

## In the Pines

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EXT. HOMESTEAD GARDEN - DAY

The pines sway in a light breeze and the sound of a child at play echoes among the neatly planted rows of crops.

IVY, 7 in a grass-stained sun dress with dirt on her knees, darts out from behind a rain barrel, giggling, though there is no one else around.

IVY  
You can't catch me!

More giggles, like a crystalline sound, come from different directions, mimicking Ivy's.

WHISPERS  
You can't catch me!

A gust of wind ruffles her hair. A columbine blossom drops in front of her.

IVY  
That's not fair.

The giggles are now distant, ahead of her.

IVY (CONT'D)  
Wait for me!

Ivy begins to run after the sound, as more blossoms bloom along a path deep into the forest.

The pines swallow Ivy's voice the moment she crosses into the forest.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EVENING

A truck pulls into the gravel driveway, skirting around some toys scattered along the edge of the path.

It stops and the engine shuts off, but no one emerges for several seconds.

The door opens and out comes JONATHAN, 28 with unkempt brown hair and round glasses, carrying a large pizza box.

JONATHAN  
Ivy! Dinner's here.

He fumbles for his keys and heads to the front door. It opens before he can unlock it.

Jonathan kisses ANGELA, 28, on the cheek. She smiles but it doesn't reach her eyes. She looks exhausted.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Jonathan and Angela walk to the small living room, hand in hand, like teenagers on their first date.

The place is furnished like an old cottage, right from the pages of a Victorian novel.

JONATHAN  
How was your day?

ANGELA  
Same as any other day. I love to stay home, but sometimes it gets lonely.

Jonathan looks at her, a guilty expression on his face.

JONATHAN  
I'm sorry, you sacrificed so much for...

ANGELA  
I chose to. I knew when I married you that life wouldn't be the same.

JONATHAN  
I wanted to give you the world.

ANGELA  
You gave me Ivy, and the house I always wanted, away from the city.

JONATHAN  
But you aren't happy.

ANGELA  
I am. I'm just also very tired.

On the walls there are pictures of old ladies and gentlemen, dressed in the fashion of the early twentieth century. One gentleman in particular is in almost every picture.

A three piece suit, and a straw hat, but above all well-groomed waxed mustaches.

His face is familiar, like an old friend.

JONATHAN

We really should take this picture  
down...

ANGELA

Well, it was his house first, and  
you know how much Ivy loves her  
great grandfather.

JONATHAN

Speaking of her, where is our  
little monster?

ANGELA

Outside, playing by herself like  
usual.

JONATHAN

No friends today?

ANGELA

No, not even the imaginary ones.  
She asked me about him, and when I  
told her the same story, and about  
how he became a famous writer, she  
ran off again, happy.

JONATHAN

Well, as long as she's happy.

ANGELA

But shouldn't she have some more  
real friends? I know it's a drive,  
but... Maybe she should go to  
school with the other kids her age.

JONATHAN

I never did and I turned out fine.  
Otherwise, you wouldn't have moved  
out here, would you?

ANGELA

I know, but...

JONATHAN

Let's give it another year, and  
then, if you're still worried, we  
can give school a try.

Angela's expression is reluctant, but she doesn't answer. Instead, she looks out the open window.

ANGELA

Ivy, come on back, daddy brought  
your favorite - pizza!  
Nothing moves outside except the pines.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Ivy? Come inside.

Nothing.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Ivy, this is not funny.

When the silence continues, Angela and Jonathan leave the pizza on the table and rush outside.

EXT. HOMESTEAD GARDEN - LATER

Angela and Jonathan run outside, worried.

They look around, scanning the garden, but Ivy is not there. Then, at the same time, they turn towards the line of trees.

ANGELA

Ivy! Ivy, come back, baby.

JONATHAN

Ivy!

They run towards the forest and disappear beyond the pines.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

As the sun begins to set and the light gets weaker, Jonathan and Angela frantically look for Ivy.

Their unanswered calls echo in the silence. On the ground Jonathan sees foxgloves - a lot of them.

JONATHAN

No. Not again.

ANGELA

Did you say something? Have you  
found anything?

JONATHAN

No. No. I was, I was praying.

The wind carries a crystalline sound of bells. Then it becomes stronger, making it hard for Angela to see as dust is blown in her eyes.

WHISPERS

Liar, liar twisting briars.

JONATHAN

Go back home, Angela. I will keep looking for her here, but someone must be there in case...

ANGELA

What? No.

JONATHAN

What if she comes back? You need to go.

The wind pushes Angela back, too strong now to be resisted.

ANGELA

Jonathan? What's going on?

JONATHAN

Go, now!

As another gust of wind pushes her back, hair blinding her long enough that she doesn't see Jonathan sprint deeper into the forest, where bushes of roses and blackberries are.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Angela paces across the living room, peering out the screen door every time she passes it. Her eyes are red-rimmed and puffy with tears.

She holds the phone so hard the plastic creaks in her hands and her knuckles are white.

INTERCUT

OPERATOR

999 what's your emergency?

ANGELA

Ivy is gone. My baby girl...

OPERATOR

Ma'am? Who is Ivy? Is someone hurt?

ANGELA

My little girl. We can't find her.

OPERATOR

Ma'am, please calm down. Tell me  
what happened.

Under the picture of the gentleman with the straw hat, there is now a bunch of forget me nots, scattered around. When Angela notices them, she pales.

ANGELA

We can't find her. She's gone...

Angela grabs the flowers and stomps on them as she keeps talking into the phone, but the words become unintelligible.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Dogs bark. HUNTERS are scouting the area, hounds tight on their leashes.

They pull hard, their slim bodies tense with excitement, feeling the call of the hunt.

MR. HARRISON

They're close.

HUNTER #1

The dogs can smell them already.

MR. HARRISON

I bloody hope so. They are worth  
more than my car.

HUNTER #2

That's because you're a cheap  
bastard.

MR. HARRISON

You're one to talk.

MATTHEW

I heard something.

The dogs are in a frenzy. The wind, even if not as strong as before, makes them nervous.

MR. HARRISON

They're too nervous, like they  
don't know where to point.

HUNTER #1

It's just us and the bloody foxes.  
No one is crazy enough to stay out  
with this weather.

MATTHEW

Fairy weather. We shouldn't be  
here.

MR. HARRISON

If I hear another word of your  
nonsense, Matthew, I will  
personally kick your ass back to  
London.

MATTHEW

They aren't nonsense. My  
grandmother saw them.

MR. HARRISON

Your grandmother would see the  
Queen herself after a couple of  
pints at the pub.

A nervous laugh breaks through the other sounds of the group and they proceed, flashlights pointed ahead to see.

Mr. Harrison's hound stops, sniffs the air and then pulls hard enough the leash slips from his owner's hand and starts running.

MR. HARRISON (CONT'D)

Bloody hell.

He chases after the hound, and everyone else follows.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST - LATER

The forest is dark, and the silence is broken by the sounds of the hunters crashing through the brush and the baying of their hounds as they all but drag their owners behind them.

Without paying attention, Mr. Harrison crushes mushrooms and flowers under his heavy boots, breaking the neat ring they once formed.

MR. HARRISON

Chester. Come back here, you  
bloody...

He stops, frozen on the spot.

Ensnared in brambles at the edge of the meadow is Ivy, shivering and crying. Chester has already reached her side and licks her face.

MR. HARRISON (CONT'D)  
 Good heavens, what are you doing  
 all the way...

He rushes forward to disentangle Ivy from the thorny branches and vines. She sobs wordlessly, hiccupping and clutching her rescuer when she's free of the plant.

They're both covered in cuts from the thorns, which seem reluctant to give up their quarry, and Chester continues to bark and growl at them.

MR. HARRISON (CONT'D)  
 Hunt is over for tonight. Let's  
 take Miss Conan Doyle home.

Matthew, the last to arrive, looks around and gets pale when he sees the crushed ring.

When no one pays attention to him, he takes a shiny new penny from his pocket and leaves it behind.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Angela is still pacing. When she looks up at the pictures on the wall she stops.

The photograph of the man in the straw hat has accumulated more flowers growing out from under the frame.

She frowns and reaches out to touch them. Before she can, headlights flash through the door.

A car skids to a stop beside Jonathan's, and the door swings open. Dogs bark from the bed of the truck, and Mr. Harrison stumbles out.

She opens the door, worried.

ANGELA  
 Scott? What are you...

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Mr. Harrison hurries to open the back door. Ivy gets out unsteadily, wrapped in Mr. Harrison's coat.

As soon as she sees Ivy, Angela falls on her knees and cries, her arms stretched out to her.

ANGELA  
 Ivy! Ivy, Oh my God. You're okay.  
 My baby.

She keeps crying, and all she cares about is holding Ivy as tightly as she can.

Mr. Harrison looks on with tears in eyes.

The other hunters pile out of the truck. Matthew is the only one who stays inside.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST - AT THE SAME TIME

Jonathan is lost and the forest is pitch dark. He stumbles over raised roots, loses his balance, falls, but keeps going on.

His face is dirty, and there is a bit of blood on his cheeks and hands, where thorns and twigs hit him.

JONATHAN

Ivy! Ivy, where are you?

The echoes of his calls break the silence of the night, but no answer comes.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Ivy, it's me, it's Daddy.

He keeps walking deeper into the forest, hoping for an answer that still doesn't come.

He stumbles over tree roots and nearly falls again but catches himself. When he stands upright, he freezes.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Ivy?

There, in front of him, appearing from nowhere, stands Ivy. She's pale, and fragile looking, like she had been waiting for weeks to be found.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Ivy? Are you okay baby girl?

She doesn't answer.

Jonathan moves a step forward but then stops and really looks around.

She stands in the middle of a circle of flowers and mushrooms.

He stumbles back a few steps. She stretches her arms out but still doesn't talk.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
No. You're not Ivy.

She looks at him, sad for a moment, her arms drop to her sides. Then she smiles with too many teeth.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
Oh God. He was right. It was all  
real...

Jonathan turns and runs away as terror makes his steps unsteady.  
INT/EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Jonathan runs without turning back. Blindly he rummages in his pockets for the keys. His hands are so shaky he comes close to dropping them.

At the second attempt, he finds the lock and finally enters the house.

He slams the door behind him and locks it, making sure nothing could come in.

Angela rushes to him.

ANGELA  
Jonathan, she's back. They found  
her.

Jonathan is so pale he looks like he's seen a ghost.

JONATHAN  
They? Who's they?

Ivy rushes to him and hugs his legs.

IVY  
Daddy, you're back.

She holds a bunch of forget me not in her hands, now a bit crushed, but fresh.

Outside the wind howls.

Inside the crystalline giggle of many voices that sound like bells.

END