

It was a cold February morning, and nerves gnawed at my stomach as I walked to school that day: it was the day of the science test I had been dreading. Snow fell from the grey sky, tingling my nose and cheeks as I pulled my hat over my ears and wrapped my coat around me. The walk was quieter than usual, almost eerie, and even the birds hadn't seemed to have woken up yet. The ominous silence served only to intensify my growing anxiety about the tests. Onwards I trudged, kicking the fresh powder up with my old hiking boots and wishing that Mum had the money to order me the new ones when I'd asked her last week; these had holes in the soles and my socks were starting to soak.

Since it was so quiet, I decided to take the short cut through Bertram's Woods. Tree trunks were heavy with snow, their limbs almost bowing under the weight, and the light gradually disappeared the further in I ventured. Then suddenly, I stopped in my tracks. Up ahead, slightly off to the right, there was a sound. I knew the noise I had heard was not snow falling from branches and there wouldn't be a car for miles. There it was again... a bang, followed by a bright flash of light. As my eyes struggled to adjust to the intense brightness, a piercing, high-pitched noise that made my ears ring surged at me like a weapon, and within moments, it forced me to collapse to the ground in a cold, wet heap. I looked up, blinking and dazed, and could just about make out a shape, something like the silhouette of a figure, as it leapt upwards high into the trees and out of sight.

Sweat poured from my brow and my heart beat faster than it ever had before. Then it began. I felt a tingling sensation in the palms of my hands, itchy at first but then more like a fizzing under my skin, and it felt as though my skin was too tight. Dizziness and nausea took over. I tried to scream but no sound came out: I was crippled by fear. Without warning, I felt a surge like an electric shock shooting through my body. A flash of light suddenly shot from my hands and cut through a nearby oak tree, severing it in half and sending it tumbling towards me. I summoned up all of my strength and staggered to my feet. I leaned forwards to run, but my legs felt as though volts had been passed through them and I lurched into an oddly rapid pace. Usually it would take twenty minutes to complete that track back through the forest to the road, but I had just done it in less than one. How? What had happened to me? How had I run that fast yet couldn't remember a single step of my path? What on earth had I seen in the woods? I knew, whatever it was, it wasn't human and I knew it had done something to me.