

limp branches falling over the trail
sunlight cutting through the trees
leaves smashed under foot
birds chirping in tempo

a glimpse around the grassy corner
30 feet away

royal blue polo, worn jeans
awkward red tennis shoes
mucky brown hair cut like a clown's wig
glasses
lanky, long arms
skinny, almost underfed
cold, pasty white skin

alone in the woods
ambling, not hiking or running
no eye contact
odd clothing choice
middle of the trail
no one else around

15 feet away
ivy crawls quickly up the tree trunks
grass-filled path turns dusty
roots emerge from the dirty floor

hand in my back pocket
pulling it out
hand resting on my back
blade released and open

now walking

5 feet away
trees blocking out the sun
gravel biting my shoes
thorns needling my skin

eyes down, eyes up
firmly staring
hand comes forward
blade parallel with thigh

2 feet away
turtle frozen in the middle of the path
smell of horse manure wafting
lost branches everywhere

sweaty hand, gripping hard
arm swinging up
wrist relaxed but strong

Hi.
Hi.

5 feet away
roots slither back into the grass
single stalks shoot through the dirt
sunlight pierces the patchwork of limbs

breathing out
flicking back the sweat
relaxing arm, bent against my hip

15 feet away
path gently widens
stream tickles the rocks
flowers beaming with petals

closing blade
placing in back pocket
gaining speed with arms pumping faster

a glimpse around the grassy corner
30 feet away