

The Running Man

Short Story

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He runs fast. The woods pass as if he was a racecar on a speedway. He secures his ears, hearing nothing. He would rather feel the pursuer than hear of what is to come. He breathes deeply yet feels no relief. In the distance, he sees a hint of the clearing. He presses on. "I can do this," he says silently, "I will *not* be the next victim."

He continues, sprinting at an unwilling speed. As he moves towards his destination, it seems to be moving away from him. With sheer will he pushes his body to its limits and continues to reach the clearing. Oh, that glorious clearing! He leaps with great force, missing tree roots and gigantic holes which lead to deep, tortuous pits. He steadies himself after many stumbles and continues on the path.

His breath quickens. His heart beats against his chest. His eyes begin to sting from salty tears that flow from his eyes. His head spins. He feels lightheaded, as if he was under a hex. He shakes his head, but the clearing still is out of reach.

He is tired. His heart continues to race uncontrollably. He does not look around for fear of seeing his pursuer. He searches for a place to rest. His gaze fixates on a warped tree with many steady but twisted branches. He hoists himself up and climbs to the highest tree limb. He rests his head upon the trunk, and listens to the forest. After a while, he hears the stomping of heavy boots. The fragile, dead leaves crumble underneath its weight. The unknown pursuer approaches the warped tree.

The pursuer is a tall man with short brown hair. He wears long pants and a dirty envy green shirt. Scratches and blood cover the pursuer's arms. After establishing what the pursuer looks like, he leans back and relaxes. He breaths slowly and shallowly so he is not heard. Once again, he hears the rustling of leaves. As he looks down, he notices that pursuer's shirt is an angry red color. "Strange," he thinks to himself, as he

continues to rest upon the trunk. He hears the rustling leaves again. Peering over the branches, he sees the pursuer but in a skin tight, lust blue t-shirt. He scratches his head in confusion. After several minutes, he sees the same man, but in different colored t-shirts: greed yellow with gold chains, beautiful pride violet, and foods stained gluttony orange.

Studying these men, he comes down to the conclusion that these men are not the pursuer, but they must be the victims. They must be lost like him!

He climbs down the tree with confidence that they are not after him. As he does so, he hears the rustling of leaves once again. He turns to see who is coming now. To his shock, he is run over by the victim who seemed not to be running but to be walking slowly and purposefully. This victim did not seem to pay attention until the man causes the leaves to rustle. The other victim, wearing a dirty sloth-brown shirt, turns and stares at him. Utter amazement overwhelms the man. He raises his right hand in a friendly manner. Instinctively, the victim raises his left hand; he mirrors his every action. He puts his hand up like he is going to give the victim a high-five. As they are about to touch, something hard stops them. He steps back in shock. As he looks closer at the face of the victim, round eyes with tear-stained cheeks, he realizes this person is him!

*He is the victim. He is the pursuer.*

Looking around now, he sees that he is in a glass box. Trapped. The others, the ones who wore the different colored shirts, start to surround the box. They are all him. He begins to cry out, but they do not seem to hear him. They do not seem to care. He drops to the ground in defeat. No hope. He places his head on his knee and cries. The box soon grows dark and cold. The figures are no longer seen, all that can be seen is

the man in what seems like a room full of mirrors. Taking a closer look, he sees what he has actually become his life. Tears begin to flood his face. In an instant the box is illuminated with the warmth of a bright, white light. He welcomes the light with open arms. It becomes overwhelming. Quickly he closes his eyes for he feels blinded.

Reopening his eyes, he finds himself standing in front of crowd of beautiful children, young adults, and seniors, with his arms raised. Tears run down his cheeks. He clears his throat. "This is my story. Now you know my past." He smiles as he looks at his black jacket. "This is the journey that got me here. It was tough and it was painful. It also got me into a lot of trouble. My inner demons ripped my heart apart. I loved no one. I loved nothing. I didn't even love myself. But with the guidance and forgiveness that I received, I picked myself up and became the person that everyone knew I could be. You see," he began to take off his black jacket reveal a white shirt, "my past was dark like this black jacket, but now my future is bright like this white shirt. I was trapped, but now I am free. This journey has been long, but it is not quite finished. This is my journey. This is my chance to share the Grace that was given to me." The crowd begins to roar with applause and shouts. "Please my friends, this is not for me but for you. This is my testimony. If I can be brought out of this depth of sin then so can everyone else. This is my testimony." In that instant, he realizes that he has finally made it to the glorious clearing.