

BY: ABBEY GUTOWSKI

Within the Trees



DOLOR SET AMET

The Woods

The funny thing about kites is, although they are able to fly, able to catch the breeze and soar high and fierce into the sky, they are not free. They are completely controlled. There is a person on the other end of the string, holding them in place, manipulating them to their desire. And yet, when you stare up at them whipping around in the wind, darting from one direction to the next, you might be fooled into thinking they have their own mind; that they choose their direction, and their own movements. But they don't. They don't make their own choices. And what's worse is that they might think that they do.



Keara was eleven. And going through what normal eleven year olds go through. Her crush, Connor, just told his best friend, who told her best friend, who told her, that he thought Keara was in the top three cutest girls in the class. She had just bought her very first bra, (sports bra of course.) Her teacher, Mr. Sevey, just named her student of the month, for the forth month this year. And her fifteen-year-old sister Jamie, just started dating a new boy named Thomas and seemed to be too busy for Keara. But she still idoled her big sister, just like any little sister does. She would pick up one of the other land-lines, to listen in on Jamie's conversations with her friends and boyfriend. She would steal her clothes, even though they were three sizes too big, and definitely too mature for an eleven year old. And she would say she liked and disliked all the same things as Jamie, just because she wanted to seem cool to her sister, and to her own friends. Although Jamie was eighty percent of the time annoyed with Keara, and constantly telling her to stop bothering her and her friends,

she really did love her. They had a lot of fun together when it would just be them, goofing off, doing makeovers, making home videos, and playing outside.

It was a warm, breezy day in July. The sun was bright and at its peak. The air was fresh and sweet, smelling of the many trees and flowers that surrounded their house on the top of Goodrich Hill. Keara's parents were gone, her dad at work as usual, and her mom out grocery shopping. Jamie was home, technically watching Keara, even though she never cared about what she was doing or where she was. She just sat inside on the couch in the living room, eating cereal and watching morning throw back shows like Full House, and Boy Meets World. Keara was outside, adventuring in the woods around their house like normal. Pretending she was like Snow White, and calling to the birds and chipmunks, trying to get them to eat the nuts she carried with her, out of her hand. Her plan was to one day train a wild animal, and keep it as a pet.

She loved the woods. It was a sanctuary. Full of discovery, and where her imagination had no limits. She was at the age now where playing pretend with other kids was kind of awkward. No one liked dolls, or simple toys anymore. Lately it was all about the video games, the new bikes and scooters, and sports. But it was nice to be by herself, where she could create fake situations, fantasy, sci-fi, anything. And it could come to life in her own head.

She hadn't ventured very far into the woods, when her eye caught something sticking out from a pile of sticks and leaves. It was red. A deep red. She walked over to it and uncovered it from the brush. It was a kite. And old one. Not like the new ones made of plastic. This one had a wooden cross frame in the back, the red triangle made of cloth, and the string that attached the bottom of the kite to the handle, was a spool of string. It was dirty, and had a few little rips in it, but it still looked usable. Keara untangled it and made her way into a

clearing of trees, where you could see the sky and feel the sun. It took her about four tries, but she finally got the kite to catch the breeze and pull itself into the air. It whipped from left to right, plunging to the ground and then swooping up at the last second. She watched the kite in wonder, her thoughts drifting off and imagining herself as carefree as the kite. Suddenly, the wind picked up speed, and sent the kite diving straight into a tree, tangling itself in the branches. She pulled at the string, but it didn't budge. She made her way over to the base of the tree, and began to climb along the lower branches. The kite was about eighteen feet up. Although it seemed high, Keara had climbed that far before, looking over treetops and seeing the town down in the valley. She was up about nine feet when she realized the gap between the branch she was on, and the branch she needed to be on, was just out of her reach. She struggled on her tip-toes, and even made a small attempt to jump to it, but she still couldn't reach. She climbed down from the tree and jogged back to the house.

The Climb

Jamie hadn't moved from the couch.

Even though it was a beautiful day out, it was also summer vacation, where being lazy and not utilizing every single nice day, is a little more acceptable. Keara came in the front door, the screen door making its usual creaking noise, then abruptly shutting with a slam. She ran right up to Jamie, blocking her vision to the television.



“Jamie can you do me a favor?”

“What Keara? If it involves getting up, then no.”

“Please, please, please, I’ll do anything I swear!” Jamie raised an eyebrow at that offer.

“Fine, you have to clean the kitchen before mom gets home.”

“Deal. I need you to come outside and get my kite that got stuck in a tree. I’m too short to reach this one branch.” Jamie rolled her eyes, as if this was such a juvenile task.

“Keara you are so dumb. Maybe next time, don’t fly a kite around trees. That’s like, the one rule of kite flying.” They made their way back into the woods, Keara leading the way. When they got to the tree, Jamie looked up a little questioningly.

“That’s pretty high up there.”

“It’s not that bad I swear. It just looks that way from this angle.”

“I don’t know Keara, maybe you should just get another kite.”

“No! They don’t make kites like that anymore. Come on Jamie don’t be a baby, I climb trees higher than this one all the time.”

With that, Jamie grabbed the lowest branch, and started making her way up the tree. She was a lot quicker than Keara. Her arms and legs longer and stronger, being able to lift her body weight with ease. She got to the spot where Keara had to turn around.

“That’s where I couldn’t reach!”

“That’s cause you’re a little midget.”

Sure enough, Jamie grabbed that next branch with no problem, hoisting herself higher and higher as she went. Finally,

she got to the last branch before the kite. She looked down at Jamie.

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“So much for not being as high as it looked you little liar.”

“Yeah well you made it up there so just grab it and throw it down.”

She tugged at the string and the branches, it was weaved in pretty good.

“Jeez Keara how did you manage this, its literally as if....WOAHHHH!”

Keara looked up. The branch Jamie was standing on was rocking back and forth.

“Holy shit I think this branch is about to break. I’m too heavy for it I’m coming down.”

“Wait! Grab the kite first! You almost have it.”

“Keara I am literally too heavy for this branch, it’s going to give any second.”

“Jamie you are right there come on, it’s not going to break.”

“I’m not kidding, I can feel it starting to.....”

The cracking sound echoed throughout the forest, and before Keara had a chance to say anything, her sister was falling down towards her, screaming, her body flailing. She hit the ground five feet in front of Keara. There was a second crack. But this time it wasn’t a tree branch.

The Glass

Keara sat in her room, looking out the window, frozen. She hadn't moved in two hours. Her hair was pulled back, and she was wearing an old dress. It smelled of her grand mothers closet, and was made of satin and lace. But more importantly, it was black. She stood up, wiping the tears from her cheek. They seemed to be there permanently, even in her sleep. She had never been to a wake or funeral before. She had never known anyone who's died. Except now she did.



She hasn't spoken much since it happened. She had to give an account to the police, and try and give an explanation to her parents. But majorly, all she could really say to them was "it's all my fault."

She would wake in the night to the sound of her sisters screams, falling from the tree. Until she realized it was her own screams echoing in the night. She couldn't get the sound of Jamie's body hitting the forest floor, out of her head. It thudded like a drum, or like the sound of your heartbeat when you're in full panic. And then, it was followed up by the snap; the snap that left her sisters body lying there, twisted and lifeless on the ground. It was the sound that's made when a human neck is broken. Her eyes were wide, and staring off towards the tree line. Keara dropped to her knees, mouth open. She swore she was screaming, but the forest was silent. She reached her arm out to touch her sisters face, but then pulled

her hand back. She was gone. So she just sat there with her, until the sun started to go down.

Keara grabbed the black ribbon that was sitting next to her glass doll on her dresser, and slowly tied it into her hair. As she looked at her reflection, her eyes sunken in and bloodshot with purple rings on the bottom, her face pale, she grew angry. She was looking straight at the person who was responsible for her sisters death. The girl who murdered her was literally right there. She picked up the glass doll, and with full force, slammed it at her reflection in the mirror. Instantly, the mirror glass cracked into a thousand pieces, and the glass doll shattered in her hand. She didn't even notice the pain. She was just looking at the blood dripping from her hand, down her wrist, and to the floor. It was red. A deep red. And she smiled.

The Wake

People filed in through the funeral home, giving their condolences to Keara and her parents. Everyone was crying, and hugging each other, and saying the oh-so-common line of “we are so sorry for your loss.” They would pull Keara into a hug, trying to comfort her. But what they didn’t realize is they were hugging the person responsible for all this sorrow. Keara never looked away from the casket.



She didn't know who made the decision to have it open, to see Jamie lying there cold and lifeless, but she didn't break eye contact. Suddenly, she made her way over to it, cutting the line of people. She stood over her sister, and whispered

"I'm sorry."

She remained there, paused. And repeated it again, but a little louder

"I said I'm sorry Jamie."

People looked over at her. Her mother started making her way towards her. "Keara, it's..."

Suddenly she snapped.

"I SAID I'M SORRY JAMIE! ANSWER ME DAMN IT!"

Keara had both hands on Jamie's shoulders, shaking her, screaming in her face. Her mom came running over and

grabbed Keara, but she squirmed away, pushing past her and back in front of Jamie.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry Jamie! It's all my fault! Everything is my fault. I did this to you. I'm bad."

Her dad grabbed her, and pulled her away from the casket. He brought her over to the corner, and looked her straight in the eye.

"Keara, this is not your fault. Do you understand me? This was an accident."

"No I killed her."

"You did not. Keara listen to me, you had nothing to do with this. You loved your sister, you would never hurt her. You're a good girl."

The expression on Keara's face shifted. She brought her gaze up from the ground, and looked her dad directly in the eye.

Her stare was cold, and sharp, and foreign. She had a slight twisted smile in the corners of her lips. She spoke in a small whisper, almost hissing the words as she spoke.

“That’s what you think.”