

## The Sea of No Returnies

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I swirled in my chair, biting my nails. I needed a good story for the newspaper or I would be fired. I needed something interesting and different. I stopped the chair and continued to scroll down the computer screen carefully looking for anything that could catch my eye. A murder case perhaps or maybe something paranormal? No, there is nothing new about them. They always get coverage. As I continued to scroll aimlessly, my friend, Rin spoke up. “Aokigahara : The sea of trees. Popular for it’s unknown reason of suicide cases.”

“What?” I asked back, taken out of my thoughts.

“We wanted something different, what about a suicide forest? We can write a story about that.”

She replied. I knew we were going for something different and exciting, but that was a little intense. Going to a forest to investigate suicide cases, a forest everyone warns never to enter at that.

“It’s not going to be worth it if we don’t get a good story out of it. We need something that can guarantee a good story.” I explained.

“We won’t know if we can get a good story out of it unless we actually investigate it.” She reasoned. She had a good point, but a trip to Aokigahara wouldn’t be cheap, and we were already low on money. At the same time though, what if we did get a good story out of it. It would definitely help our small company. I looked back to my computer screen. We finally had something interesting to write about, but it was risky. “I know you're thinking that it's not the best idea to go and investigate something that won’t guarantee a good story, but we don’t have a choice. If we don’t get a story out soon, we will probably get fired.” She tried convincing me again. I still wasn’t sure, but she was right; this was our only chance.

“What else is there about the forest?” I finally gave in. If there was something good enough to give us a story it was worth checking out. Rin eagerly turned back to the computer and skimmed through a couple pages.

“Suicide cases started years ago and anyone who enters never comes back. No one knows why so many people commit suicide there and no one wanted to go and find out, which was perfect for us.” She listed. Not bad, ‘*The Unknown Reason for Aokigahara Suicide Cases Solved*’. We might as go, our lives are on the line if we go or not anyways. I looked back at Rin with a new gleam in my eyes; an eagerness to solve the mystery.

“Alright, let’s go check it out!” We were going to take a trip to Aokigahara.

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Rin and I stepped out of the train, finally arriving at our destination. I looked ahead to see the sun setting down on the horizon. “We should hurry and get to the forest by dark.”

“Ya, we will start investigating tomorrow.” Rin replied back. We made our way in the direction in the forest. As we got closer to the forest, the sun set lower in the sky. By the time we reached the forest, the sun had completely disappeared and the sky had shifted to a deep blue shade. “We

should set up camp here. It's dark and soon we won't be able to see anything. Best we make use of the light we have." Rin pointed out.

"Good idea, let's quickly set camp up right now." Rin and I got to work setting up camp. By the time we were done, the sun had fully set revealing a sea of stars gleaming in the night sky.

"I'm going to go out and grab some wood for the fire, you cut the veggies for dinner." Rin suggested. I nodded and started to make my way to one of the tents. I got in, rustling through the bags. I could not find the carrots so I lied down in defeat and wondered if this was going to be worth it. I suddenly jerked up at the loud steps approaching my tent. "MIKA!" Rin barged into my tent. "Bodies..." Rin explained, out of breath.

"What? Where?" I questioned and on full alert.

"Down the forest, you need to see!" She said, pulling me out of the tent. I got up and grabbed a flashlight.

"Rin, it's dark, we shouldn't be going out this late."

"There are so many of them! You need to see right now!"

"But-" I was trying to argue but Rin was already running in front waiting for me to catch up. I knew that there was no point in arguing so I just took a deep breath, turned my flashlight on and started to run after her. We were running for a few minutes but suddenly I tripped over something. I pointed my flashlight down, only to see a body! "RIN!"

"I told you! There are more over there!" Rin exclaimed excitedly.

"NO! We aren't going there! It's too dark and I don't want to have nightmares!" I shouted back, rapidly stepping away from the body.

"Mika. Isn't that why we are here? This is the first step to figuring out the mystery of the suicide forest." She tried convincing me. It didn't help though. Knowing I stepped over a dead body sent shivers down my spine.

"NO!" I said. It was too late though, Rin was already jumping over tree roots and making her way to the bodies. "RIN! GET BACK HERE!" But it was no use, she wasn't listening. I was tempted to just let her go and make my way back to camp, but I couldn't just leave her in the forest. I sighed in frustration and ran after her. I pointed my flashlight in the direction she had run in and saw her bent over something. I ran after her and grabbed her arm when suddenly I heard a sound in the distance. I didn't think too much of it and was tugging on Rin's arm to get up and make our way back to the camp. "Rin, get up. We're going back."

"The noise," Rin said, turning her body in the direction of the howl. She was mumbling now.

"Rin no! It's dark, and probably just a wild animal." I reasoned.

"No, we need to see what it was." She argued and stiffly pulled her arm away. What was she doing? It was as if she was hypnotized to follow the noise. She was crazy for thinking about following the noise in the middle of the night. I looked down at my hand to see the time but noticed that I didn't have a watch or phone on me. More the reason to go back to camp.

"Rin, it's not funny anymore, we need to go back."

"Just a little bit closer." She mumbled. What did she mean by a little closer, there was nothing around us, we were just covered by a forest of trees. I was about to lose it and drag her back to

camp when suddenly something lunged out of the shadows ... right at Rin! She was in the grasp of whatever had caught her but she didn't scream though and continued to mumble. I ducked behind a large tree, making sure I didn't make any attention-grabbing noise. I walked to the other side of the tree to have a better look at the animal.

"WHAT!!" I whispered-screamed to myself. It was huge, and had claws as long as my arms and teeth as long as my palms. It also had the most monstrous, glowing red eyes - and they were staring right into Rin's eyes. They looked like they were hypnotizing Rin into following it. I was about to run in the other direction, when suddenly the creature dropped her to the ground. She landed with a thug, but she didn't make a *single* noise. The creature seemed to have taken over her and even the noises she made. The creature walked back to the cave and Rin began to follow. A couple moments after Rin entered the cave, the creature had begun to pace in front of it. The sky was getting brighter and the creature had begun to get impatient and go deeper into the shadows of the cave. As I waited for Rin to come out, two hours had passed and the creature went deeper into the cave. The creature couldn't go in the light, I suddenly realized. I needed to get the creature into the light. I looked around to find anything that I could throw to get the creature out of its hiding place. A rock beside me grabbed my eye and I threw it beside the cave. As expected, the creature jumped out, but its eyes grew in fear in the light and it went back to the cave. I was right: the creature really couldn't go in the sunlight. I had to get the creature out and keep it in the sun so I could grab Rin and get out of the forest. I ran back to my campsite. I took the tents apart and thought of a plan to get the creature into the sunlight. I had to trick the creature into thinking that there was no sunlight here. The sky was slowly growing into a lighter shade of blue. I looked around, trying to think of something to trap the creature. I saw the opening of two trees and a light bulb went off in my head. I grabbed one of the tents and threw it over two tree branches. The light of the sun couldn't pass through now. Once the creature ran in this direction I would pull it down so it got caught in the sunlight. Now I just had to guarantee that the creature would stay there. I looked down back at my camp supplies and grabbed a long rope. I ran back to another two trees and pulled the rope tight, hoping that the creature would trip on it. I looked back at the forest where I last saw the creature. Now I had to get the creature here. I sprinted to the cave where the creature was hiding. I carefully stepped out from behind the tree, not seeing the creature anywhere. If it wasn't in the cave, I could go straight to Rin and run out of the forest. I turned to look over my shoulder to make sure the creature wasn't there but there they were: the glowing red eyes. The creature leapt at me from above the cave, and I luckily jumped to the side just in time. I got up and began to scurry to the campsite. After two minutes of sprinting, I saw the campsite in front of me. I jumped over a couple roots and made some confusing turns as I finally made it to the rope. After a final leap over the rope I was able to get out of the creature's grasp as it tripped over it. I took a deep breath and pulled the tent from over the trees as the sunlight revealed itself and the creature let out the most ear piercing scream. I covered my ears, and ran past the creature. I dashed to the cave knowing that the creature wouldn't be able to get out of the rope. "RIN, WHERE ARE YOU!?" I screamed. I ran deeper

into the cave until I saw Rin in the distance. She was staring across a lake at a plant on the other end of it, but there didn't seem to be a way to get across.

"Some things aren't meant to be in our hands." She mumbled.

I was too panicked to respond as a piece of the cave collapsed and I heard the same piercing howl echo through the cave before silence. Rin suddenly snapped out of her hypnotized phase.

The creature was gone, so nothing had control over her anymore. The trap had worked! Our second problem was to get out of the cave before it collapsed. Rin and I began to run for the exit not even sparing a glance back. We ran out of the cave, past our campsite until the cave and the creature was far behind us. "Rin, are you okay?" I asked.

"What was that?" She asked, not answering my question.

"I don't know." I answered while looking back to the forest and catching my breath. All I knew was that it wanted the thing on the other end of the lake. Whatever it was, Rin was right, some things weren't meant to be in our hands and that plant was clearly not supposed to be in the creature's hands. It was waiting for Rin to receive it for her, but she wasn't able to get it either.

"Well, whatever it was, we should not go back in there." Said Rin.

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We were back in our little office with a finished story and answers. Rin had confirmed that the monster had hypnotized her into acquiring the plant. The greedy thing wanted it for itself; we didn't know why, but it desperately wanted it. That was behind us though. We had a story and a dead mind-eating creature. All that was left on the list was a good night's rest: that was something *I* desperately needed.

THE END