

Death by exposure

She ran into the wilderness without looking back. To her, looking back only meant one thing and that was defeat. She had had enough of it for a lifetime and yet she was afraid of thinking about the course of actions that she was following that night. For she had decided to run away, she thought as a shiver ran down her body. Her adrenaline pumped up a few notches and she turned her jog into a run. The paper bag of apples that she had taken with her in case she got hungry in the way was beginning to tear and so was her determination. Despite all she had planned or decided earlier, she chanced a glance backwards, knowing the second she did it, that it was the biggest mistake of her life.

It was not what she saw made her nervous, it was what she could not see. Everything behind her was filled with a thick greenish mist and the front was no better. She struggled to find a pen torch that she had kept in her robes in case of an emergency and accidentally dropped the entire bag of apples that she had been clutching tightly. The lady might not have known a lot of things, but not stopping to recollect the apples at that time was one thing she knew she shouldn't do. Rolling and stumbling on the fallen apples, she opened the pen torch but it was no good for the light seemed to be falling at the mist rather than through it, as if the mist was a solid object.

Catching her breath on the steadily choking night, she tried to calm herself by closing her eyes but instead of feeling lighter she felt her throat constrict as she felt a jolt of fear. The rustle of her own clothes and the panting of her breath had caused her to neglect the fact that she was not the only one breathing in the vicinity. Throwing the torch in panic, she ran and ran till her legs gave way and her lungs protested, collapsing at a tree nearby. For now that the fog had dissipated slightly, she realised that she had reached some sort of clearing amidst the woods. It took her a few moments to catch her breath again and a further few to register the fact that the danger has not yet abated.

The first thing that she needed was... she started thinking as she felt the objects around her in darkness. Stumbling and staggering over the thick roots of the trees she felt her foot step over a broken bottle which seemed to have scattered all over the floor of the clearing. The moment she felt her foot smart, the mist began to encompass the clearing she had taken refuge in. With the wounded foot she tried to flee but only ended up in a denser region of the forest that did not allow much room for escape. In desperation, she tried to escape the fog but the more her foot bled the denser the mist got. No matter which direction she headed into, it was the same dank, thick smoke that prevailed, so much so that it seemed to be closing in on her on purpose.

Retreating slowly, she found the trunk of another tree to which she hugged dearly but instead of giving her way to hug the tree, something hurdled her access to the bark. Although her mind was completely boggled by the events of that night, she still had enough senses to recognize a dead body tied tautly to the ancient oak tree. Before she could give in to her hysteria, she was nudged violently from behind by a four pawed creature. There was no light to see from, but around her she felt a dozen paws circling to dig into their prey. Any chance that the monsters would have given up on her assuming she was dead was gone the moment one of them started licking her injured foot. Her reaction to what happened next could be heard miles away as the woman screamed the last of her breath.