like a cape.

I open my eyes and sit up. I’m in my bedroom, laying in my bed soaked with sweat. I’d, obviously, had yet another nightmare. I move my hand under my pillow to silence my vibrating phone. I unlock it and open my notes, so I can write down my dream before it fades from my head. I finish up, press save and slump my arms into my lap with a big sigh. I sit there, listening to the silence in my room and the sounds of the morning bustle coming in from outside. I jump as my phone blares out a ring. It’s a call from Julian.

“Uhhnnn…” I groan tiredly.

“Are you ready, motherfucker?!” Julian yelled through the phone.

“Nuhhh…”

“Well, get up, ‘cause we need you to open your door if you don’t want us to break it down!”

“Ughhh…” I hung up the phone and relished the final moments in my soft, warm bed. I can hear incessant knocking on my front door. I rip my comforter out from under my mattress and wrap its comfort around me. I swing my legs off the side of my bed and make first contact with the outside world, the cold wood floor. I make my way through my small one-bedroom apartment to the front door and swing it open.

“Took you long enough, it’s so fucking cold out here,” Julian said, rushing past me into my slightly warmer apartment. “Jesus, it’s not much better in here. Where’s your thermostat?”

“Touch it and you die. I can barely afford rent as it is.” I said. I turned back to the door and gave a friendly smile, “Hey Dana.”

“Hi Mae. Sorry for the rude awakening.” Dana gave a little wave and shut the door behind her.

“Rude awakening was my nickname in high school!” Julian yelled.

“Quiet down, I have neighbors, Julian. And I thought your nickname was ‘Doughnut Fucker’” I said.

“I can have two nicknames! But, whatever, that doesn’t matter. What matters is today!”

“And I’m *so* excited for it” I said, my words dripping with sarcasm.

“Mae, I promise you, this will be the best camping trip you’ve ever been on. Maybe the best any of us have been on. I’m talking campfires, I’m talking hotdogs and smores, and come on, the forest! When’s the last time you even saw a tree, Mae?” Julian said.

“What’s this word you’re saying? Truh…ee? Never heard of it.” I said snidely. Dana giggled and then looked at me.

“So, are you ready to go?”

I glanced over at the half-packed bag laying near my bed and cursed at my past self for not being more prudent.

“If I said no…” I started.

“We already guessed you weren’t, just hurry up! The longer you take the more of your food I eat” Julian said, nearly shouting again. I hustled over to my room to finish packing.

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“If we’re not getting coffee, then I’m getting more sleep.” I said. I bunched up my sweater between my head and the window and made myself comfortable. I normally don’t sleep easy in cars, but I fell asleep nearly the instant I closed my eyes.

I woke up to the sounds of arguing. I looked out my window and saw nothing but an ocean of pine trees. Dana was looking out the window while arguing.

“Guys, guys, guys, why are you talking so loud.” I interrupted.

“Dana is getting all heated because she saw a dog outside, but she--” Julian said.

“It was a wolf, Julian, not a god damned dog. I can tell the difference.” Dana argued.

“Oh, can you? Because I remember wolves being way bigger than that. And I don’t think they just hang out by main roads.

“That doesn’t make it impossible, though.”

“Makes it pretty fucking far from likely.”

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“I thought camping was sleeping in tents and shitting in holes.” I said.

“Camping is whatever you want it to be.”

“But that’s a house. Shouldn’t we be outside and li-”

“Don’t worry, you’ll get your fill of camping. We’ve got a bunch of tents, we’re just keeping our stuff in there.”

“…And sleeping in there.”

“Just for the first night! Don’t microanalyze this so much! Sleep outside if you want.”

“Alright, alright, fine.”

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The laughter died down until we sat in a comfortable silence listening to the crackling of the fire and the sounds of the night.

“I’ve got one.” The voice came from across the fire from me. That was the first time I’d heard Illia’s cousin say more than one word at a time. What did she say his name was, again? Everyone’s focus shifted towards him and the atmosphere immediately became tenser. We all sat uncomfortably, anticipating what he would say.

“This is a story from our tribe that goes back hundreds of years ago. Our grandfather told us this story--”

“Oscar, don’t, we can’t talk about that. You of all people should know what happens.” Illia interrupted.

“Relax, it’s fine, it’s just a story. Besides, they should hear this. Especially if they’re staying on the rez with us,” Max said. He cleared his throat and began. “This happened way in the past, hundreds of years ago, back when this land was home to the Yakama tribe. They had millions of acres of land, most of which was forest. Real dense forest, like it is around here. Now, that was both a blessing and a curse, plenty of space to forage for food and hunt, but the deeper you go into the woods, sinister things thrive out there.

“On one day, it was discovered that their medicine man had been meddling in some seriously dark shit. Blood magic, sacrifices, the whole nine yards. The villagers obviously didn’t take too kindly to that, so the elders dubbed him as a witch and declared that he was to be cast out from the village. They covered his eyes with heavy cloth and bound his hands and three men lead him on a winding trek deep into the wilderness. They left him out there, naked and dozens of miles from home, without anything to help him survive. Despite that, he managed to survive out there for weeks, searching for his old home until eventually, he found it. He’d be killed if he walked back into the village, so he did what he did best.

“He did the worst thing any man can do to themselves. He turned himself into a yee naaldlooshii. A skin walker. He could change shape, into anything and anyone, so long as he has their skin. This came at a price, though. All he felt was pure rage and hunger, and the hungrier he became, the angrier he got.”

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“What’s that noise?”

“It’s probably just Illia and Joel bumping nasties again. Who thought it was a good idea to give them their own room, anyway?” I said. “Are they fucking on a swing? They’re slamming the wall so loud.”

“Yeah, probably.” Julian said, rolling back over.

“I can’t sleep like this, I’m gonna go tell them off.” I said. Julian only responded with snores. I not-so-quietly slipped on some pants and shoes and walked down the hall to the stairs. The second my foot touched the first step, the smell hit me. It was like a mixture of sweat, rancid meat and old milk. The smell wasn’t overpowering, but it was enough to make my stomach churn. I covered my nose with my shirt and kept walking. I started walking down the hall to Illia and Joel’s room, but the sound wasn’t coming from there. It was coming from the front door. A rhythmic knocking that shook the whole house.

Was someone trying to get in? The door behind me opened up and Illia rushed out.

“Who the hell is being-” Her eyes widened and she covered her nose

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“Jules,” I said softly. He didn’t stir. I kicked his bedframe. “Jules, can you come outside with me? Natures booty calling me.” I said.

“That’s not the saying.” Julian muttered groggily but didn’t move. I kicked his bed again, much harder.

“God, alright, alright, I’m up. Don’t break the bed.” He said. He slinked out of bed, slowly put his clothes on and reluctantly followed me downstairs. I grabbed a random coat off the rack, hurriedly shoved open the front door and fast walked outside. Julian barely tried to match my pace.

“Jesus, it’s fucking cold outside. What is it, negative twenty?” I asked rhetorically.

“This says thirty-four.” Julian said while yawning, looking at his phone.

“Sure, that’s cold too.”

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I stepped out of the shitter, slammed the door closed and took a deep breath of the frozen night air. I should really learn to hold my breath longer. I looked around, and Julian was nowhere to be seen.

“Fuckin’ asshole” I muttered under my breath. Who just leaves someone out here? I swear to god, if I see a bear I’m going to let it eat me, just so Julian feels bad. I let out a sigh and start the lengthy walk back to the cabin. Just as I begin, I hear a whistle behind me. A quick two-note whistle, with the first note pitching up high and the second sustaining down lower. In the dim moonlight I could make out a figure standing near the edge of the trees. That has to be Julian. I make my way over to him.

“ ”

“*I THINK I SAWWW SOMMMETHING IN THE TRRREES*.” His voice made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. It sounded like a deaf person was impersonating him while using an electrolarynx. On top of that, his intonation was all off. He stretched out syllables for no reason and had no rhythm to his mumbled speech.

“Julian, come on, stop being stupid. I just want to go back inside.” I said earnestly.

He turned his face to look at me.

“*COOOME WITH MMME, HHHELP ME FFIND IT.*” My flashlight couldn’t quite illuminate his face, but I could feel his eyes on me. I glanced over at the glowing cabin on the other side of the clearing. It was far, but I’m definitely fast enough to ditch Julian out here in the dark. I turned back around to respond to him, but Julian was at the very edge of the woods now. He got there so fast it was like he’d teleported the second I looked away. I watched as he gestured awkwardly for me to follow then slipped into the trees and disappeared.

“Yeah, fuck this.” I said and sprinted back to the cabin as fast as I could. I could hear him whistling that same tune over and over until I got too far away to hear him anymore.

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“How the fuck did you make it back here before me?”

“What do you mean? I ditched you like ten minutes, dude. I think you broke the world record for longest time taking a shit.”

“But…You were near the woods trying to freak me out!”

“…no I wasn’t. I came back in here after you decided to take a nap in the shit shack.” He nodded at the fireplace in front of him. “This fire definitely didn’t make itself, so…” He shrugged his shoulders at me.

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I opened the door, exposing the warm world inside to the cold one outside. The old frozen snow glistened in the bright morning sunlight.

“After you.” I said to Julian, gesturing to the open door. Julian shot me a sly look and stepped through.

“I’m glad to know you value me so much as a friend that you’ll let me get killed first.” He turned to smile at me, but I was still uncomfortable with the idea of going outside.

“Hey, dude, it’s alright. Nothings out here.” He said, his voice now gentler. He must have seen through my poker face. I step outside next to him.

“I know, I know, it’s just…” I said, not knowing what I was trying to say. I know Julian is just humoring me. There’s no way he could believe me, and I don’t really blame him. He probably thinks I’m over reacting. He just doesn’t want me to be worried for the rest of this trip, but…

“Hey, c’mon, this’ll be fun!” Julian said, breaking me out of my head. He walked up and threw an arm around my shoulder. “We’re going on a monster hunt! Wow, that sounds fuckin’ badass when you say it out loud.”

“You guys don’t believe me, though, so why even do this?” I said quietly.

“Well yeah, what you said was a *little* farfetched. But I want to believe you. I love the idea of monsters and ghosts and shit, but it’s hard to believe in them without any hard proof. But if I saw them with my own eyes, hoo boy, that’d change my whole world! If I know for a fact that one monster exists, who knows what else is real!” He looked at me with a stupid grin on his face.

“You done with the pep talk?” I said after a long pause.

“Yup!”

“Good. Thanks, man.”

“Alright! Let’s go find that shitter!” he said, pointing at the tree line.

“The monster or the outhouse?”

“Both! Because I need to take a shit!”

“Oh. great.” I said sarcastically, rolling my eyes.

We began out trek to the shit-shack, ruining the beauty of the freshly fallen snow. Passing by the frozen pond in the middle of the field was another grim reminder that, yes, it is cold. We followed our footprints from last night until we came up on the snow-covered outhouse.

“Okay, so that’s me.” I said, pointing at my smaller footprints leading into the outhouse, “and that’s you.” I pointed to the larger stack of footprints.

“Yeah, that’s where I paced for warmth, and that’s where I said, ‘Fuck This’ and went back inside.” He paused for a second and then said, “Speaking of which…” and then opened the door to the outhouse and clambered inside.

“Oh Jesus, it reeks in here!” Julian shouted through the door.

“Easy, just don’t breathe.” I shouted back. He muttered something that I couldn’t quite make out. I sauntered my way away from the dookie hut to give Julian some privacy. I looked out over the enormous white clearing, admiring the beauty that snow brings to a place. I stared out at the tree line when movement caught the corner of my eye. Standing at the edge of the tree line was an enormous grey wolf.

“Oh! Oh shit! Julian, get the fuck out here right now!” I heard him banging around in the shack, then he kicked open the door and ran to me while rebuttoning his pants at the same time.

“What? What is it? What’s wrong?” He yelled.

“Look at that!” I said, pointing to the wolf. He dropped his arms to his side and looked at me in disappointment.

“You made me pinch one off, so I could look at a someone’s dog?” He said, still fiddling with his belt.

“That’s not a dog, Julian, that’s a fucking wolf. Also, eww.”

“Oh shit. It…uh…it won’t attack us, right?”

“I don’t think so. I think they’re pack animals, and this guy’s all by himself. I mean, I hope.”

“Are there even wolves in Washington?”

“I don’t know, Julian, I’m not a wolf expert!” I shouted. The wolf raised its head and stared at us with its piercing yellow eyes. My shoulders tensed up as it glared at us for an uncomfortably long time. Then, as soon as it had appeared, it put its nose to the ground and sauntered back into the mess of trees behind it. We both sighed in relief.

“Wow…That was insane. Guy was so beautiful.” I said.

“I thought wolves were supposed to look…I don’t know, less mangy?”

“Oh, come on, I doubt you even know what mange is.”

“That’s that thing lions have, right? A mange? So, it probably just means really fuzzy.”

“You’re an idiot.” I said playfully, rubbing my face in annoyance.

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“Oh god, Oscar, this is all your fault! You knew it would come if you talked about it!”

“It’s someone messing with us! Skin walkers are fairlytales, Illia! There not real!”

“How can you say that? What about what happened to mom?”

“It was a car crash and you *FUCKING* know that!” Oscar’s voice cracked.

“How can you be so delusional? You saw it just as much as I did.”

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“Mae?” Dana whispered quietly. “How many of us came on this trip?”

“There’s the three of us, Oscar and his brother and their friends.” I looked down as I counted on my fingers. “So that’s nine.”

Dana’s face turned every shade of white as she grew paler.

“Dana, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“Mae, there are ten people in this room right now.” I looked up and recounted. She was right. There’s someone else in this room who wasn’t here an hour ago.

///Good Ideas:

1. Someone goes somewhere and gets attacked by some wolf or something, guys got a baton cause hes “that guy”, “(Don’t worry, ive got this baby” whips out baton “oh wow really cool” said deadpan). When guy gets attacked by it, he sticks the baton down its throat as it lunges, but it doesn’t back off, it still tries to bite him like its not choking on a pole. Either he also has a gun and shoots it or someone comes and stabs it and then it runs off.
2. Native guy calls it the yee naaldlooshii, someone else calls it the yenal-douchebag when theyre they know about it hunting them.
3. Main characters a girl, so girl-girl-guy friend dynamic.
4. Shit hut, poop cabin, shit shack, shit house, dunk bunker, dookie nook.
5. Main Trio is Mae, Dana, and Julian.
6. Oscar likes to act tough, but ends up just weirding people out. He just wants people to like him. “I just wanted you guys to like me”
7. “It’s like my dad always said, you know its cold outside when you go outside and its cold.” “You’re not original, I saw it on that Readthat website, too.”

//Names List:

* Mae
* Illia?
* Juila
* Dana
* Lucas
* Mark
* Oscar
* Sebastian (seb)
* Joel
* Ben
* Julian
* Amir
* Desmond
* Sam