



The Clearing

She ran until the trees grew strange.
Branches clawed at her sleeves. Roots twisted like ropes.
There was no path. No plan.
Only her feet, and the sound of her breath.

A sudden clearing opened like a wound in the woods.
Bright. Bare. Watching.

She stepped forward.
Nothing moved.
Nothing whispered.
Not even the wind.



Fear prickled at her neck, though she did not know why.
The silence was not peaceful.
It was the kind that listens. The kind that waits.

A single tree stood in the centre, blackened by storm.
Its trunk split like cracked stone.
Its bitter breath curled through the air.

Why had she come? What was she hoping to find?

She took one step closer.
A thousand voices rose — not shouting, but singing.
Not loud, but everywhere.

Her heart pounded like thunder.
Still she stood.

Still she listened.

