

Fireflies

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Nora, an innocent girl who is afraid of her own shadow, is invited to a romantic hike by her friend Christan, whom she secretly loves. Ignoring her gut feeling she meets him there and later she realizes that she has bitten off more than she can chew.

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1 - Fireflies

“Fireflies”by:
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Nora scrambled inside her checkered purse, desperately looking for her keys. Her hands fingered loose change, lip-gloss, and even millions of tiny silver gum wrappers before she finally found them. A howl from a neighborhood dog made her jump nearly five feet in the air, causing her to drop the keys to the pavement. She knelt over and snatched them, quickly thrusting them into the lock. She sighed a breath of relief. Ever since she was a child her friends and family had always teased her about being a coward. When it came to horror stories, she cringed, but movies were even worse. Actually seeing the monster, or the psycho killer made her whole body tremble. It wasn't too long ago that her high school friend Christian asked her if she would like to go on a hike with him in the woods north of town. Her gut told her that she shouldn't, but the way he described the valley at night made her giddy with interest.

Fireflies supposedly were everywhere, hovering above thousands of beautiful wild flowers. Also, with the full moon illuminating the scene, it could be the perfect chance to finally tell Christian how she felt about him. Alas, she knew she was a coward, even when it came to dating, but she trusted Christian with her life and knew that she was making this out to be more frightening than it would be. As she began to back out of her driveway to meet Christian she was feeling unnaturally nervous. Her pale skin gave off a creepy glow in the moonlight, and her light blonde hair made her look even more ghostly. Her only features that made her stick out among the crowd was her bright blue eyes and the streak of black running through her bangs.

The roads were completely desolate of any other drivers, which made chills travel down Nora's spine. She hated to admit it, but she was really having doubts about this whole hiking trip, as romantic as it sounded. The headlights from her car made even the simplest shadows seem murderous. She felt like an old lady driving down the street without her glasses. Nora's eyes were wide and she got her face as close to the windshield as she could. She clutched the steering wheel so hard that her knuckles began to turn white.

As her car crept up the road she could see the headlights of Christian's black Toyota truck. He was leaning against the hood with his hands inside his black jeans. Nora's headlights reflected his black T-shirt, which fashioned 'the punisher' symbol. He gave Nora a wide smile as she finally pulled up the rocky road and put the car into park. She quickly spread her hands over her jean skirt to rub out any wrinkles and zipped up her red hoodie. Christian began to walk towards her car when her door swung open nearly hitting him in the process. Her eyes grew large with humiliation.

“I'm so sorry!” She bellowed, jumping out of her seat. Her legs were covered with black and white candy-cane style tights and her feet were engulfed in black 3-inch thick boots. Christian smiled and his chocolate brown eyes shimmered.

“It's fine. Totally my fault.”

“No it wasn't, I'm the one who nearly knocked you out.”

Christian rolled his eyes and held out his hand, which Nora took without hesitation. She nearly melted into a gooey puddle.

“I think you’re really going to like this place.” He said, “I come here a lot on my days off and it always makes me happy.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, it’s one of my favorite places to just chill out.”

Nora’s gut twisted into a knot. He always came here at night? Why? She asked herself mentally, not realizing that they were extremely close to the metal fence that separated the woods from the road. A yellow sign with bold black letters read “No Trespassing”. Nora’s heart sank as if it were made of lead. After a long moment of silence she opened her mouth, her voice vibrating off the dead trees.

“Why do you come here at night?” Nora finally asked.

“Well, I like collecting fireflies for my little sister. She adores the little creatures.” He gazed back at Nora.

“You aren’t scared are you?” He asked.

“N-no...” She stuttered, “But since when did you have a sister?”

“For eternity. She’s a creepy little girl but I love her.”

There was an awkward silence as they finally reached the gate. Nora’s face turned sour and her eyes widened. Christian caught on that she was freaked and wanted to push it. He elbowed her gently in the side to get her attention.

“You know, some say these woods are haunted.”

She playfully smacked Christian on the arm.

“Don’t start.”

“It’s true! Not only is it a beautiful place, but it’s also home of some strange happenings.” He smirked, “But hey! This could be your chance to beat your fear.”

Nora’s expression turned emotionless and she squeezed his hand tightly as they both ducked through a hole that was on the left side of the fence. Nora wondered why no one has patched it up; it looked like a bear crashed through it. Metal, jagged and sharp jutted out from the sides and she struggled to get through without tearing a hole in her new tights. Christian waited patiently flipping his short black hair out of his eyes. When she made it through he took her hand in his again and lead her down the spooky path. They didn’t speak a word. Nora gazed up toward the sky, the trees surrounding them looked as though they were desperately reaching for the stars, almost like they didn’t want to linger in the forest any longer. It seemed like impending danger, there were no crickets chirping, absolutely nothing made a

sound. The only sound that echoed off the trees was the sound of Christian and Nora's footsteps.

"I don't feel right about this." Nora said, gripping onto Christian's arm. She nervously looked behind them afraid that someone could be following. There was no one, but she couldn't suppress the feeling of being watched.

"It's just the bats." Christian said calmly. He obviously wasn't affected by the lack of noise or the beady black eyes glaring down on them from high in the trees.

"H-how did you know?"

Nora's face turned dead pale and she started to shake.

"I just do."

"No, I mean...you knew I was feeling watched? What else would make you say 'It's the bats' randomly?"

Christian didn't answer. Nora was feeling very insecure; she was starting to wonder if there was something wrong with her friend. She clutched his arm tighter, and then she saw an opening in the path. It had to be the valley. They walked through two trees that looked as though they were forced to form a giant wooden gate. The limbs were bound together and vines surrounded the top, some falling to the ground like brown rain. There was something different about the valley though. It was lifeless. It was nothing like Christian told her about. Nora's heart began to beat faster, the blood rushing to her head. She released Christian's arm and bent down to touch a wilted flower. The only piece of color in the whole valley was that one wilted purple flower. Nora gazed across the valley noticing thousands of wilted brown flowers. It was like they were crying.

"I think I want to go home." She said, standing from her slouched position in the grass. There was no answer. Nora's stomach fluttered. Christian was nowhere to be found. How could he walk away so fast? She worriedly scanned the circular dead valley for any sign of movement. There was none. She stood frozen in that one spot, unable to feel her limbs.

"C-Christian!" She yelled at the top of her lungs. There was still no answer, only the wind gave her sympathy as it blew through her hair. Her bangs stuck to her forehead from sweat. She managed to force her body to move forward and she found herself in the dead center. A passing cloud blocked out the light from the moon and Nora didn't even have the glow of fireflies to guide her through the dark woods.

She felt like she was going to cry. Her knees buckled and she fell toward the grass. Beads of sweat began to form on the back of her neck. The cloud that covered the moon managed to pass and let some light into the rotten valley. A loud screech caught Nora's attention as she sat in the muddy grass. She gazed toward the sky and a single bat flew in circles above where she was sitting. It screeched again and dived towards the earth, softly landing by Nora's knee. She cringed and moved backwards with a crab-like walk. The bat screeched again, only this time it echoed back with a piercing noise that tore through Nora's ears. Tears filled her eyes.

"Christian!" She screamed again. There was still no answer, only the sound of the wind. It was an

awkward silence that made even the atmosphere seem eerie. Suddenly she heard crackling noises coming from behind her. They started off soft, paused, and then got louder. It sounded like bones crunching and breaking. Her eyes widened and she was afraid to turn her head. Crack, crunch, squish--. The noises repeated until they sounded like they were right on top of her. Terrified, she flung her body up and began to run towards the tree gate, nearly on all fours. Her boots kicked up mud and grass as she dug them into the soft earth. The cracking gained on her and sounded almost like it was running as well. She shrieked and her breath quickened. The noise made her want to cry.

Finally, unable to ignore the noise anymore she flicked her head backwards. Right behind her was an unbelievable sight; it made her skin crawl and her blood escaped her head, nearly leaving her body as a mere shell. A thin creature, about the size of a human being was inching its way toward her. It was covered with caked on mud and what looked to be dripping blood. It's round head cracked and turned upside down, then back again. It was crawling toward her, it's bloody hand digging in the dirt and pulling itself forward. It almost looked like a spider, only with four limbs. The hands were ten times the size of its head and strands of black hair fell from its scalp. Red eyes pierced through Nora's blue ones, pinning her where she lay.

Her heart was beating uncontrollably. She couldn't move, she could only watch as the monster inched itself closer, dislocating and relocating its limbs with an awful cracking noise, as if no muscles were inside the body, requiring it to break every bone to move. What Nora saw next nearly made her vomit. Stuck on the creature's face, mingled with the blood and mud were tiny fireflies, some alive and crawling, others dead or twitching. One snuck its way into the creature's eye and came back out through the other. Finally the creature stopped, frozen in place, its neck cracked to the side. Without warning it opened its mouth wide letting thousands of fireflies scurry throughout the valley. A loud horrific moan escaped its mouth while the fireflies fled for their lives.

Nora screamed as some came near her. She regained movement and stood up as fast as she could and started to run towards the dirt path. Suddenly she ran head long into something hard. She had her eyes squinted closed, awaiting her fate. What felt like two hands clenched around her shoulders and a familiar voice echoed through the woods.

"Nora."

Nora nearly fainted, Christian stood before her with a wide Cheshire cat grin on his face.

"C-Christian?!" She cried, clinging to him like a lost child. "We have to get out of here!"

Nora tried to pry Christian away from the valley, but he didn't budge. She began to worry.

"Come on!" She screamed again, desperately yanking on his arm. Tears filled her eyes and they fell to the ground like rain. Christian didn't answer. He only stared at the creature with the same wide grin on his face. There was something different about him, something malevolent.

"What are you doing? That creature is going to kill us!" Nora pleaded once more. Christian still didn't budge. Finally he took in a breath.

"She will only attack when told." He whispered. Nora slowly let go of Christian's arm and backed away, eyes wide.

“W-what do you mean?”

Christian began to laugh with a smirk planted firmly on his face. He turned around and pierced Nora with his eyes. He backed up closer to the creature who was still frozen stiff, mouth open and blood dripping from its chin. A loan firefly escaped the creatures mouth and flew up toward the sky, shimmering it's yellow light. Suddenly Christian thrust out his hand, snatching the insect with cat-like reflexes and began to lick his hand, insect juices and all. Nora froze, even more petrified than before. Her heart raced and her body went cold with fear.

“I told you my sister loves fireflies.”

He chuckled and gazed down at the monster. Nora started to back further away. Her mind raced with thoughts. *There is NO way...that couldn't ...it just couldn't be his sister.* Nora's mouth went dry and she could barely breath. Her head felt heavy and dizzy.

“But...---” Christian cooed, his words bouncing off his tongue like velvet, “---her favorite is human blood...”

“W-what?”

“My sister needs to eat.” He gave a chilling laugh and thrust his hand out and pointed toward Nora. Nora stood frozen, unable to believe what was happening. It had to be all a dream. This couldn't be the same guy she always hung out with.

“Goodbye. Nora.” Christian said while laughing. Then he muttered something inaudible and the creature began to move again. Only this time it moved faster. Crack...crunch.... squish. Nora made a run for the dirt path, but was tripped up by the creature. Its giant bloody hand dug into her ankle and pulled her backwards. Red blood ran down her foot from the creature's claws. Nora screamed and sunk her nails into the mud, creating long scrapes in the dirt as she was pulled back. Her fingernails began to bleed and she wept in pain, she tried to scream again, but her voice was almost mute from her previous screams.

Nora glanced over her shoulder, only to see the creature lunge like a bullet toward her, its mouth fully open, now with jagged blood stained fangs. Crack...the creature's mouth split through Nora's chest. She gagged and a thin line of blood ran down her chin. Crunch...Nora's body fell limp in two pieces. Her hand twitched. Squish...Blood erupted from her body, creating sticky puddles around her body. The last sound Nora heard before she died was the sound of Christian's uncontained laughter, his smile spreading ear to ear. And then everything went black.

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