

Writing on the picture – Bianca Dinu

Silently screaming soliloquies of help, my blood boiled in fright and anguish, pouncing at every miniature boom that ricocheted through the blanket of trees. Needles... Needles pricked at my feet like chomping mouths each lined with immaculate sets of daggers. A step. A laceration. A step. A laceration. Feet? No, they resembled disfigured criminals after they had been hung drawn and quartered, with tiny remnants of life that swelled from the pink plumped skin that was not drowned in the blood from a whole cadaver.

Walking, running, sprinting, the only option to escape the deafening screams that drowned the whole forest labyrinth; searing darts popping at my new-born ears like soldiers firing their target practise: merciless and disillusioned. I remember the once joyous and infatuated cries of laughter as my friends shared a drink. We chortled all night until the sunrise until we decided we were all too tired and just fell into a silencing slumber. That was yesterday. My birthday. Before th-... Cackles thumbed through my ears, slashing the caverns with their merciless blades, firing their roboticized rifles, kicking with their ironed shoes. I couldn't hear anything except for feel the excruciating echoes that inhabited my head.

The ground below quivered with the sight of death mirrored in my face, I wanted nothing more than it to engulf me, with the tenderness that my mother used to always embrace me with before going to sleep. Except maybe this sleep would be forever? Did I want that? A lightning tear slithered down my face, knowing that I would never feel the warm comforting gaze of my mother or hear her melodic voice telling me everything's going to be okay. It was just me now. I need to be strong for her. I will be. I want to make her proud. Who am I kidding, I'm just a girl: ordinary life with ordinary friends and a blessed family, what do I know about surviving?

Can I really do this? Or is the end near.

Stop.Stop.Stop. This overthinking is never going to get me anywhere and I'm already as good as dead if I carry on. With the cloaked weight of my existence riding on my back I managed to take refuge in the remains of a tree stump, swarmed with big leaves that provided cold warmth. I precariously perched on the skeletal moss that sank into the ground; finally managing to feel my swamped breathing, caked with adrenaline, and iced with the stillness of a criminal escaping a fortified prison, surrounded by brute brandished giants. One could say it was calm after the storm however the tempest was very much still real...The chillness of the undead morning still suffocated me with the bindings of intermittent shrieking that strangled the breath out of me. With the stealth of a magician, I rested my head on the tree stump behind me, forcing my eyes to close. Maybe I would magically wake up and realise this was nothing but a nightmare? Or maybe when I open my eyes again this would be my new reality?