

The Wait for the Inevitable.

“Promise me. Promise me you will always Hold me, and you will never let go.”

“I promise.”

23 years later

Augustus Booth sits alone again for the 32nd year in a row. Eating his dinner. White potato poisoned with brown gravy. He moves his spoon into his food and moves it to his dry, ghost white lips and munches his life away. Augustus Booth is in his 40s. He has brown hair on the ends of his ears and nothing more. His stomach sticks out and almost touches the brown table with an old, dirty maroon cloth on it. His feet are small. As always, he wears his brown, cheap suit, with a coffee white shirt. The shoes he wears are as dull as his house. Brown and sad. As Augustus finishes his meal, he looks up the cobb webbed roof of his house, and a worried look gets glued to his lonely face. He slowly moves out of his chair, and walks, slowly hunched-up his creaky, maroon stairs. As he reaches the final steps, he breathes in and smells his childhood. It smells like warmth from the food he ate, and the warmth his friends gave him. He remembers his childhood. He wishes he was reliving it again. Augustus walks straight and walks down a skinny hallway with cold white walls to his attic. As he looks up, he wonders what they want from him. He stands on his tippy toes and reaches up to pull on a lever to get access to his attic. He walks up to the sturdy ladder and breathes in once more. He hears a life of innocence. That is all Augustus wants again. When he reaches the top, he turns on the light, and a room full of dull colours overshines it. He walks to the far end of the attic and he crouches down very slowly with the same hunched back in every move he makes. He touches a white cloth and pulls it back. A book appears under it. It looks like something a child would have made. A drawing of a bear, kangaroo, elephant and rabbit are on the front cover, with rainbow colours, the books’ title, “*The Wonder Woods*” is above the drawing. Augustus Booth smiles lightly. And almost at once, he is transferred from his lonely world into his literary story. He is not in his attic anymore. But in the biggest forest he would ever see. But it’s not like he remembers it.

“You promised us. All of us. But you broke our trust.”

“Mr Bear, Mrs Roo, Mr Trunk and Mrs Carrots. Oh my! I thought I would never see you again! what happened here?”

“You have broken a bear’s heart. You have broken all of our hearts. This is your doing. Look around Booth. You did this.”

Augustus slowly walks around, once a beautiful place, now a place shattered from heartbreak. The trees how he remembered, when he was a little boy, were as green as his eyes. He remembers when he felt the leaves on the trees when he was younger. They were as smooth as Mr Bear’s fur. Now, there are only a few green leaves left, and the others had fallen off, turned to dust. He looked out and found where the stream was. Once, it was as clear as glass. The water used to run in a circle, round the woods. The sounds of splashing made Augustus smile. The taste of it made his lips a dessert. But it didn’t matter, he was with his friends. Now, there was no more water, just an empty pit of dust.

“I-I don’t understand. How could I have done this?”

“You left me. You left us. You left your woods. That’s why it has turned cold. We don’t know what to do. How to live our lives. You are as bold as your writing Augustus. You need to write one more story. So, we know how to live on. I could never get angry at you. I just want my best friend back. We were like glue, weren’t we?”

Inseparable.” Mr Bear gets down on his knees and weeps. His tears are waterfalls.

Mrs Roo, Mr Trunk and Mrs Carrots crouch down to give Mr Bear warm hugs. Mr Bear, with his soft, brown eyes begs for Augustus to stay.

Augustus stands facing Mr Bear and the dead woods. He breathes in once more. Augustus hears his own voice. Laughing with Mr Bear when he was young. How could he ever forget those times? He smells the hot pies and

cold drinks that were served in the woods all those years ago. He tastes it in his mouth. The flavours were rich and powerful, just like the power Mr Bear and Augustus' friendship had. He can see it now. The laughter, the food, the tastes. How he wishes he was seven again. He feels a kind smile on his shoulder when it was time to say goodbye, and he was back there again the next day. All of that has turned to a frown sitting upon his shoulder.

Augustus eventually moves to Mr Bear's side and looks in his eyes. How he remembers those eyes. They were his childhood.

"I'm so sorry, Mr Bear. To all of you. Don't you think I want to stay? I do. I never wanted to leave anyone's side. It breaks my heart to see Wonder Woods like this. To see you all fading away. But I know deep down that you will be ok. I knew the day was going to come. That I would have to leave you. But I fear I have to do it again. I am not seven anymore. I have to be rational and grow up. I will never forget you."

As Augustus gives Mr Bear, and the rest of his friends one last hug, and as he turns to leave, Mr bear jumps up, as quick as a fox, and yells with all his might, "We will die without you. We will turn to ash just like the water. Just like the leaves of the trees. We have been looking at you for a very long time. You don't have a life of wonder like you had with us. You work at a shoe factory. Then you come home, and you eat potato and gravy. You never married. You never had any children. You are not living a life of luxury. What is the point of leaving us if you are not going home? You know deep down why you kept this book. Why you kept us. We are your friends. We are your family. I... We don't want to lose you again."

Mr Bear and Mr Booth stare at each other for a moment.

Augustus turns and disappears.

As he leaves, the four characters all fall onto the floor into each other's arms. Their cries are as deafening as thunder in the night sky.

"Goodbye, Augustus Booth." Mr Bear cries between heavy sobs.

But just when all hope was lost, a single leaf rises up from the ashes and sits where it should be. A green leaf again. Mr Bear, Mrs Roo, Mr Trunk and Mrs Carrots all see this amazing transformation and they smile ear to ear, as more rise up from the grave, joining their brothers, their sisters, their mothers and their fathers on their home again. The four animals get up, wipe their tears and turn around slowly. Trees of green are green again. Full of colour once more. The pit of dust turned into the clearest of waters. As clear as a summers day. The stream, after 33 long years, finally moves again. And most importantly, they look at themselves. They are themselves again. Full of colour and warmth glows on their faces. Mr Bear turns when he sees someone walk into The Wonder Woods. A smell of nostalgia hits his snout when he sees Augustus holding a book and pen. Everyone runs to Booth and hugs him tightly with all their might. They let go of him, and they look at what the author has written. They all smile as big as the world.

"I'm Home." Augustus whispers.

Mr Booth and Mr Bear hug once more.

"Promise me. Promise me you will always hold me, and you will never let go."

"I promise."