

FRACTAL FOREST

Written by

Nicholas Nyhof

Nicholas.Nyhof@Columbia.edu

INT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

The forest is dense. Lush trees and overgrowth give life to an already stunning view. A baby deer steps out from the brush and onto the dirt trail, the only break in the foliage.

JENN (O.S.)
(whispering)
Stop. Wait. Oh my god.

Two hikers, MIKE and JENN, stop dead in the middle of the trail as the baby deer is followed by her mother. The deer makes eye contact with the hikers.

They keep still, Mike slowly raises his camera and snaps a few photos, then the deer's attention jolts upwards - something in the canopy above.

JENN (CONT'D)
Put your camera away. You're scaring them.

Mike lowers his camera and looks above but sees nothing.

The deer begin to back away, keeping their eyes focused upwards.

Mike picks his camera back up, about to press the button when-
The deer skitter off into the woods.

JENN (CONT'D)
Good going.

She starts walking down the path.

MIKE
I don't think it was me.

He keeps his eyes fixed above, seeing nothing in particular. He takes out his camera and snaps a picture.

JENN
Come on. We're almost at the site.

He jogs to catch up to her and they continue to walk along the trail with walking sticks in hand.

JENN (CONT'D)
I hope our kids like nature.

MIKE
I don't think you'll give them a choice.

JENN

That's true. I think your Dad's excited.

MIKE

I think he's more excited than we are. He's probably already building a crib.

She laughs.

JENN

I would *hope* he's not more excited than us. I can't get a read on your Mom though. She seems supportive but at the same time she makes these off-handed remarks about how she doesn't think we're ready yet. Has she mentioned anything to you? Mike?

She turns around just in time to see Mike walk off the trail and disappear into the woods.

JENN (CONT'D)

Mike?

No response.

She walks towards where he left the trail.

JENN (CONT'D)

Mike? Come on. Don't play around.
(to herself)
God dammit.

She walks off the trail and enters the brush.

She pushes through tree branches and ducks under the ones she can't move. She sees Mike in the distance, moving slowly through the trees.

JENN (CONT'D)

Mike! Where are you going?

BACK ON THE TRAIL.

Mike walks back onto the trail and zips up his fly.

MIKE

Alright. Good to keep going.

He notices Jenn is gone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Jenn?

BACK IN THE WOODS.

Jenn catches up with Mike and grabs him from behind.

He stops dead.

JENN

Hey, come on. We're going to get lost out here. Stick to the damn trails.

He keeps his back to her.

MIKE

You would have made a terrible mother anyways.

JENN

What the fuck?

He turns slowly towards Jenn.

JENN (CONT'D)

Mike?

We don't see his face - only hers as it curls into horror

MIKE

Do you *really* think he doesn't know?

Mike's voice shifts into a deep snarl with each passing word. This is clearly NOT MIKE.

NOT MIKE

Or is he just biding his time to leave you stranded. *Alone.*

JENN

NO!

BACK ON THE TRAIL.

Mike holds his phone to his ear, pacing.

JENN (VOICEMAIL) (CONT'D)

This is Jenn, leave a message after-

He hangs up, then a deep **CLACK-CRACK-ACK-ACK-ACK** comes from deep in the woods followed by a **PIERCING SCREAM** that echoes all around him.