

Witnesses: Between Light and Shadow

Deer: It's time to eat! I prance around, waiting for an aunt to join me on this short morning trek. After nudging her leg for what seemed like forever, we went to the dark strip of land. That piece of land was dangerous when there was light. I'm glad it is still dark. Though the sprouts were good, it was boring to just stand around and eat. Oh, flowers! I love flowers! It's across that black land though. . .but the light hasn't appeared yet, so it should be safe. I place a hoof down. Then another.

Ah! What is that! I can't see! I need to get to the other side. Run, hooves touch the other side. No, light is still there, not safe. I go back. No, go to the place where the flowers are. It's not going to work. I wheezed in my nose. Flowers, black land, flowers, black land. I stood. Still. The light wasn't moving. My tail twitched. I'm running at the edge. It follows. I can't die. Run. Run. Run.

It's gone. What do I do? Where's aunt? I need to go back. Calm down. I walk slowly yet hurriedly. I hope I will never see the light again.

Elk: It was still dark. I eat a little bit, then I see a sister. We go find better food. We tired. Rest next to the shade-giver. We can't see. I can't see. We need to wait for our eyes to adjust.

Ah, that's better- There is a killer. It doesn't move. It moves back. It looks at light. It looks at us. Killer leaves. Sister snorts. Light leaves. We stand quietly in the dark. We need to move, this place, no longer safe.

The light is a curse. It can kill us.

The light is a blessing. It can save us.

Bear: They growl, push at my stomach. Thought flash, *food*. Walk out the dirt, into the trees. I want to find food. I need to find food.

I walk. Berries. Not enough. Need meat. Continue, only meat enough.

I smell! There be two next to big bad land. I see. I smell. They be under that big brown stick . I walk near the monster ground. But monster comes. I don't know if meat sees me; they watch monster. It too close; I run. On hill, I look back. New creature stares back. I'm almost blinded. Need to leave. I need food. My children need food. Forget about that monster. Food is most important.

Human: I yawned, tired but excited. I stared out the window of the car into the murky darkness, searching for any animals. *Ugh, it's going to take another hour before an animal appears.* . . . Deer! Two deer appeared on the side of the road. As the car slowed, the smaller deer went into a frenzy. It treaded the edge of the road for five minutes, not able to decide where was safer. Though we felt bad for scaring the young deer, we had to keep moving. Thankfully, as we passed the deer, it finally calmed down enough to retire to the roadside.

Just as I was about to fall asleep, the *woah* of my father woke me up just in time to see a black lump moving to the side of the road. It was a bear. The car lights reflected in its eyes as it turned back, giving us a look of despair. Then it lumbered off. A few feet away, two elk stood under a tree, both still. Knowing we wouldn't be able to take quality pictures in the dark, we continued our journey, joking along the way that we had saved the elk from the bear. For us, those two stories would live long after we died. But what did those animals think?

Tree: *Zzz. . .Zzz. . .SNORT.* Oh, excuse me. Alas, my brethren, in their fervor for nocturnal tales, deemed it necessary to disturb my serenity for the recounting of a particularly preposterous anecdote, delivered with great mirth by my siblings. It appears some hapless deer, in a display of ignorance, failed to yield to the malevolent creations of our forest dwelling kin. *Sigh.* . . when will they ever learn. Anyway, I thought that I would get a better night of sleep when the world were dim again, but no. As I teetered on the brink of dormancy, a troupe of elk sought solace in my vicinity. "Oh, whatever," I mused, attributing their presence to their elkish predisposition. But lo and behold, just as the embrace of sleep was about to enfold me, an unwelcome visitor emerged in the form of a bear. The elk, perturbed, disrupted the tranquility, and a capricious illumination from an insidious human contraption bathed our realm in an intrusive glow. In a fleeting ten seconds, the interloping luminosity retreated, the bear departed, and the elk, now companions in rest, lingered by my side. The aftermath, though sparing me from a potential sylvan bloodbath, left me bereft of the sweet embrace of a peaceful slumber. Yes, I was saved from the observing the threat of predation, but that's normal here. Rather, it was the intrusion of blinding lights that defy the sanctity of our arboreal abode. Hmph! Such is the curious disposition of you humans—permit me respite, I implore.