

ERICA AND THE BEAR



Erica turned from the window to look at the bear through the fog.

The house was caught in a perpetual gloom, every corner darker than the last, and the only light seemed to be the ultra-pale blue that slid through the thick murky windows to spill across the floor and walls. She was in the kitchen, the sink on, splashing about the dirtied dishes from her solitary dinner the night before.

Candlesticks on the table, two places set, but she ate alone.

And now, her back to the sink and the rain outside, she looked across the wood floors that moaned under each step, and out to the back door. The mahogany paneling on the walls showed a silvery hue in the daylight, which felt more like moonlight in the weather.

A cool, misty chill crept across the back of her neck. The animal meandered about the yard for a while, its unkempt fur matted with mud and water. Small eyes recessed in its thick skull watched her occasionally.

She might have closed the screen door, for that was all that remained in the doorway of the old house, but something seemed so docile about the creature. She hesitated to obstruct her view of its magnificence. Even in the damp air, out in the wet grass of the field-like lawn that lay beyond the porch, this bear commanded her awe.

It snorted and growled, and eventually found the courage to enter the house, lumbering as was its way.

Some of those who knew her say they can still hear her screams when they close their eyes, but Erica lives in the south-land now. When people stop and point at what is left of her, others tell them to hush, and that it was a landmine or an accident of some sort. She is treated as a hero.

- Adam Suskind