“In the Swamp” is a 2,835-word short story authored by Caroline Zahluth Oliveira in 2015; last draft was finalized in 2016. This fantasy horror tale tells the story of Dylan, a little boy who escaped his abusive home and now wonders through a Southern swamp in the middle of the night. Equipped with only a mysterious potato sack, he follows the instructions of a disembodied voice that tell him to find a river, while fighting physical pain and the many dangers that hide in the shadows cast by a full moon.

Once he finds the body of water, he meets a friendly stranger who takes him on a canoe ride. The stranger, an old man with a long beard, not only seems to know all about Dylan and his vicious father, but also what the potato sack hides. Dylan is finally confronted with the fact he does not remember how he got to the swamp or why he is carrying the sack. He only remembers blacking out after his father’s most cruel beating.

The old man breaks the truth to the child. Dylan did not survive the beating and everything he went through that night is part of his journey to the afterlife. There is only one more thing to do: get rid of the past, which resides inside the potato sack.

No longer frightened, Dylan drops the bag in the water and a brilliant white light appears in front of him. From the corner of his eye, he sees his father in one of the riverbanks throwing a potato sack in the water. The boy knows his lifeless body is inside. However, he is finally at peace and ready to go. No more pain.

“In the Swamp” was first written in a piece of paper and has since been converted to a word processor file. It has gone through three drafts with minimal changes. This story has not been published and it is not based on any previous work.
Part II
Part III

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