

Unheard Once, Lost Forever

Ralph returned the glasses to a discontent Piggy, whose cries were reduced to a hysterical mutter, something about “blurs” and “acting like children.”

Meanwhile, I joined the crowd of joyous boys running and squealing around the fire, yelling as it twirled and leapt much like we did. Its vibrant gold and its flickering movements enticed us; its crackling laughter taunted us.

But the fire was dying. Ralph shouted.

“More wood! All of you get more wood!”

The dance stopped and we raced out into the woods, a pack of screaming children into the dark tangle of creepers and fruit trees. But the fun and games were not over. Before long, many of us littluns had left off to the allure of the tropical fruit and a chance to play, and the biguns had settled into a comfortable conversational stroll.

But I stayed loyal to my word and the greater good. The biguns appreciated this effort, despite their laughter at my humiliating mention of the Beast last night. At this thought, so suddenly revived and fervent, I addressed to the nearest boy as soon as we stopped for wood.

“Whaddu ya think `bout the beast? Is chiefie Ralphie right?”

The fear from the assembly came back to me at that moment, and my voice came out a whisper, the wind barely carrying it to his ears. His dark eyes and the spider webs of concealing hair hid his identity as he turned to me, and I did not recognize the tone, deeper and wiser.

“Nah, there ain’t no beastie. Why don’t you just go listen to the chief? He’s always right. If you’d just listen to him and get some wood like he’d asked you to, then we’ll all be happier and he’ll protect us better.” He grunted as he picked up the log. “Just do like he says.”

I was only six years-old, a twig to many of the other boys, but I wasn’t stupid. The tension in his eyebrows and the frown he made was caused by more than the weight of the logs he was carrying — I had watched the other boys carrying worse.

He was holding back. I pushed on some more.

“Are ya happy with Ralphie? Do ya like him?”

“Who else’ve we got? Look around; stop asking silly questions. Everyone else listens to him, so we gotta too. And there ain’t no beastie. Let’s build this fire like he says.”

“But I saw—”

The boy trudged off with the others, strange shapes condensed into a dot in the distance.

But there was a beastie. I knew it. I could prove it to them! Ralphie had the conch, but I have, I have ... I have nothing.

I stormed off, away from the returning boys, away from Ralph and Piggy and Jack in their childish power struggle. Life suddenly became a burning passion to disprove Ralph; to show that being a littlun with a mulberry-colored birthmark meant nothing less than they did.

The creepers hung ever so eerily, challenging the decision. Worse yet, a hissing began, a murmur, then a crackling roar. In my chest gathered a cloud of despair, dark and foreboding.

I tried to run back, panic sparking like the flame behind me. “Help! Help! Come back!”
And in the distance, I heard Piggy rant again.

“That littlun that had a mark on his face — where is — he now?”

I turned and fled, a young impala in the face of the fiery pride of lions closing in from all sides. The boys did not listen to me last night, but now they would never hear me again.

Then, a thought. An incantation. A comfort known only known to my brother and I.

My name’s Harry Wemys Madison. The Vicarage, Harcourt St. Anthony, Hants.

The sizzling crept nearer even as my body flew down the slopes.

I’m English. We had fun once. Jack and the choir sang beautiful songs, and we clapped and all the pretty girls liked him. We laughed at Piggy. And Ralphie? He was always the same—

The unfriendly side of the mountain beat with the accelerating drumroll of a heart.