

Before

The woods sat silent, the darkness pierced only by the brightness of the full moon.

Animals slept in peace, their days done and their families safe, as a cool breeze played between the trees.

As suddenly as the silence had come, footsteps crunched on the autumn leaves, the sound echoing through the night. A woman with golden hair that looked almost platinum in the moonlight ran through the brush as though she had memorized the way and knew the woods better than herself. Shadows chased after her, each screeching in outrage as their nails scrapped against the trees and ground around them. Yet she didn't utter a sound. No heavy breathing, no cries for help. Only the sound of her bare feet hitting the ground betrayed her as she ran, her rose colored eyes flickering as she searched for her way away from the monsters who pursued her.

The shadows crept closer with every step she took, their hands reaching for her until finally, one grabbed her ankle, tripping her. A grunt escaped her lips as she fell, then at last, a cry echoed out, the claws in her leg too harsh to bear. Her handkerchief shirt was covered in dirt as the demons dragged her, and dirt caked under her nails as she tried to claw her way away from them.

But with every dark step that the monsters took, she struggled less and less. If the monsters were determined to have her, there was little chance she would get away from them on her own. And so she stilled, choosing not to fight her capture as she tugged her powder blue shirt down when it came up from the friction of the ground, and she waited, already aware her rescue would be coming soon.

Commented [1]: Consider expanding on the description of this to really hammer home how peaceful and calm it seems before the coming chaos. Perhaps we could read about whether it was warm or cold. Was the moon full enough to light the forest, or slim enough to barely offer any light at all? Could we hear crickets? Things like that

Commented [2]: Consider adding something like, "as suddenly as the silence had come, it was interrupted by the sound of footsteps crunching on the autumn leaves that covered the ground." It would help this sentence flow a bit better.

Commented [AF3]: Little redundant,, consider removing for easier flow.

Commented [AF4]: I love this! The contrast between the chaos of the monster chasing her and the peace she seems to emit on her own despite the danger is VERY well done!

Commented [5]: Odd wording. Consider rewording, perhaps something like, "A grunt escaped her lips on impact as she fell, and the claws around her ankle dug into her skin, drawing a cry from her lips."

Commented [6]: Simplifying this to "free" may help this flow a bit better. Sometimes less is more when it comes to simple descriptions like these

Commented [7]: Stepping where? In the sentence before, they were on the ground with the woman trying to crawl away, how did we get from there to stepping?

Commented [8]: I love this! It is a great cliffhanger that makes the reader question what happens next, encouraging them to keep reading to find out. Nicely done!

Archangel Michael stood atop the cloud in the dark, the stars glistening as he watched in silence. The moon lit the clouds as though it were daytime, and the cold breeze cooled his heated skin.

He loved twilight in the sky. As a boy, he had escaped to this spot many times, watching as each star seemed to take a turn to twinkle. Sometimes, the clouds would be above the waters where he could watch ships sail, their passengers asleep below decks while the captain ensured they reached their destination.

Michael frowned and sighed. That was a long time ago. A time before his brother chose darkness, before responsibility had been his and his alone.

He was the head angel, the one who made the decisions regarding the afterlife realm and sometimes, even the living realm. Enjoyment, fulfillment, nothing pleasurable could ever be his or the four realms could fall to chaos.

It was a responsibility that he was to share with his brother Lucifer, yet the devil could not be persuaded to return, to take his place amongst the most pure.

Centuries had passed since then, and Lucifer was too far gone to be saved.

Michael stiffened when he felt a presence behind him, his hands tightening beneath his ivory wings.

“Gabriel,” he muttered. “What news do you bring me?”

Gabriel frowned. “None. I just wanted to make sure you were alright.”

Commented [9]: Consider summarizing this a bit, perhaps down to maybe a paragraph max for flow. Too much backstory upfront and all at once can cool the high-action flow you had in the beginning. You can always add more bits and pieces as the story progresses, as it becomes relevant.

Commented [10]: Consider expanding this a little bit. How is he standing? What does his body language tell us about his mood? Just a sentence or two here would create a clearer image of the scene

“I’m fine.”

His second in command gave a small smile at the off-handed response. “Are you?”

“Yes,” Michael said firmly. “I wish to be alone.”

Gabriel instead stood beside him, ignoring him, and looked out to the endless landscape of clouds quietly. Though Michael didn’t like to admit it, Gabriel had become one of his closest companions, a brother, by his own right. The archangel was not supposed to make friends, wasn’t meant to form relationships, but from the moment Gabriel’s pure soul had joined the angels, the man had refused to give up on Michael.

Suddenly, a sharp cry pierced Michael’s head, the sound loud but gentle enough to derail his thoughts. He placed a hand to his forehead as he was flooded with fear and panic, nearly bringing him to his knees.

“Michael?”

“I must go,” he forced out. “You are in charge until I return.”

With that, he dove from the sky, his wings opening as he rubbed his temple, willing the overwhelming presence to still, but it was as though someone had connected with him mentally, showing him their fear.

“I am coming,” he ground out between clenched teeth, a promise to whoever had invaded his mind enough to cause such a reaction. “And you will pay for this dearly.”

Commented [11]: Consider rephrasing a bit. Something like, “With enough fear and panic to send him to his knees” would flow a bit better here.

Commented [12]: Consider expanding on this a bit. What does this presence feel like? How does he know it’s coming from someone else and not from his own feelings or senses?

Developmental Edit Notes

With some adjustments to scene details and expansion on character actions and reactions, the reader will be more immersed into the story itself. That being said, I love the cliffhanger at the end of the sections! It makes the reader want to continue to read the story to find out more, which gives the story some nice forward momentum.

After

The woods sat silently as night fell over them, the darkness pierced only by the brightness of the full moon that shone overhead. The white beams came down from the sky between the high branches of the trees above, giving the forest floor a dimly lit pathway for any passersby. Animals slept in peace as the crickets sang around them, their days done and their families safe for the time being, as a cool breeze played in the air.

As suddenly as the silence had come, it was interrupted by the sound of footsteps crunching on the autumn leaves that covered the ground, the sound echoing through the night to break the quiet. A woman with golden hair that looked almost platinum in the moonlight ran through the brush as though she had memorized the way. Shadows chased after her, each screeching in outrage as their nails scraped against the trees and ground around them. Yet she didn't utter a sound. No heavy breathing, no cries for help. Only the sound of her bare feet hitting the ground betrayed her as she ran, her rose colored eyes flickering as she searched for her way away from the monsters who pursued her.

The shadows crept closer with every step she took, their hands reaching for her until finally, one grabbed her ankle, tripping her. A grunt escaped from her lips on impact as she fell, and the claws around her ankle dug into her skin, drawing a cry from her lips. Her handkerchief shirt was covered in dirt as the demons dragged her, and dirt caked under her nails as she tried to claw her way free.

Once she was down, the demon stood and began to drag her across the terrain, grunting and tightening his grip, as though expecting her to put up a fight. But with every dark step that

the monsters took, she struggled less and less. If the monsters were determined to have her, there was little chance she would be able to get away from them on her own, and so, she stilled, choosing not to fight her capture as she tugged her powder blue shirt down where it had come up from the friction of the ground, and she waited, already somehow aware that her rescue would be coming soon.

Archangel Michael stood atop the cloud in the dark, the stars glistening as he watched in silence. The moon lit the clouds as though it were daytime, and the cold breeze cooled his heated skin. He loved twilight in the sky. As a boy, he had escaped to this spot many times with his brother, watching as each star seemed to take a turn to twinkle. Sometimes, the clouds would be above the waters where he could watch ships sail, their passengers asleep below decks while the captain ensured they reached their destination. Of course, that was before Lucifer had become the irredeemable and corrupt monster that the worlds had come to know him to be.

Michael stiffened when he felt a presence behind him, his hands tightening beneath his ivory wings.

“Gabriel,” he muttered. “What news do you bring me?”

Gabriel frowned, placing his hands on his hips as he huffed frustratedly. “None. I just wanted to make sure you were alright.”

“I’m fine.”

His second in command gave a small smile at the off-handed response. “Are you?”

“Yes,” Michael said firmly. “I wish to be alone.”

Gabriel instead stood beside him, ignoring him, and looked out to the endless landscape of clouds quietly. Though Michael didn’t like to admit it, Gabriel had become one of his closest companions, a brother, by his own right. The archangel was not supposed to make friends, wasn’t meant to form relationships, but from the moment Gabriel’s pure soul had joined the angels, the man had refused to give up on Michael.

Suddenly, a sharp cry pierced Michael’s head, the sound loud but gentle enough to derail his thoughts. He placed a hand to his forehead as he was flooded with enough fear and panic to nearly send him to his knees.

“Michael?”

“I must go,” he forced out. “You are in charge until I return.”

With that, he dove from the sky, his wings opening as he rubbed his temple, willing the overwhelming presence to quiet, anything to bring him relief. It was as though someone had connected with him mentally, the fear far from his own, and the pull he felt towards it was like a tether to another being, one who was calling to him to find them.

“I am coming,” he ground out between clenched teeth, a promise to whoever had invaded his mind enough to cause such a reaction. “And when I find you, you will pay for this *dearly*.”