

# Woodland Things

*Amelia K*

Annette was practising her clarinet in the forest. Clara enjoyed it, for her wife was by no means accomplished, but the notes were not so far out of tune to sound odd. Still melodic. Clara found the song made her feel less alone as she carved pinecones into flowers in their little kitchen.

Now Annette stopped playing, so soon she'd be home to cook them parsley-fried steak for dinner. It also meant that there would be silence as she walked. There had been a moment earlier, Annette had trailed off in the middle of Fur Elise. Clara almost went to go look for her. Something could be wrong; it was rare for Annette to leave a tune unfinished. Shortly afterwards, however, she started again, and Clara dismissed the concern. Annette must've been distracted by a rabbit or badger rustling through the undergrowth.

Now the chill of the autumn night was settling in. The fire wanted lighting. Clara'd need to go outside for more wood. A shame; the foxgloves were really beginning to take shape. On the porch, the lamp, lit now to guide Annette back, glowed with an orange and woolly light. The margins of the sky were pale, the last of the day slipping down. Clara gathered her logs.

The clock ticked, little hands reaching out to Clara's lone form at the worktable. She nibbled a piece of lavender shortbread, cautious of ruining her appetite. Footsteps crunched on the path outside. Through the window, dark yellow eyes softly glittered in the dark, and long, furred ears appeared in silhouette. Battered leather case on the table, put very carefully. The wives bolted the door against the shadows.

The scent of Annette's cooking summoned things that howled in the night. The wives' laughter overwhelmed the sound.