“He’s coming! Our god is returning to us!”

The ground lightly quaked as the unnamed village, located somewhere in the world or ruin hidden amongst a thick group of trees, rapidly began to get to work. Adults and teenagers were rushing around and setting everything up, a large totem pole at the back of the village with several large wooden poles around it, the pathway leading there having several large houses either side to create a sort of road.

Despite the world having fallen into ruin over the past year, the town had been hardly affected in being so well hidden, and only a few houses had been damaged in the collapse of the planet. The biggest problem that the town had was, there were so many people there and with the town being somewhat cut-off from the world, they had been faced with the dilemma of overpopulation.

With the destruction of the world however, the people had been given an unexpected but very much welcomed boon, in the form of a monster that had very quickly become their god. Having appeared over six months ago it had made demands they were more than happy to meet, and in exchange they were not only protected by it, but anything they needed was acquired by their monster-god.

The monster’s name was Humbaba.

“Get the sacrifices ready!” shouted a man as he ran up the road, ushering two children north to the small hill the town had been built around. Despite them seeing him as a god, he was first and foremost a monster, and Humbaba needed his energy to keep himself going which came in the town’s form of children and the occasional teenager or adult.

“How many would he want?” questioned a teenager from nearby, a female his age disappearing into an open door.

“Half a dozen is the quota he would demand.” An adult responded, a child alongside him as they walked up the road. “That’s been all he’s after since he appeared.”

The teenager said nothing else as he followed the older male up the road, the rest of the people disappearing behind closed doors and locking them while others vanished down alleyways. Up ahead on the small hill, several adults had gathered the children together and were tying them to a pole each to stop them from running away.

Only a few adults would often see who the children were sacrificed to, as most of the townsfolk preferred to look the other way during it, or not be present to avoid being an extra snack. This way, anything that was brought to them would be used as sparingly as possible, as most of the time Humbaba would bring the village resources, materials and in some cases food.

“If you’re not here to watch then you should return home.” The man said as they arrived, the hillside being no bigger than a ten foot climb. “It’s not a nice thing seeing it happen, as much as it must.”

The teenager couldn’t disagree with that point there. The town had over one hundred orphans, and no-one knew where they had come from. Most of the villagers had assumed they were from neighbouring towns, or from various large groups that had accidentally left their children behind and not returned, while a few had suggested that some of the orphans were from people who had mysteriously disappeared overnight.

No-one knew the truth and no-one really cared enough to consider discovering the problem.

Just as the final child was tied to a pole, the ground beneath them all shook again, the nearby river slightly rippling. “Our god approaches!” a woman called, paying no mind as the children started looking around worriedly. The slight tremors began to slowly get stronger as the shadow of a large being loomed in the far distance, the few villagers waiting by the children to stop them from escaping and sharing glances, anxious to get this over with so they didn’t have to worry for another month.

The glances of the assembled adults turned back to the town they lived in, the slightly damaged houses lining either side as they specifically looked past the road, seeing the trees in the distance beginning to move. “What does our god look like?” the teen asked, having moved to the side to avoid being in the way.

“You’ll find out shortly.” said a nearby woman that the teen didn’t recognise, though he only knew several people since moving to his new home nearly two years ago, a good year before the end of the world happened. “Our god will feast and we will be granted his blessing!”

Which no-one in the village could ever hint or guess at how that happened.

The question on the tip of his tongue was answered as a shadow slowly began to loom over the trees, advancing at a fair speed towards the town and pushing trees out of the way. None of the adults shared any glances or looks, knowing what was going to happen, as the teen felt a mix of emotions flow through him, the main one being fear. It started to show on his face as the shadow finally got within sight, revealing the village’s god in all its glory, and the feeling of dread that had been creeping up inside of him froze him solid.

Easily standing at fifteen feet tall, if not taller, the green-skinned monster had a very muscular upper body and lower body to match, a small pot belly that he knew saw the demise of many within it. The sharp teeth and horns either side of its head did little to quell his fear, and only served to make the green titan ever more intimidating. “Humbaba, our god, has come!” he heard the woman say as she bowed out of the corner of his eye, the fierce tremors threatening to throw him off balance if he wasn’t careful.

Tearing his eyes away from the monster to look at the children he noticed that they had been coated with a number of spices and some sauces, their skin itching from where it had been applied, their squirms and expressions of terror doing little to calm the teenager’s own fears and worries. One of them, a young girl no older than seven, was looking at him with a terrified expression and trying to struggle against her bindings, bringing no success whatsoever with how tight they were.

His ear-drums suddenly burst as he heard a roar erupt from the monster’s mouth, the ground’s frequent shaking only telling him that it was getting closer and closer. Turning his head he saw the green skinned monster standing straight in front of him, its black eyes scanning the assembled adults and children.

“Your feast, our god!” the woman spoke, bowing as she made an arm gesture to the children. “We hope it is to your liking.”

The growl that rumbled from the monster’s throat almost took the teenager by surprise, his expectation of the beast talking to them being somewhat crushed, as it bent down slowly and plucked a boy from the pole he was tied to. His expression didn’t change as he watched the boy was lifted to the monster’s now gaping maw, and promptly slung inside it where it was chewed some, and then an audible swallow sealed the poor kid’s fate.

“It’s not nice to watch.” whispered the man from earlier as a bulge briefly formed in Humbaba’s throat, the teenager doing his best to remain calm at seeing a child be so casually swallowed.

The teenager didn’t budge or shift as the massive hulking monster slowly descended and picked up another child, a girl who began kicking and trying to escape his grip. All the children’s mouths had been tied to stop them from screaming, as the last time it had happened Humbaba had crushed the child in his hand and demanded two more sacrifices, the village hastily meeting his demand before he went on a rampage.

There was no crunching sound as the girl vanished past the monster’s lips, which only sent shivers down the teenager’s spine as the bulge vanished from its neck, confirming his suspicion that the children would be digested while alive. *I’m glad that’s not me going in there* he thought, watching the monster rub its stomach in a satisfying manner before looking away briefly.

His glance returned to the monster as it grabbed its third meal, a boy he recognised as one of the ones who ran around with several others, who was not struggling at all in the monster’s grip. The teen felt bad for the boy as he noticed his defeated expression, almost as though he knew what was to come and he had no chance to stop it from happening, before he vanished into the monster’s mouth and with a little chewing was swallowed down whole.

“This has been going on for the past six months?” the teen whispered to the man, who nodded once with a grim look. “Why hasn’t anyone tried to stop him?”

“One lady tried and she was eaten for defying him.” The man whispered in response, a shimmer of mist appearing in the man’s eyes. “Unless someone is strong enough to kill the monster, this is all that we can do.”

The teen felt his heart sink as the fourth child, a girl, was gone with an audible gulp, a small but struggling bulge appearing in Humbaba’s throat before it descended and disappeared behind the muscular chest. “Your feast is to my liking.” Humbaba spoke for the first time, his eyes glaring at the adults and teenager, and then picked up the fifth child to be eaten. The adults could only watch as the boy disappeared into its jaw, a small bit of chewing throwing it around within Humbaba’s mouth and followed by a swallow that everyone present heard.

The final child, a boy no older than eight, was trying his hardest to escape from where he was tied as he knew what was to happen. “I don’t wanna be food!” he shouted, trying to escape from his bindings. “I don’t wanna end up in that ugly thing’s belly!” despite his words, Humbaba ignored them as he had been called worse in the past, and responded by grabbing the kid in his hand, muffling his words.

His struggles only sped things up as Humbaba raised his closed hand to his mouth and opened it quickly, tilting the boy into his gaping maw who had no chance to respond. A light amount of chewing freed the spices around his mouth followed by a loud swallow that sealed the sixth and last child’s fate. “You have appeased me this month.” Humbaba growled, rubbing his pot belly which slightly wiggled with the children.

“We do our best to appease you our lord.” The woman spoke for the assembled adults. “Have we earned your favour this month?”

Humbaba’s response was to raise a hand and cause lightning to rumble overhead, the clouds present slowly beginning to gather. Within seconds a slight rain had begun, before it began to get stronger, becoming a small storm that they needed. “You have earned my favour this month.” He boomed, already beginning to feel hungry again. “I will be back in one month’s time for my next meal. You know what will happen should it not be to my liking.”

“Yes my lord!” the woman responded as she bowed down, the teenager and man following suit. “We will do as you ask!”

“Good.” Was the titan’s response before he turned around and slowly began taking his leave, the tremors affecting the area around him on every step he took. The teenager slowly got to his feet as the tremors continued to get weaker and weaker, the mixed feelings he had finally dissipating.

“Never easy to accept isn’t it?” the man said, standing, to which to the teenager could only nod. “Hopefully... one day, the kids will be avenged.”