

Inside this book...

The shapes of large pine trees flickered through the mist all around them. They stood rooted to the spot, staring at a faint mountain lake that appeared. The lake mirrored a blue sky where the citadel gardens had been. The scene grew clearer. Was this a mirage again? They could feel dewy coolness rising from the water. This was no hologram!

As if all of this wasn't bad enough, something moved between the pine trees. The children huddled together on the ground. A very large bear with two cuddly brown cubs charged through the shrubbery. The bears were on their way to lunch on the abundant fish buffet in the lake. But something was wrong.

The shaggy mother bear stopped in her tracks to sniff the air. Her long snout quivered as she detected danger. The animal heaved itself up on powerful hind legs to full, frightening height and growled through menacing fangs. Her curved, black claws sliced the air. The cubs squeaked and scuttled back into the undergrowth. The children gasped. There was a muffled scream. The bears were only feet away.

A rather large butterfly appeared above the lake, then another one. The butterflies seemed to stand still in the air, observing the scene. The children squinted at the strange creatures. Were they butterflies at all? Were they here to rescue them?

Another loud growl again caught their attention. They screamed and the mother bear made ready to lunge. She took off, flying toward them.

The scene faded. The bear, the forest and the lake vanished back into misty shadows. There was no sign of the giant butterflies as the vapor swirled around them once more.

The rushing, swishing sound came back and rose and ebbed until their heads hurt. Then there was nothing but darkness and silence.

Maybe that's what death feels like, Trevor thought before he lost consciousness.