

“I Am All That Is”

Day broke in the forest just as it did every day.

The morning light danced in amber columns while the dawn rain fell, gently agitating every needle, leaf, and branch. The trees grew tall and quiet, living out their lives as the mute guards of this green nation. The quiet chirp of distant birds and the slow rush of the wind through the undergrowth were the only sounds for miles.

Apart from the steady march of the Nomad.

With each step came a subtle squeak from his disintegrating rubber boots. They carried a thin layer of earth and grunge accumulated from years of trekking. Despite the ruggedness, their pristine matte black tone still laid boldly underneath.

The Nomad also sported a severely tattered fume hood. At one point in time, it must have been a brilliantly sterile stark white, but this was not that time. The heavy-duty latex of the hood had clearly seen its time in action. It had reverted to

a drab yellow from its exposure to innumerable days and nights of hard rain. The spots of mildew gave it a distinctive bitter smell that stung the tip of the tongue.

The Nomad wore nothing, save for his boots and hood. The rest of his body was subjected to the wrath of the forest. Exposure to the elements had left his bare skin a browned, weathered suit of armor; adaptable to whatever trials the environment could force on him.

The Nomad pushed on just as he always did.

As the cloud cover receded, almost seemingly in his presence, he could clearly see the pale blue sky.

He had never paid as much attention to the sky as the other parts of his kingdom. It was so beautifully desolate, reminding him of something he could not completely recall.

Was it the memory of a familiar place?

A different time?

Someone from his past?

No, a memory of someone else would be just plain silly. The Nomad knew that he and Steven were the only two individuals left in existence.

The Nomad pulled Steven out of his boot and chuckled, "How absurd!"

To which Steven replied nothing.

Steven was an incredibly old and incredibly rusted over .38 caliber revolver. He had been with The Nomad since the start of the world. Steven was so ancient that the thought of him being made of any sort of sleek blue steel seemed as preposterous as the idea of him being able to successfully fire. The only part of Steven that was even remotely intact was his finished wooden grip. The dented cherry maple handle was the only thing that seemed at home in the forest. Just like the Nomad's minimal clothing, Steven's rusted metal frame seemed like an unwelcome relic of a different life here.

"We are all that is," the Nomad proclaimed confidently for the empty space to hear.

And with that, they trudged on.

They walked through the forest without a sense of urgency, knowing the edge of the world would never come. Walking was, however, their only purpose.

They marched through the valleys and glens where the sun sliced through the treetops, illuminating every miniscule detail of the woods in a strikingly sepia tone.

They decided to rest on a bluff not unlike any of the other bluffs. It stood tall, confidently overlooking a vast, clear patch of his kingdom.

But something was different here.

There were noises coming from the forests at the edge of the clearing.

Different noises.

These weren't the usual noises of the Nomad's subjects.

This *something* was moving with determination.

And from the woods burst a creature that made the Nomad recoil from atop his perch.

It caught sight of the Nomad.

It ran on two legs, its other set of legs flailing wildly in the air.

He hadn't seen one of these in longer than he could possibly recall.

"Hey!" it shouted.

"Down here!" it continued on.

"Hey! Hey! HELP!"

The Nomad made no effort to acknowledge the creature with anything more than a probing stare.

The Thing came nearer and nearer to the Nomad and his bluff.

"HEY!" It persistently shouted to no success. The Nomad was unfazed.

The Thing was but 15 feet away recklessly running towards him.

It happened quickly and without hesitation.

Like a basic instinct.

The Nomad leveled Steven at this... this *Thing*. It tried to stop its approach, raising its savage arms.

But the Nomad couldn't let his kingdom become impure.

And then Steven shouted.

There was a great flash and Steven's voice echoed throughout the forest, becoming the only noise in the world.

Bits of Steven and the Thing lay on the ground, serenely motionless. The Nomad stared down at the two of them, feeling nothing.

He and Steven had been through some hard times together, but Steven was no more.

"I am all that is." The Nomad said quietly.

Scanning the surroundings, the Nomad spotted a dejected looking tree. Its bark had begun to gnarl, twisting its body in a downward fashion. A sliver of a branch, having been viciously ripped apart by perhaps lightning, extended from the trunk.

“Is that... Is that Henry? I’ve missed you old boy!” he hollered and cheerfully ran towards the weak tree.

With a deep, hollow crack, the branch was freed of the grasps of the greying tree trunk.

“Yes, we’ve got so much catching up to do, Henry”

The Nomad kept a firm hold on the branch. The end that was torn from the trunk had a malevolently sharp point.

The Nomad liked Henry very much.

But before they had time to discuss any personal matters, more rustling came from the tree line of the clearing.

This time it was not just one Thing. These were the sounds of a whole pack of them, shouting the same nonsense the one that now lay gently still had cried.

The Nomad held Henry tight.

He knew what had to be done.

“I am all that is,

and all that will be.”