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Spring rain drummed on the forest leaves. It was oddly silent. The camp lay ahead, swallowed in the camouflage of its protective gully.

"I ..." her voice was stifled by a strong hand as he thrust her against the trunk. Eyes wide, body pressed against the concealing bark, she watched, silent, as he shrank beneath the ferns. *Had they come?*

He beckoned. Rustling unfurling stems, they crawled, hands trembling, her enlarging belly catching on the undergrowth. Sinking into the shadows they gained their feet.

"Can you run?" he hissed.

"The others ..."

"Too late! Can you run?" She nodded. Grasping her hand, he raced through whispering branches. She began to stumble. He paused, noting her laboured breath.

"The children ..." she gasped.

"I can only save ours." He ran a protective hand over her belly. "The woods are full of troops, hundreds of them. We need to move, after they're finished, they'll come looking."

As if in confirmation, guns rent the stillness, echoing through the silent groves. He wiped a soiled sleeve across his eyes.

"We have to go ..."

She nodded. Pursued by cries and gunfire, they melted into the ancient refuge of man. Tall sentinels guarded the way, as increasing rain erased traces of their path.

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"Did they have dogs?"

"Didn't see any ... I hope not. The stream should throw them off the scent if they did. Sleep now. I'll keep watch."

Bathed in tears, she surrendered to exhaustion. Greg scruti-