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Lost

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He wasn't sure how he got turned around; he had been hiking in these woods since he was a kid. This was the first time he had ever found himself in these circumstances. He couldn't say the four-letter word out loud. Nope, it sounded fowl and dirty in his mind. Lost, yes, he was lost. He had got turned around in the woods and wasn't sure where he was.

The worst part is that he didn't have any rations, he had planned on only being a couple of hours, taking some pictures and then heading back home. That was almost five days ago. He was tired, thirsty, and hungry. Following the sun, he tried to go in that direction, and he should have found the road a couple of days ago.

He couldn't understand why he hadn't found the highway. The highway was to the left.

"Focus idiot!" he scolded himself. "Focus!"

He felt tears welling up in his eyes but looked up into the bright sun and blinked them away. No, he would not cry. This was ridiculous. He knew these woods. He grew up in these woods. Looking around him, nothing looked familiar. It was all foreign. He could have been anywhere in the world at this point, and he was indeed lost. It was the third day that he realized he had been screwed and didn't have a clue. On the second day he tried to retrace his steps but that didn't help.

Susan, his girlfriend and him had gotten into a fight. She wanted to get married, and he had cold feet on the subject. He loved her and just needed more time to get used to the idea.

Susan felt three years was long enough and had his bags packed by the door when he got home

from work. He had taken his things and tossed them in the trunk of his car. That's when he ventured out for a late afternoon walk. When the sun went down, and he couldn't find the road he began to panic a bit. He kept moving forward thinking he would come out at the end of the trail and to his parked car. He couldn't see the trail markings, but he knew the trail. Or at least he thought he did. After a while he stopped and sat down, taking a break. He was going to call for help on his cell phone, but it was dead, and useless to him. He fell asleep, it was a long day at work and then the fight with Susan he was just worn out emotionally.

The next morning, he forged forward until the sun was high in the sky, when he couldn't find the road or his parked car, that's when he decided to try and back track to get back to his parked car. The only thing he achieved was getting more lost. Day three, he decided that someone would find his car there and come looking for him, so he stayed in one place and kept listening for other hikers. It was a wasted day. Day four and now five, he was heading west to find the main highway, or someone's house or some kind of sign of the living.

Sitting against a knocked over tree, he felt like someone was watching him. He looked around but couldn't see anyone. He listened hard but couldn't hear anyone. Just the birds chirping and the wind blowing. Then he heard a bear growling about twenty feet away. It was a big one with a couple of cubs. Slowly getting up he tried quietly going in the other direction. He didn't have the energy or skills to fight a bear, who did? When he felt he was a safe distance he began to move a little faster, the more distance he put between them the better it was.

Hastily he hurried along he slipped a couple of times but recovered and then he slipped on the muddy path and went sliding down into a ravine. Sitting at the bottom he closed his eyes for a minute as a tear slid down his cheek.

“This is bullshit,” he mumbled. Getting up he noticed a sharp pain shooting up his leg from his ankle. “Awe,” he groaned. “Just great, just bloody great.”

He tried walking and fell down. Nope he couldn’t put pressure on it. The tears streamed down his cheeks as he came to the conclusion, he was probably going to die out here. Laying there he had crawled a few feet but was still stuck there, the sun was going down again. His stomach rumbled. The stars started to come out.

Then he heard it, rustling in the dark. Something was coming towards him. He reached around and found a branch; it was his only defense against the momma bear. His stomach growled again. His breathing felt heavy. The footsteps were getting closer and the only light he had left was the stars. It was a soft glow.

Closer, step by step they were coming in his direction. The bear must have smelled the sweat and fear he was giving off. He scrambled and tried pulling himself in the opposite direction. The pain from his ankle was throbbing, sending sharp pains up his leg. He knew he was about to die and there wasn’t much he could do about it.

Regrets, only a few. He should have proposed to Susan two years ago, she was right. She is worth the effort. Work, well he should have tried harder for that promotion. He didn’t have any kids, and the last time he talked to his mother, it was a few months ago.

He remembered something about playing dead. He didn’t have a whole lot of options. Laying limp in the grass. The footsteps cleared and the bear was at his feet. Squinting through his eyes, the bear was standing tall. It was huge! At least 8 feet. His heart was racing, and he tried hard not to make any noise. Maybe it would just leave him and go away.

The bear growled. Instinctively he rolled over and tried to sprint even with his broken ankle. As he pushed off the ground, he rammed himself headfirst into a thick tree trunk and everything went black. He was out cold.

The smell of something dead was what woke him. He was high in the air being carried by something. The eight-foot bear was carrying him on his shoulder! It was furry, a bit wet and smelled horrible. The moon was out and the beast that was carrying him left huge footprints in the mud behind them.

The beast came to a stop. This was it. This beast was going to kill him and feed him to its cubs. Slowly and gently the beast lowered him to the ground and laid him up against a rock. Swallowing hard he had never seen anything like this in his life. It was an eight-foot giant that was hairy everywhere. It grunted then turned and walked away. His eyes were heavy, and they closed. Maybe this was all a dream.

“Sir?” someone shouted at him and shook his shoulder. “Sir, can you hear me? The ambulance is on its way. Hang in there.”

He opened his eyes and saw a woman shouting at him, “Susan?”

“Sir just hang in there.” Darkness took over again.

When he opened his eyes, he found himself lying in a hospital bed with Susan sleeping in a chair at his bedside. Was it all just a dream?