

WATCHWOOD FOREST

Maxwell Sutherland

Eyes. Wherever you went in Watchwood forest there were eyes. It was home to the most beautiful and mysterious creatures in the entire realm, yet very few *human* eyes had ever seen it. One day, at the time of year, when it stays sunny and warm well into the evening, a little girl called Rose decided she would explore Watchwood Forest. Rose had been told by her parents and by numerous other bossy grownups that she was never to go into the Forest. But in Rose's mind, rules were there to be broken.

Rose considered skipping school to visit the forest. Countless times she had heard of legends about the wonderful fantasy beyond the border. Many had set off and never returned, but Rose believed the reason for this was that the forest was so majestic there was no reason to. Was it true? Were the stories about the wonderland beyond really true? The village elders used to whisper that the flowers held the secrets and the souls of the wanderers and outcasts, and that's why they stayed away from the flowery forest.

Rose paced herself as she walked along the beautiful path. Red flowers adorned the sidewalk as she happily skipped across the path. Her mother loved flowers and bought different kinds every day. Rose decided that she would pick some on the way back. The sun was shining and Rose felt warm and content. This truly was a wonderland. Humming, she pranced along taking in the scent of freedom. Even the clouds seemed to be dancing.

Ahead of her, she saw a red painted line. When she crossed the line, the sun had vanished and in its place a dead, miserable gloom shrouded her. The forest was eerily silent, aside from the lightning striking in the road ahead of her. Now she wasn't so sure if this was as good of an idea as her friend Lily had said. A black wispy figure swirled around the sky. Screaming, she tried to run back, but gnarled roots had grown where the line was. She began swatting away eyes. Haunting her, they circled around her, almost teasing. Their red lenses crept closer, and closer. A large chasm opened up in Rose's path, and she was swallowed up, eternally trapped. In her place, a small red flower with a little face popped up...

A small old van rumbled up, with a faded fancy print that read 'Watchwood Flowers'. A fat balding man pressed a remote and stepped out. After daintily picking some flowers, he hopped back into the truck, pressed the remote again, and drove off.

Rose's parents returned home and began to unpack their shopping. At last, her mother pulled out a final item.

"This is a gift for Rose, from the new place that opened, 'Watchwood Flowers'. I just know she'll love it, a little flower with a face. When I saw it, I knew I had to get it. It looks just like her."