

Choose Your Own "Other"  
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2015

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## WARNING

Do not read this text straight through. You and you alone have complete control over the contents of this story. Follow the instructions at the end of each section to reach your own conclusion. Beware, your choices may have dire consequences.

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Unpopular opinion: watching the sunrise is bullshit.

Eventually each and every one of us sappy, soul searching suckers will be forced by our romantically inclined friends to wake up at the crack of God-knows-when under the guise of appearing introspective. For fifteen excruciatingly long minutes we stare in awe at a ball of gas and light millions of miles away: a ball with the power to scorch our skin and blind our eyes, the power to give us life and to take it away again within an instant. And for what? Just to say that it happened? That we were there when it happened? To take a picture of it happening and pretend that it changed us forever? We watch the sunrise for no purpose other than being able to tell someone else we did, and that just doesn't seem like a very good reason to do anything. RE: the sunrise is bullshit.

That is, of course, with the distinct exception of the one you're watching right now.

This morning you woke up blinded by darkness in an unlit tent in the middle of an unlit wilderness. On either side of you were friends, still effectively passed out from yesterday's hike. It would obviously be more than a few hours before the others were ready to join you in the world of the conscious, and knowing this you unzipped yourself into the cold not-quite morning outside. With nothing to do and time to kill, you went in search of the camper's rarest and most valuable resource: Wi-Fi.

Phone in hand and forethought long gone, you began to wander around the perimeter of your campsite. Periodically you stretched your arms into the air, sweeping them from side to side in anticipation of seeing that one little blue bar of hope in the corner of the screen. Dammit. Nothing.

As the stars began to fade and the sky lightened in the anticipation of the bullshit sunrise, you made what would inevitably become “the incredibly stupid decision” to search for reception further away from camp. You walked. You cursed your lousy AT&T coverage. You walked some more. And, as they say, time flew.

It’s been about an hour or so now since “the incredibly stupid decision”. Though you call out their names, your friends do not hear you. Though you retrace your steps, the campsite remains hidden. Lost and exhausted, you sit on an unfamiliar ground, surrounded by unfamiliar trees in an unfamiliar section of the woods and, with nothing else to do, watch an ironically familiar sunrise. With no one to tell and no picture to take, you admire the what would be the bullshit sun light up the world and whisper in realization:

“Fuck.”

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### **Where to Next?**

- A) Greater Than Less Than – Pg. 4**
- B) Again – Pg. 8**
- C) Concentric Circles – Pg. 13**
- D) Super – Pg. 12**

## Greater Than/Less Than

“Shit”, you breathe.

Nothing around you is recognizable. Walking has gotten you effectively nowhere and running has only gotten you nowhere faster. Now, hitting a dead sprint, the trees and the grass and the tiniest patches of sky all blend together in a turbulent whirlpool of green and ground, sucking you in and spitting you out confused, dizzy, and soaked in doubt.

North and south were lost to you hours ago, up and down are fading fast from your memory, and panic takes the helm in your sense of direction. How could you have gotten this far from camp? How could you have gotten this far from camp *looking for wifi*? Your breath shortens to millimeters, the tears welling in your eyes threaten to overflow. What is happening? What is happening? Where are you? Stop. You can't run any further. Head in between your knees, both trying to catch your breath and hanging in shame at once, you pause.

For the first time, you feel completely separated from absolutely everything. Separated from the campsite, from your friends. Hell, your phone is dead, for all you know no one else is out here: you feel separated from the entire world. Stuck in the time-warped pocket of existence that is this goddamned forest its almost as if you don't exist at all.

Lost in these woods you are no longer real. You no longer matter.

The un-lost, those lucky bastards. With their GPS, and their cars, and their free Starbucks Wi-Fi. Being able to go where they please, and know where that is: it's a gift! They are worth more, their lives mean more because of what they have. Your life means less because of what you don't.

How is it our existence contingent on who is lost and who is found, who has more and who has none, who is greater than and who is less than?

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**Where to Next?**

- A) From Here to There – Pg. 5**
- B) You Are What You Eat – pg. 10**
- C) Again – pg. 8**
- D) Conclusion – pg. 15**

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## From There to Here

What now?

None of your attempts thus far have gotten you any closer to getting out of these woods and back to civilization. You rack your brain trying to remember any survival skills from TV or movies, even though you're aware of their probable inaccuracies. WWBGD – What would Bear Grylls do? An inappropriate time for laughter yet you chuckle. In middle school, they told you that moss grew on the north side of trees, right? You decide this is your best (and only) option.

Heading “north” now, the forest seems to shift with every subsequent step. The lush green trees which had loomed over your head mere minutes ago, damp and thick with bark like leather, are now squat, tan and splayed just above your head. The ground expands at your feet, roots and patches of grass growing further from each other at every passing breath. Previously non-existent flowers, purple and yellow and white they grow at the bases of the squat, light trees, vein-like reaching up the stumps towards the branches, petals wide like fingers grabbing at unreachable clouds.

“Where the hell am I”, you wonder aloud, even though you are sure no one can hear you. While beautiful and mesmerizing, the shifting wilderness around you becomes more unfamiliar with every second, with every heart beat, becoming a place you don't even recognize as the forest you were lost in. How did you get from there to here?

Displaced in this section of the wood you become lost in a secondary sense. You feel further separate, further othered, form the rest of the world that surrounds you.

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**Where To Next?**

**A) Greater Than/Less Than – Pg. 4**

**B) Super – Pg. 12**

**C) Conclusion – Pg. 15**

**D) Again – Pg. 8**

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## Again

Thunder claps behind you. Damn, you had entirely forgot it was supposed to rain today. It's probably best that you find shelter. Looking towards the nearest hills you see a few rocky outcrops that might provide some cover. It's a long shot for sure.

Wind begins to swirl around your head, the air sweet and sticky and humid and thick with the impending storm. Thunder rolls again, louder and closer this time like a dog growling at your heels. There's something eerily calming and familiar about an imminent storm. The same signs always manifest themselves, warning you to prepare for a relentless and torrential down pour. The last time it rained was just like this: hot and dank, the clouds slipping past each other hurriedly, ready to burst at any second.

And yet, despite its repetitive nature a storm like any other could produce a tempest. With winds powerful enough to knock you down or pluck you up from the earth, never to be seen again. With rains large enough to wash away your home, your body and yourself. The warning signs all indicate you know what is coming, that a storm like this has happened a thousand million times before. Thunder cracks again. You are confident you know what is headed your way yet at a moments notice you could be ripped apart, and two weeks later it could happen to someone else.

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Thunder claps behind you. Thunder cracks again. Thunderclapsbehindyou.  
Thundercracksagain. Thunderclapsbehindyouthunderrollsagain. Thunder, Thunder, Thunder.

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#### **Where to Next?**

- A) From There to Here – pg. 6**
- B) Super – pg. 12**
- C) You Are What You Eat - pg. 10**
- D) Conclusion – Pg. 15**

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## You are what You Eat

Have you been here before?

You have lost all sense of direction now. The campsite is officially forever out of your reach, consumed (you are positive) by the woods themselves, swallowed whole and never to be found again. Your friends have surely moved on to somewhere new in this labyrinth of trees and unknown space. Location, direction, compasses, GPS, maps, up, west, there: these things hold no meaning for you now.

Rather than being grounded to the forest floor, you are instead grounded only by the deep pang within your belly. Over the past few hours, what had started as a dull ache behind your gut has roared to a full-blown scream from your entire body,

“Feed me!”, it shouts. “Feed me!”, incessantly.

Somewhere in the vastness of these woods must be something edible, anything edible to stop the non-stop pain that now shakes throughout your body. But you have seen no berries, no fish or birds, nothing that looks remotely satisfying to the hunger slowly taking over you. Will you starve out here? Will you die curled on the ground, hands cradled around a stomach who’s final cry of “feed me” remains etched upon your face? No.

You wonder, if you had to, which part would you eat first? The finger would probably hurt the least, but would also probably be the least filling. Maybe a toe or a foot? No, no you would surely die bleeding and unable to walk. Ultimately you decide, if you needed to, you would eat your left arm. Feeding yourself to yourself to survive. That’s what you would tell people.

Cannibalism, would you really resort to cannibalism? Allowing your body to survive off of the consumption of another body, even if it is your own? Perhaps it would give you the strength to keep going. You would look so strong, so brave when you were eventually rescued:

“Camper Eats Own Arm to Survive”

We have power over that which we eat. Would you have power over yourself? Or would you instead become powerless to yourself: consumed by your own body, subordinated by hunger.

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#### **Where to Next?**

- A) Again – pg. 8**
- B) Concentric Circles - pg. 13**
- C) Greater than/Less than - pg.4**
- D) Conclusion – Pg. 15**

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## Super

Breathe in, breathe out. Try to stay grounded in reality. These trees are real. The sky above you is real. The racing of your heart is very, very real. Concentrate or you will lose your mind out here. Walking underneath a canopy of a million branches they all start to look the same. Each one just as green and blooming as the last, weaving in and out of one another and stretching across the sky overhead.

You wonder if anything lives up there, in the tippy tops of the trees. Sprites, maybe, or elves watching over the travelers on the ground below. Playing tricks on the lost, striking deals with those stupid enough to gamble with the supernatural. Wait.

There goes one now! Wrinkled and small, his cackle like a broken whistle echoing on the wind. You bet he's following you. He's probably the one keeping you stuck in these goddamn woods. Little fucker, using magic and illusions to laugh at your misfortune, you bet that without him you would have already found your friends again. Stop.

There he is again! Running back and forth in the path, trying to trip you up. Bet he just gets a kick out of you, big bad human stuck in the forest with no way out. Its all his fault, its all his fault you're sure! It's magic, it must be magic keeping you here. Wouldn't that be something.

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### **Where to Next?**

- A) Again – pg. 8**
- B) Concentric Circles - pg. 13**
- C) From There to Here - pg.6**
- D) Conclusion – Pg. 15**



### Concentric Circles

It's all the same! Everything in this forest is the exact goddamn same! Every tree, rock and bug in this God forsaken wilderness are carbon copies of one another, set up in a hedge maze to keep you in. Exasperated you drop to the ground, tired of walking, tired of trying to find away out, convinced that there is some kind of trick being played on you.

But this isn't a story, this isn't a dream. You aren't going to wake up ten minutes from now, safe and happy at home, a ten year old plagued by very strange dreams. No. This is actually happening, you are actually lost, you are actually alone. Defeated you sit on the ground in fear, the surrounding scenery which had seemed so beautiful just days before has become menacing, evil in light of your scenario.

“What happens now?”, you wonder.

What ripples will you getting lost set off? Lost, in between the real world and the green pastoral world of these worlds you no longer exist as a member of society, so does someone take your place? Who will get your job? Who will get your dog? Will your mom cry? They will probably hold a funeral for you, burry an empty casket with pictures and tokens of memory. They will stop looking for you, you know. They will move on with their lives, liquidating your home and your assets. They will go through your stuff, keeping mementos of their long lost friend who never made it out of the woods.

The world will go on, but not in the same way: it will go on without you. Losing you will cause concentric circles of loss, grief, remembrance, and replacement. Lives move on, albeit changed, while you remain lost.

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**Where to Next?**

**A). Conclusion – pg 15**

**B). From There to Here – pg8**

**C) Greater Than/Less Than – pg.4**

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## Conclusion

Your feet feel like they have been utterly destroyed. Cut and bleeding, the throbbing in your toes travels up your legs, through your spine and onto your skull. Your hands are heavy with the weight of your shoulders which seem to no longer support themselves. Shuffling you continue your way through the woods, still looking for a sign of life, of anything that can help you escape from this hell.

Despite being lost yourself, it is the world that actually seems lost to you. You have lost touch with reality, with existence. Less than a real person, a shell of who you once were, you feel separate, different, other. You have a sinking feeling that, despite seeing lights in the distance, you will always feel lost.

Slowly, you walk towards you walk towards them anyway.