

# Deep in the Forest

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## Review Type:

Full

## Full Review:

Your cover fits the title and invokes the heart of a vast forest nicely. Its words were easy to read. If I were to change anything, it might be to add a shadow that might hint at Ste ye hah. Nothing obvious, just maybe if your imagination is good, you might convince yourself it could be. More likely, it is a darker patch of a tree. I think it would help catch more readers by their indecision on what it is. The longer they question it, the more likely they add it to their reading list or library.

Based on what I expect to read, your title seems perfect for the story. It does not invoke the mystery of Ste ye hah, but nothing I could come up with would either. The deep forest has its own mystery which it invokes, especially with that image.

I like your blurb but think it could start with the awakening of something ancient to catch the reader with the first sentence. It affecting her father is more important as a hook than details on her life, as the story will cover those, anyway. The horse might hook people, but the bugs will not. The last paragraph is also hook material. That last sentence gives us more information about the issues Zoe must face and is a crucial hook.

Bigfoot by itself would never hook me, but the fact you based it on Native American tales did. Between the two, you already have a powerful hook. Adding horses to the story in the second paragraph added to the pull for more people. While your Burrisonii butterfly is not the most beautiful, its inclusion will hook more people. Takota's appearance and Zoe's conversation with him continued it. If people made it that far, I doubt you would lose them.

Review of your chapter one: You gave us a mysterious feeling of the forest, a good overall image of Rhymes, with insight to Takota, and barely anything on Willow. But nowhere near enough details on your main character, Zoe. The details on the tree and its surrounding mystery were powerful. Given Takota knew a half mile up Culver Ridge was off limits, you should have mentioned his tracking Zoe or questioning her presence there. The fact she was familiar with that trail seems out of place with the ridge being Ste ye hah territory. I assume it was the tree that stood as a warning and her moving beyond it that caused the issue to come. If so, make it obvious when talking to Takota's grandfather. You could also state the trail entered the area and left going no further than that tree, so known safe. You mixed present and past tense in this chapter using 'is' twice in non dialog verbiage as present and many past tense words. Change 'is' to 'was'.

I loved the sense of security Zoe felt seeing the rambler. That moment with her father's photography was an awesome comparison to his current state. Their interaction was excellent and her trying to avoid the truth of his illness felt real. James seemed a complete, real person, while Tessa did not. That picture was the perfect moment to add Zoe's description so our image would match yours.

In the third chapter, you made Tessa complete. You also nicely set the stage for the issues to come by her passing on her grandfather's warning and the history of the area. I love the image of bugs the size of cars as long as they stay on their planet. I would not

want them visiting ours.

I dislike horror, and your dream scene scared me. Given I had to read many so I could write my own, not as bad as it could have been. You should have a warning about it some place. It also had one 'is' within it. This entire chapter nicely created the foreboding of things to come.

Ste ye hah bothered both, leading to an interesting conversation between Takota and Zoe further setting up the mood in chapter four. Nice introduction to Rebecca making her feel real. Saving Zoe the trouble of getting herself motivated to take that first step. I can relate to both. I was like Zoe between fourth and tenth grade when I decided who cares and went after what I wanted.

Your making Takota's maintenance seem like Ste ye hah was perfect. Everything in this chapter felt right except one. James hollering with COPD seems impossible given his symptoms. I would find raised his voice slightly difficult to believe. Exclaimed seems reasonable and implies a slight difference in voice that would be noticeable. While it could mean louder, a same loudness, different pitch, which Zoe would immediately notice because of the issues with his breathing would be his more likely attention voice.

Your chapter six was definitely climatic. Tossing in those green flashes, helping to raise interest. One 'is' found its way into your text. Adding John here was good to provide a backstory to Takota's visit with him later. Mac could use a detail about why he showed up. Is he Dyani's boyfriend, husband, or neighbor? He definitely fit in to protecting the property given how they separated with obvious habit. Mac gets a Native America description, but what about Dyani and Tessa? They both seem to be, but you do not mention it and the readers would not need it to be. I would drop it from Mac to be consistent. You already set Native American in our brain using Ste ye hah. Instead, any non natives should get that mentioned in their description.

The issues I have with this chapter are you claimed the tree was a twenty-minute walk home for the horse, so a mile and a third roughly given their four mph pace. Dyani's voice could not get heard from that distance. You do not have other calls further leading them on, though you hint at some. Yet ignoring the slope, it would be an eleven minute run for Takota and longer for Zoe. You need more calls to bring them there, and they need to be even more urgent to force the uphill run to that point. At that distance, even with the calls, Takota would have caught his mother, so you must make us number nerds believe he did not stop to think rationally, as he was so caught up in the moment.

Another method is to force a zigzag path on him by the calls while Zoe and pretend Dyani take a more straight path centered on his. That way, they all end up together at the same time at the tree at a more believable fifteen minutes.

Ignoring my reality issues, the story was impressive when I assume it was a minute run. I liked the mystery you created. Having Zoe hurt and locking eyes to know the green flashes came from Ste ye hah was beautiful.

Chapter eight, the double line breaks are distracting. I liked the dialog between Zoe and Takota, especially the not looking at him when lying. Takota's grandmother's dialog was interesting and helpful to set up the future. Your lavender detergent paragraph said worlds about Takota's mindset without the need to state it. The more roundabout way you stated what we already knew was good for those that could not figure it out and interesting to those that knew it already.

Grammar issue in the third paragraph 'was' should be 'were'. You should not be using contractions except within dialog, so two 'wasn't' should be 'was not' and 'who'd' should be 'who had'. Another 'is' showed up. Scientist Zoe failing to believe what nature shoved into her face because nobody proved it was real. You would think locking eyes with it would be enough, but if not hair and footprint would not be.

Two 'couldn't' and a 'wouldn't' appeared in chapter ten. We know she paid him previously for something. If it was not some form of cheating, you need to state it because that will be the first place many people will go. This could cause people to no longer care about Zoe and lose interest in your story. Nice manipulation of Price and very believable.

You have a 'hadn't', two 'wouldn't', and two 'didn't' here. I do not get John's anger at Tokota. I assume he must have testified against his father, if so, Dyani should include that in her backstory in six to make it obvious here. The time did not seem long enough for John to sober up enough to have voice effect, though I understand you wanting to imply it here. Personally, I would go with: John Sohappy's words were stated calmly having lost his earlier anger. It is a more believable statement that would likely reflect his halt of alcohol and his love for his son.

Chapter twelve brought with it a 'hadn't', five 'didn't', a 'can't', two 'couldn't', and a 'wasn't'. Given they had a usual booth, I would have expected: Welcome back to Tom's waitress opening, or it is nice to see you again after the required welcome message. Given she wanted Tokota, she must have remembered him, if they come in often enough to have a booth. I question the need for the umbrella woman in the story, as she served no purpose. I am slightly shock he opened up without a prompt from her. Her waiting for him makes perfect sense. His talking does not. This being a nobody would talk moment, I get you pushing it on him. But it could be more believable with the motive of guilt of leaving her behind and not telling her previously.

Issues that appeared here are a 'is', three 'didn't', and a 'wasn't'. I was so glad Zoe got her kiss before mom called. The image of your description of the painting created in my mind was gorgeous. Zoe getting a painting in the art museum with bugs on her second trip felt wonderful, and I was sorry it got broken up. Another missed opportunity to describe what she looks like. The fact Rebecca drives her to the hospital is impressive and hints at her longing for more like Zoe has been. If you extend this, having another Rebecca and Zoe scene would be nice.

Chapter fourteen held two 'didn't', two 'couldn't', and a 'wasn't'. I am not a fan of tons of dialog which this chapter had, but you did an excellent job keeping it interesting and real seeming.

A 'she'd', two 'didn't', and a 'wasn't' invaded this chapter. I had hoped for a goodbye kiss with Rebecca, though her first of many held the promise. I question Zoe's statement of Ste ye hah hurting a horse. It does not feel right to me though I understand her feeling on the matter. I might change to she could not mount a horse. If Ste ye hah wanted to hurt anything, when she was bleeding against the tree would have been the perfect moment instead they left.

Four 'didn't', a 'weren't', and two 'she'd' visited chapter sixteen. Are the ritual words actually from the tribe in your area? Their meaning is like others I have read. But with a writer's license, able to adapt them, I have always wondered how accurate they actually are. My son-in-law's grandmother left those ways behind in her childhood and I have never felt comfortable asking her the few times a year we gather at my daughter's house. This is likely the most powerful chapter in this story to me, showing Zoe facing the truth and running as if her life depended on it, ignoring her injury.

Seven 'didn't', a 'wouldn't', and two 'wasn't' visited. I hope John and Tokota get through their issues. I understand it is hard for Tokota to forgive, but it would be a shame to lose a dad you never got to know when he seems willing to let you. At least part of my Mac question from six got answered here.

“I did what?” Se set...’ should be ‘She’. The chapter eighteen also had a ‘hadn’t’, a ‘she’d’, a ‘couldn’t’, a ‘shouldn’t’, and a ‘didn’t’. I hope Maddy is as interested as Tokota is. Your statement of three DNA strands is confusing and unlikely given the proteins that we know make up DNA and how they work during cellular split. The DNA splits each half, meaning one strand into each of the two forming cells to rejoin with proteins to make a perfect copy of the original DNA. Three strand DNA would need different proteins, each forming two bonds to the other strands, and would have to form three cells. Dr. Green's method would not recognize the new proteins as DNA. It would be better to have a different number of chromosomes besides the forty-six Earth species have, as that is believable and detectable from the two strand DNA. You could, of course, state there was no DNA, but then there would be questions on Price's performance. Did he screw it up or what happened?

A 'wasn't', three 'didn't', a 'she'd', a 'hadn't', and a 'couldn't'. A nice finish to the story. Given, Takota ate the bacon, but Dyani would not know it, how did she know to buy more?