

BEWARE

She walked slowly toward the dark, foreboding forest. At the edge stood 6 trees, each trunk carved with a single letter; combined, these letters spelled an ominous word ~ “BEWARE”. Although the forest and surrounding countryside had an eerie reputation, Angelina understood this was the shortest route home. So, hoping to evade her captors, with a steady breath, she stepped beyond the trees. Hopefully, the word at the forest’s border was just a horribly conceived joke.

The sun’s warming light was quickly extinguished by the oppressive darkness of the closely spaced foliage. If a quick escape was needed, Angelina realized it would be virtually impossible. Fortunately, in defiance of traditional practices, the girl had been trained in survival and self defense skills. However, she had few tools at her disposal, having escaped wearing only a shift and slippers. The cold, damp of the forest and the inhospitable terrain would prove a challenge even for the determined and innovative girl.

The trail, minimal at best, was quickly lost in the dense undergrowth. As she walked, a quiet rustling was heard quickly increasing in both volume and speed. While Angelina knew many creatures, both familiar and unfamiliar, were inhabiting the forest, Angelina was taken aback by what appeared in front of her. A massive, green monster loomed, blocking her path. This was the rare Xeememmem, a shapeshifting being made of a transparent, jelly-like substance and known for its voracious appetite for flesh. Whether that was animal or human was of little import to this beast. The oft-told stories told how the creature used the shapeshifting ability to get within striking distance, quickly and fatally immobilizing its prey. The hapless victim was then consumed by being drawn into the goo that the Xeememmem was made of.

Based on her minimal information about the beast, Angelina was determined to quickly place distance between herself and the Xeememmem. Unfortunately, the terrain did not easily lend itself to a rapid escape. As her terror increased, she became aware of other sounds. The most ominous was a raucous crashing through the forest accompanied by the sound of angry, foul-mouthed shouts threatening all manner of horrors should she be recaptured.

To her terror, her captors seemed to be rapidly approaching her hiding place in the brush. She frantically tried to devise a plan to avoid recapture. A most amazing thought came to her, amazing in both audacity and extreme likelihood of failure. Angelina took calming breath and then began.

She emerged from her hiding-place and meekly approached the immense monster that towered over her. While unsure how to best communicate with the Xeememmem, Angelina realized it was her best chance of escape. Considering her quickly dwindling options, she realized that she would suffer a milder destruction from the monster than the human monsters getting closer with every step. Speaking in a calming tone, she inched ever closer to her fate.

As Angelina approached, the Xeememmem quieted, and an almost intrigued expression appeared on its face. Prey were not expected to come toward but rather flee in terror. It bent to more closely inspect the girl and was surprised to feel the animalistic rage quieting in the presence of this unique human. As Angelina stood in front of the monster, silently praying it could understand, she explained her plan.

The men burst through the trees, anticipating the easy recapture of the young girl. One can only imagine the surprise, nay terror, appearing on their faces when the Xeememmem towered over them instead. From behind the monster, the girl calmly approached them. Initially the beast appeared calm as Angelina began to quietly relay the numerous horrors inflicted by the men. As her story progressed toward its inevitable conclusion, so did the monster's rage and fury. With the last word escaping her mouth, the Yeelenan struck. To this day, while Angelina will not recount her captors' awful fate, she does admonish heeding the ominous warning of the forest. BEWARE.