

George

By Oonah Barnes, age 14, Coquitlam

A cold breeze wraps around me, picking up chunks of snow that sparkle in the setting sun and slice at my dry, cracked skin like knives. The snow beneath me crunches under my boots.

Wishing I had a warmer jacket, I cross my arms and hold them tight to my body.

The sun was setting, and a fiery orange light illuminated the snowy earth like spilled ichor.

I've lost track of the days; they all feel the same now. So do the trees, but those had been hard to distinguish from the beginning.

Their feathery branches seem to reach down to me, casting long blue shadows that grow as the light gets lower.

I hear whispers as the wind blows through the pine needles... no, a weak, rattling breath. My heart quickens and I whip my head around to check the path behind me, fists clenched.

Nothing.

I shake my head and keep walking, keen to find the way home.

My legs feel like lead, dragging me backwards, but I can't go back.

I could've sworn I saw something move in the shadows.

My stomach turned, and I shakily pull my hood off to look around. I begin to speed up.

A small building appears in the distance.

I run towards it, hope ballooning in my chest.

The old wooden planks looked familiar.

My heart sinks.

I'm right back where I started.

I fall to the ground, tears springing out of the corners of my eyes.

Am I going to die here?

George is next to me, glassy eyes reflecting the now dark sky.

I stare at his chest cavity, my stomach growls.

Would it hurt to have a little more?

I crawl over to the tree and grabbed the sharpened stone. Its bloody tip had turned brown and icy.

Something moves in the darkness. I drop the stone and stand up, shivering.
A blurry spectral figure.

I scream and run back to the shack, pressing myself against it.
My eyes dart across the forest, but all I can see are trees.

Blood pulsing in my head, I cautiously walk over to the stone and pick it up again. Turning my back to the trees, I go over to George.

I chip away at his hollowed corpse, flaking off pieces of meat. *I'm sorry*
He looks at me sorrowfully.

I push myself away from him, trembling, but his face is blank again.

Shaking my head, I get up to look for sticks. Maybe I can make a fire.
It's dark now, and the breeze is replaced by strong gusts of wind that scream through the trees.
There's movement in the forest, but it disappears whenever I look. I can't feel my fingers anymore, and it's hard to breath, as if something's pressing on my chest. I see it again. That grey thing. All I can hear is my heart thumping in my ears. The stench of decay fills my lungs. It gets clearer and clearer. Closer and closer.

"George?"