

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON
SUBMISSION FROM LONDON

Synopsis – SUSAN'S CRITIQUE

The Sunlight has mysteriously disappeared. The life-saving tea crops have failed, and a cold, grey fog has descended on the land. The great forest is slowly dying...

Can four naïve Treewoods (part tree and part human) and a smelly wizard cat called Brian, find the source of the trouble and save the Treewood nation from extinction?

Find out as the travellers leave the safety of the forest and embark on an exciting, often dangerous, quest to look for both the missing sunlight and the old astronomer, who set off a hundred years before them and never returned.

'Search for the Sunlight' is a unique and lightly humorous adventure packed full of peculiar characters and bizarre places.

The story is aimed at both young adults and those of us who are struggling to grow up.

Commented [SD1]: Per the show, based on the section we read, I agree with Jenn's comment that this reads more like middle grade (ages 8-12) than YA.

Preface

To the south of the Gogo River, beyond the Stake Hill Valley and the Gouldong

Mountains, lies Treewood Forest. Forgotten by time and man, this vast ancient woodland is

home to a gentle peace-loving species known as Treewoods. Part tree and part human,

these peculiar mutations live harmoniously with one another, enjoying the idyllic lifestyle that the great forest provides.

Commented [SD2]: Beautiful language throughout!

Commented [SD3]: If the Treewoods are a species, then what does "with one another" refer to?

One day however, the sunlight on which their fragile existence depends mysteriously disappeared from the heavens. Almost overnight, their perfect world was reduced to a dark murky state of depression. Slowly, everything began to wither and die.

Commented [SD4]: Would it be slowly?

Commented [SD5]: I think you can delete the premise and incorporate it into the first chapter. We can find out what's happening through dialogue and action.

Chapter 1

Basil S. Treewood sat in his favourite elm chair, gazing out across the lagoon.

As he stared motionless into the cold, grey mist, He could easily have been mistaken for dead. Moving only his eyes, he looked beyond the dune grass towards the jetty at what little

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remained of his dinghy. Ravaged by time and neglect, its wooden hull had rotted through, causing it to sink into the slimy black silt. ~~The prolonged absence of sunlight had brought his perfect world crashing down.~~

Basil closed his eyes. He could still recall the days before the fog, when he and his friends used to dive from the overhanging branches of the tall Stonewood trees into the crystal blue water and race one another to the tea house on the opposite shore. There, they would while away the long hot afternoons, lazing in the shade beneath the giant cedars, drinking the finest of teas that the Gouldong Plantations had to offer.

In the evenings, when the sun went down behind the mountains, they would wind their way home and gather round the night fires to play music and listen to the Elders' tales of magic and the mystical secrets of the universe. But now, in these dark sunless times, few Treewoods ventured from their homes. The Teahouse had long ago closed its doors and shutters for good, and everyone in the forest had become grumpy and selfish.

Basil leaned on the arms of his chair and forced his weak wooden body to sit upright.

His frostbitten limbs creaked and groaned as he stooped ~~forwards~~ and plucked a wrinkled marshmelon from a sack by his feet. With a pained look on his face, he drew his stiff arm back as far as he could and lobbed the sticky pink fruit into the lagoon.

In the chilled silence, a loud splash sounded out as the withered melon broke the icy surface of the water.

In sunnier times, wading birds and water fowl would have taken to the air in their thousands, and small mammals on the surrounding banks ~~scattered would've scattered~~ for cover, while Basil and his friends laughed out loud at their mischief. But in this present cold and hellish environment, nothing stirred, for nothing lived there anymore.

Commented [SD6]: I think this last sentence is too dramatic. The reader should be able to deduce this from the rest of the description.

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A sturdy Scots pine of strict Presbyterian upbringing, Charles S. Treewood had been an active and well-respected member of the Grand Council of Forestry Affairs for as long as anyone could remember. Amongst his duties, it was his responsibility to ensure that life in the forest ran smoothly and, in his spare time, when he had any, he liked nothing better than to indulge in his favourite pastime, astronomy.

Many years ago, working from the blueprint in an out-of-date copy of the quarterly journal 'Interstellar and Unusual Galactic Phenomena in the Known Universe' - a publication which he had stumbled upon in the waiting room during one of his rare visits to the Tree Surgeon - Charles built a large and powerful telescope.

Employing a hollowed out oak trunk, a large sheet of mirror glass, two tins of French Grey paint, and a variety of miscellaneous ironmongery - all of which he recovered from the depths of his shed and cost him nothing - he began construction.

After several months, patiently grinding and polishing the mirror glass for the lenses and several lengthy visits to the Treewood Central Reference Library, in order for him to fully grasp the principles of chromatic aberration and magnification, his work was finally done. Through sheer hard graft and ~~single-single~~-minded determination, Charles S. Treewood had become the proud owner of the finest telescope in the land.

At first, his knowledge of the night sky was limited, but with continued practice, he was soon able to locate all the major constellations in the galaxy without need for reference maps or star charts.

Commented [SD7]: Use em dashes

Commented [SD8]: Overarching comment: There is no description of a treewood beyond the initial "human/tree" combination. The treewood's description, mannerisms, etc. should be woven throughout the text so that we can clearly picture what one looks like and begin to understand the unique qualities that they have from being both a human and a tree.

Commented [SD9]: Again, em dashes

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As the weeks passed, allowing for seasonal adjustment, the days became unnaturally short. Then, one morning in early August, the old astronomer rose from his bed, pulled back the curtains to greet the new day and, to his dismay, it was gone! The sunlight had disappeared from the Heavens, and in its wake, a fine feather-like frost, faintly illuminated by a sinister greenish-blue half-light, was all that remained.

Over the coming days, a thin, wispy mist crept in. It appeared, at first, like wood smoke from a distant leaf fire on a still autumn evening, but as the temperature continued to drop, the mist thickened, resulting in a damp, freezing fog that engulfed everything in its path.

As if it were winter, his healthy green pine needles wilted, and his rich copper-grey bark faded and flaked. The crystal blue waters of the beautiful lagoon succumbed to a covering of sludge grey ice, and all but the hardiest of plants and creatures fell silent. In less than a quarter of a year, the great forest had become a place of darkness and despair.

During the long, cold months that followed, Charles worked alone in his observatory, searching the heavens for clues as to whom, or what, had brought about the environmental catastrophe that threatened the future of Treewoodkind. But, in spite of his vast knowledge of the cosmos, and all the technology to hand, all he could see was fog.

Commented [SD10]: THIS is where your story starts. This is where you really grab the reader's attention. You can essentially start here and then incorporate some of the details from the earlier part of this chapter into the story. At this point, I don't think you need Chapter 1, but I'll make the assumption that that can be woven in later in the story. Maybe Basil's grandfather thinks of him as he's looking through the telescope. Or maybe Basil is with him when his grandfather sees the anomaly.

Commented [SD11]: Okay, you definitely don't need chapter 1. This is telling us in ch 2 what's happening.

Commented [SD12]: During editing, watch out for usage of "cold" – used 6 times in these pages alone.

**YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON
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Late one afternoon, unable to bear the intense cold any longer, he abandoned his search. With a heavy heart, he wrapped his precious telescope in protective oilskin sheets and returned home to contemplate the bleak future that lay ahead.

That evening, alone in his study, a ghostly apparition appeared before him. Shimmering in and out of focus, like celestial visitors from the spirit world tend to do, the mysterious electroplasmatic messenger instructed Charles that as Elder in charge of forestry affairs, he must travel east, beyond the Peckwood Desert and The Gouldong Mountains, in search of the missing sunlight. A few sinister moments later, with its short but fateful message conveyed, the ghostly figure exploded in a spectacular burst of white light and disappeared into the ether. All that remained was a strong smell of burning ozone, a rusty compass, and an ancient parchment map. Thoroughly shaken by his brief encounter, Charles S. Treewood packed a few essentials into an old lapsack and, following the messenger's instructions, set off in an easterly direction, into the unknown. To date, he has never returned.

Commented [SD13]: Why sinister?

Commented [SD14]: Okay-this is definitely interesting. However, it's too compact-too much information is missing. This is more of a summary. What is happening day by day? Who is Charles interacting with? How are others reacting? What's his home like? Who is his family? We need to be brought into his world so that we feel empathy for what is happening to him and what he is losing-his home, food, family...right now, this is all tell, rather than show.

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON
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Chapter 3

Basil S. Treewood rocked slowly back and forth in his old elm chair. It was a struggle for him just to remain conscious. The crushing depression that he suffered, due mainly to the lack of sunlight, made even the most basic of physical movements a chore. With the passing of each insufferable day, his mind, body, and spirit grew steadily weaker.

How long ago was it since his grandfather left the forest? He couldn't remember exactly, but he knew it was at least a hundred years. The very notion that such an alarming length of time had somehow slipped by unnoticed made him shiver, but his anxiety was short lived, for within moments, his dull soggy mind returned to its usual state of lethargy, and he lobbed another marshmelon into the icy lagoon.

Suddenly, in a flurry of dead twigs and dried leaves, Harry and Herbert F. Treewood - the Hawthorn brothers from next door - burst through the hedge like an avalanche, shattering both the silence and the fence surrounding Basil's plot.

"Good morning, Baz," the brothers announced in unison. Their boisterous entrance gave Basil such a fright that he fell from his chair and landed, face down, on top of the open sack of marshmelons that lay by his feet.

"What's good about it?" he grumped, picking himself up from the ground. "It's just like every other rotten morning. Damp, grey and miserable. The only difference being, that this morning, you two have destroyed my fence and half frightened me to death in the process!" He wiped the sticky melon gum from his face and set off huffily across the muddy lawn in the direction of his house.

"I've had enough!" he stamped, cursing and grizzling to himself along the way.

Commented [SD15]: Based on this, I'm confirming that you don't need chapter 1 or the preface. You can start with chapter 2, although it will need some rework per my earlier comments.

Commented [SD16]: 100 years? Please listen for comments made in the show.

Commented [SD17]: Em dashes

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“Precisely!” Herbert called after him. “We’ve all had enough. That’s what we’ve come to discuss!” He turned to his brother and prompted him with his elbow. The sharp, unexpected prod momentarily aroused Harry from his dreamy twilight state. “Y-Yes, we’ve got a plan,” he stammered. “We need to talk!”

Cold, wet and grumpy, Basil climbed the stairs that led to his front door. But before he entered the house, he stopped. ‘A plan,’ he thought. ‘What kind of a plan?’

With his curiosity suitably aroused, he turned slowly to face his shabby little Hawthorn friends, and with a loud sigh, and a sideways nod of his head, he beckoned them both **inside**.

You definitely have an interesting premise for a story. I think that the most important thing to do here is to bring us into their world through dialogue, action, and description. Show us (don't tell) how treewoods live, interact, move, and speak. What makes them unique? Also, many details can be woven into the story, as opposed to told up front. The reader can discover what's happening as the story unfolds, as opposed to learning everything up front. Show, don't tell.

Commented [SD18]: The use of dialogue and movement in this chapter is good. Basil is interacting with other people and we are getting a glimpse into his life. But even here, it seems like they are completely human, not half human and half tree. Every movement, how they speak, what they do—we need to see what makes them unique.

Ed

Synopsis

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Preface

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One day however, the sunlight on which their fragile existence depends mysteriously disappeared from the heavens. Almost overnight, their perfect world was reduced to a dark murky state of depression. Slowly, everything began to wither and die.

Chapter 1

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Basil closed his eyes. He could still recall the days before the fog, when he and his friends used to dive from the overhanging branches of the tall Stonewood trees into the crystal blue water and race one

—this has a very gentle feeling about it
—a lot of telling! show us!

another to the tea house on the opposite shore. There they would while away the long hot afternoons, lazing in the shade beneath the giant cedars, drinking the finest of teas that the Gouldong Plantations had to offer.

In the evenings, when the sun went down behind the mountains, they would wind their way home and gather round the night fires to play music and listen to the Elders' tales of magic and the mystical secrets of the universe. But now, in these dark sunless times, few Treewoods ventured from their homes. The Teahouse had long ago closed its doors and shutters for good and everyone in the forest had become grumpy and selfish.

Basil leaned on the arms of his chair and forced his weak wooden body to sit upright.

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In the chilled silence, a loud splash sounded out as the withered melon broke the icy surface of the water.

In sunnier times, wading birds and water fowl would have taken to the air in their thousands and small mammals on the surrounding banks scattered for cover, while Basil and his friends laughed out loud at their mischief. But in this present cold and hellish environment nothing stirred, for nothing lived there anymore.

Chapter 2

Basil's grandfather was a leading figure within the community.

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As the weeks passed, ^{even} allowing for seasonal adjustment, the days became unnaturally short. Then, one morning in early August ¹ the old astronomer rose from his bed, pulled back the curtains to greet the ¹ new day and, to his dismay, ¹ it was gone! The sunlight had disappeared from the Heavens and ¹ in its wake, a fine feather-like frost, faintly illuminated by a sinister greenish-blue half-light, was all that remained.

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During the long cold months that followed, Charles worked alone in his observatory [searching the heavens] for clues as to whom, or what, had brought about the environmental catastrophe that threatened the future of Treewoodkind. But, in spite of his vast knowledge of the cosmos, and all the technology to hand, all he could see was fog.

what can he see?

Late one afternoon, unable to bear the intense cold any longer, he abandoned his search. With a heavy heart, he wrapped his precious telescope in protective oilskin sheets and returned home to contemplate the bleak future that lay ahead.

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How long ago was it since his grandfather left the forest? He couldn't remember exactly, but he knew it was at least a hundred years. The very notion that such an alarming length of time had somehow slipped by unnoticed made him shiver, but his anxiety was short-lived, for within moments, his dull soggy mind returned to its usual state of lethargy and he lobbed another marshmelon into the icy lagoon.

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When/How did the tree-human mutation occur? Why?
Do you explain Peter?
Do any characters in transition?

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One day, however, the sunlight on which their fragile existence depends mysteriously disappeared from the heavens. Almost overnight, their perfect world was reduced to a dark murky state of depression. Slowly, everything began to wither and die.

Describe his house and surroundings. Also of wood?

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→
Knapzak →

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How long ago was it since his grandfather left the forest? He couldn't remember exactly, but he knew it was at least a hundred years. The very notion that such an alarming length of time had somehow slipped by unnoticed made him shiver, but his anxiety was short-lived, for within moments, his dull soggy mind returned to its usual state of lethargy and he lobbed another marshmelon into the icy lagoon.

The twins' entrance seems abrupt

Suddenly, in a flurry of dead twigs and dried leaves, Harry and Herbert F. Treewood - the Hawthorn brothers from next door - burst through the hedge like an avalanche, shattering both the silence and the fence surrounding Basil's plot.

"Good morning, Baz," the brothers announced in unison. Their boisterous entrance gave Basil such a fright that he fell from his chair and landed, face down, on top of the open sack of marshmelons that lay by his feet. "What's good about it?" he grumped, picking himself up from the ground. "It's just like every other rotten morning. Damp, grey and miserable. The only difference being, that this morning, you two have destroyed my fence and half frightened me to death in the process!" He wiped the sticky melon gum from his face and set off huffily across the muddy lawn in the direction of his house.

Now it's each man speaking

"I've had enough!" he stamped, cursing and grizzling to himself along the way.

"Precisely!" Herbert called after him. "We've all had enough. That's what we've come to discuss!" He turned to his brother and prompted him with his elbow. The sharp, unexpected prod

JULIE

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

momentarily aroused Harry from his dreamy twilight state. "Y-Yes, we've got a plan," he stammered. "We need to talk!"

Cold, wet and grumpy, Basil climbed the stairs that led to his front door. But before he entered the house, he stopped. 'A plan,' he thought. 'What kind of a plan?'

With his curiosity suitably aroused, he turned slowly to face his shabby little Hawthorn friends and with a loud sigh, and a sideways nod of his head, he beckoned them both inside.

CREATIVE CHARACTERS. I'D LIKE TO SEE HOW THIS PLAYS OUT.
ELABORATE ON HOW THESE TREE-PEOPLE RESEMBLE PEOPLE AND
HOW THEY RESEMBLE TREES.

FACIAL FEATURES, ARMS, LEGS
HOW DO THEY WALK?
WHAT DO THEY EAT?

DESCRIBE HOW LARGE THEY ARE
HOW LONG THEY LIVE
HOW THEY INTERACT
THEIR JOBS IN SOCIETY

DEDICATE AS MUCH TIME AND DETAIL TO OTHER SCENES
AS YOU DO TO BASIL'S GRANDFATHER'S CRAFTING
HIS TELESCOPE AND USING IT.

WHEN DOES BRIAN APPEAR?

Jenni's Feedback

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

Synopsis

The Sunlight has mysteriously disappeared. The life-saving ~~livesaving~~ tea crops have failed, and a cold grey fog has descended on the land. The great forest is slowly dying.

Can four naïve Treewoods (part tree and part human) and a smelly wizard cat called Brian, find the source of the trouble and save the Treewood nation from extinction?

Find out as the ~~traveller~~ travelers leave the safety of the forest and embark on an exciting, often dangerous, quest to look for both the missing sunlight and the old astronomer, who set off a hundred years before them and never returned.

'Search for the Sunlight' is a unique and lightly humorous adventure packed full of peculiar characters and bizarre places.

The story is aimed at both young adults and those of us who are struggling to grow up.

~~Preface~~ Back of the Book

To the south of the Gogo River, beyond the Stake Hill Valley and the Gouldong Mountains, lies Treewood Forest. Forgotten by time and man, this vast ancient woodland is home to a gentle ~~peace~~ ~~loving~~ peace-loving species known as Treewoods. Part tree and part human these peculiar mutations live harmoniously with one another, enjoying the idyllic lifestyle that the great forest provides.

One day however, the sunlight on which their fragile existence depends mysteriously disappeared from the heavens. Almost overnight, their perfect world was reduced to a dark murky state of depression. Slowly, everything began to wither and die.

Chapter 1

Basil S. Treewood sat in his ~~favorite~~ ~~favorite~~ ~~elm~~ chair gazing out across the lagoon.

As he stared motionless into the cold grey mist, he could easily have been mistaken for dead.

Moving only his eyes, he looked beyond the dune grass towards the jetty at what little remained of his dinghy. Ravaged by time and neglect, its wooden hull had rotted through, causing it to sink into the slimy black silt. The prolonged absence of sunlight had brought his perfect world crashing down.

Basil closed his eyes. He could still recall the days before the fog, when he and his friends used to dive from the overhanging branches of the tall Stonewood trees into the crystal blue water and race one

→ Would people who are part wood use wood furniture? Did an elm tree have to die to make the chair?
I didn't know you were from London until we filmed. 😊

Commented [RJL1]: Sorry for changing the British spelling, feel free to ignore my edits if you wanted the British spelling.

Commented [RJL2]: Nice imagery

Commented [RJL3]: How long has it been?

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

another to the tea house on the opposite shore. There they would while away the long hot afternoons, lazing in the shade beneath the giant cedars, drinking the finest of teas that the Gouldong Plantations had to offer.

In the evenings, when the sun went down behind the mountains, they would wind their way home and gather round the night fires to play music and listen to the Elders' tales of magic and the mystical secrets of the universe. But now, in these dark sunless times, few Treewoods ventured from their homes. The Teahouse had long ago closed its doors and shutters for good and everyone in the forest had become grumpy and selfish.

Basil leaned on the arms of his chair and forced his weak wooden body to sit upright.

His frostbitten limbs creaked and groaned as he stooped forwards and plucked a wrinkled marshmelon from a sack by his feet. With a pained look on his face, he drew his stiff arm back as far as he could and lobbed the sticky pink fruit into the lagoon.

In the chilled silence, a loud splash sounded out as the withered melon broke the icy surface of the water.

In sunnier times, wading birds and water fowl would have taken to the air in their thousands and small mammals on the surrounding banks scattered for cover, while Basil and his friends laughed out loud at their mischief. But in this present cold and hellish environment nothing stirred, for nothing lived there anymore.

Chapter 2

Basil's grandfather was a leading figure within the community.

A sturdy Scots pine of strict Presbyterian upbringing, Charles S. Treewood had been an active and well-respected member of the Grand Council of Forestry Affairs for as long as anyone could remember. Amongst his duties, it was his responsibility to ensure that life in the forest ran smoothly and, in his spare time, when he had any, he liked nothing better than to indulge in his favourite pastime, astronomy.

Commented [RJL4]: They say to not start a story with backstory, to work anything that happened in the past later, just get the story going to engage the reader. But I really like this so I don't think you should change it. But I thought it worth noting. It's like the rule to not start with weather, or a dream.

Commented [RJL5]: Maybe start with chapter 2 since that's when the story starts. Begin with Charles and then move on to Basil. I'm not saying cut Chapter 1, it's well written, just suggesting flipping the sequence of the two chapters.

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

Many years ago, working from the blueprint in an out-of-date copy of the quarterly journal 'Interstellar and Unusual Galactic Phenomena in the Known Universe' - a publication which he had stumbled upon in the waiting room during one of his rare visits to the Tree Surgeon - Charles built a large and powerful telescope.

Commented [RJL6]: ☺

Employing a hollowed out oak trunk, a large sheet of mirror glass, two tins of French Grey paint and a variety of miscellaneous ironmongery - all of which he recovered from the depths of his shed and cost him nothing - he began construction.

Commented [RJL7]: Use em dashes without spaces.

After several months, patiently grinding and polishing the mirror glass for the lenses and several lengthy visits to the Treewood Central Reference Library, in order for him to fully grasp the principles of chromatic aberration and magnification, his work was finally done. Through sheer hard graft and single-minded determination, Charles S. Treewood had become the proud owner of the finest telescope in the land.

At first his knowledge of the night sky was limited, but with continued practice, he was soon able to locate all the major constellations in the galaxy without need for reference maps or star charts.

Early one mid-summer's evening, whilst observing the sunset to the west of the Gogo River, something out of the ordinary caught his attention. Instead of the usual deep rich red normally associated with the reflective particle distribution in the stratosphere at this time of year, the light had taken on a pale insipid yellow color. In his notes, he likened the effect to that of a partial solar eclipse or to a late November afternoon when the sun would normally sit much lower in the sky. But it was only June. Something was wrong.

As the weeks passed, allowing for seasonal adjustment, the days became unnaturally short. Then, one morning in early August, the old astronomer rose from his bed, pulled back the curtains to greet the new day and, to his dismay, it the sun was gone! ~~The sunlight~~ it had disappeared from the Heavens and in its wake, a fine feather-like frost, faintly illuminated by a sinister greenish-blue half-light, was all that remained.

Commented [RJL8]: I like the alliteration here.

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

Over the coming days, a thin, wispy mist crept in. It appeared, at first, like wood smoke from a distant leaf fire on a still autumn evening, but as the temperature continued to drop, the mist thickened, resulting in a damp freezing fog that engulfed everything in its path.

As if it were winter, his healthy green pine needles wilted, and his rich copper-grey bark faded and flaked. The crystal blue waters of the beautiful lagoon succumbed to a covering of sludge grey ice and all but the hardiest of plants and creatures fell silent. In less than a quarter of a year, the great forest had become a place of darkness and despair.

During the long cold months that followed, Charles worked alone in his observatory, searching the heavens for clues as to whom, or what, had brought about the environmental catastrophe that threatened the future of Treewoodkind. But, in spite of his vast knowledge of the cosmos, and all the technology to hand, all he could see was fog.

Late one afternoon, unable to bear the intense cold any longer, he abandoned his search. With a heavy heart, he wrapped his precious telescope in protective oilskin sheets and returned home to contemplate the bleak future that lay ahead.

That evening, alone in his study, a ghostly apparition appeared before him. Shimmering in and out of focus, like celestial visitors from the spirit world tend to do, the mysterious electropasmatic messenger instructed Charles that as Elder in charge of forestry affairs, he must travel east, beyond the Peckwood Desert and the Gouldong Mountains, in search of the missing sunlight. A few sinister moments later, with its short but fateful message conveyed, the ghostly figure exploded in a spectacular burst of white light and disappeared into the ether. All that remained was a strong smell of burning ozone, a rusty compass and an ancient parchment map. Thoroughly shaken by his brief encounter, Charles S. Treewood packed a few essentials into an old lapsack and, following the messenger's instructions, set off in an easterly direction, into the unknown. To date, he has never returned.

- Be clear that this is his body.

Commented [RJL9]: Don't glaze over this part of the story. Show the reader this event as a scene. Let the reader experience it as Charles did.

Chapter 3

Basil S. Treewood rocked slowly back and forth in his old elm chair. It was a struggle for him just to remain conscious. The crushing depression that he suffered, due mainly to the lack of sunlight, made even the most basic of physical movements a chore. With the passing of each insufferable day his mind, body and spirit grew steadily weaker.

How long ago was it since his grandfather left the forest? He couldn't remember exactly, but he knew it was at least a hundred years. The very notion that such an alarming length of time had somehow slipped by unnoticed made him shiver, but his anxiety was short lived, for within moments, his dull soggy mind returned to its usual state of lethargy and he lobbed another marshmelon into the icy lagoon.

- what is their life expectancy?

Suddenly, in a flurry of dead twigs and dried leaves, Harry and Herbert F. Treewood - the Hawthorn brothers from next door - burst through the hedge like an avalanche, shattering both the silence and the fence surrounding Basil's plot.

"Good morning, Baz," the brothers announced in unison.

Commented [RJL10]: What do they look like?

Their boisterous entrance gave Basil such a fright that he fell from his chair and landed, face down, on top of the open sack of marshmelons that lay by his feet.

"What's good about it?" he grumped, picking himself up from the ground. "It's just like every other rotten morning. Damp, grey and miserable. The only difference being, that this morning, you two have destroyed my fence and half frightened me to death in the process!" He wiped the sticky melon gum from his face and set off huffily across the muddy lawn in the direction of his house.

"I've had enough!" he stamped, cursing and grizzling to himself along the way.

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

"Precisely!" Herbert called after him. "We've all had enough. That's what we've come to discuss!" He turned to his brother and prompted him with his elbow.

The sharp, unexpected prod momentarily aroused Harry from his dreamy twilight state. "Y-Yes, we've got a plan," he stammered. "We need to talk!"

Cold, wet and grumpy, Basil climbed the stairs that led to his front door. But before he entered the house, he stopped. *[A plan, he thought. What kind of a plan?]*

With his curiosity suitably aroused, he turned slowly to face his shabby little Hawthorn friends and with a loud sigh, and a sideways nod of his head, he beckoned them both inside.

I love the premise of this story, and your world building is great. Your description of the setting is so good. I am having trouble picturing what the characters look like. I'd like a bit more description there. Your writing is lovely. I'd definitely keep reading. Also this doesn't sound like YA, it sounds more like middle-grade (ages 8-12). Kinda reminds me of the Hobbit.

Commented [RJL11]: Put internal thoughts in italics.

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

Synopsis – CONNIE'S CRITIQUE

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Find out as the travellers leave the safety of the forest and embark on an exciting, often dangerous, quest to look for both the missing sunlight and the old astronomer, who set off a hundred years before them and never returned.

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Preface

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One day however, the sunlight on which their fragile existence depends mysteriously disappeared from the heavens. Almost overnight, their perfect world was reduced to a dark murky state of depression. Slowly, everything began to wither and die.

Chapter 1

Basil S. Treewood sat in his favourite elm chair gazing out across the lagoon.

As he stared motionless into the cold grey mist, he could easily have been mistaken for dead. Moving only his eyes, he looked beyond the dune grass towards the jetty at what little remained of his dinghy. Ravaged by time and neglect, its wooden hull had rotted through, causing it to sink into the slimy black silt. The prolonged absence of sunlight had brought his perfect world crashing down.

Basil closed his eyes. He could still recall the days before the fog, when he and his friends used to dive from the overhanging branches of the tall Stonewood trees into the crystal blue water and race one

Commented [CM1]: I feel like I need to know more about this species right up front – it's hard for me to picture what is going on when I don't even know what these creatures look like. Also, are they all going to have the last name of Treewood, and that is also the name of the species?

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

another to the tea house on the opposite shore. There they would while away the long hot afternoons, lazing in the shade beneath the giant cedars, drinking the finest of teas that the Gouldong Plantations had to offer.

In the evenings, when the sun went down behind the mountains, they would wind their way home and gather round the night fires to play music and listen to the Elders' tales of magic and the mystical secrets of the universe. But now, in these dark sunless times, few Treewoods ventured from their homes. The Teahouse had long ago closed its doors and shutters for good and everyone in the forest had become grumpy and selfish.

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In sunnier times, wading birds and water fowl would have taken to the air in their thousands and small mammals on the surrounding banks scattered for cover, while Basil and his friends laughed out loud at their mischief. But in this present cold and hellish environment nothing stirred, for nothing lived there anymore.

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Commented [CM2]: If they are made of wood, at least partially, would they really gather around a fire? And what are they burning? Other Treewoods???

Commented [CM3]: I think extremities get frostbitten, not joints

Commented [CM4]: Not clear on why he has a sack of melons by his feet and why he threw one into the lagoon

Commented [CM5]: Cute!

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

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Commented [CM6]: Cute!

Employing a **hollowed out oak trunk**, a large sheet of mirror glass, two tins of French Grey paint and a variety of miscellaneous ironmongery - all of which he recovered from the depths of his shed and cost him nothing - he began construction.

Commented [CM7]: So, this isn't the body of a Treewood, is it?

After several months, patiently grinding and polishing the mirror glass for the lenses and several lengthy visits to the Treewood Central Reference Library, in order for him to fully grasp the principles of chromatic aberration and magnification, his work was finally done. Through sheer hard graft and single-minded determination, Charles S. Treewood had become the proud owner of the finest telescope in the land.

At first his knowledge of the night sky was limited, but with continued practice, he was soon able to locate all the major constellations in the galaxy without need for reference maps or star charts.

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As the weeks passed, **even** allowing for seasonal adjustment, the days became unnaturally short. Then, one morning in early August **the old astronomer** rose from his bed, pulled back the curtains to greet the new day and, to his dismay, it was gone! The sunlight had disappeared from the Heavens and in its wake, a fine feather-like frost, faintly illuminated by a sinister greenish-blue **half** light, was all that remained.

Commented [CM8]: So to call him this seems to indicate that this is his profession, but above you indicate this was just a hobby - I found calling him this a little confusing

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREEWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

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Late one afternoon, unable to bear the intense cold any longer, he abandoned his search. With a heavy heart, he wrapped his precious telescope in protective oilskin sheets and returned home to contemplate the bleak future that lay ahead.

That evening, alone in his study, a ghostly apparition appeared before him. Shimmering in and out of focus, like celestial visitors from the spirit world tend to do, the mysterious **electroplasmatic** messenger instructed Charles that as Elder in charge of forestry affairs, he must travel east, beyond the Peckwood Desert and The Gouldong Mountains, in search of the missing sunlight. A few **sinister** moments later, with its short but fateful message conveyed, the ghostly figure exploded in a spectacular burst of white light and disappeared into the ether. All that remained was a strong smell of burning ozone, a rusty compass and an ancient parchment map. Thoroughly shaken by his brief encounter, Charles S. Treewood packed a few essentials into an old **lapsack** and, following the messenger's instructions, set off in an easterly direction, into the unknown. **To date, he has never returned.**

Commented [CM9]: Ectoplasmic?

Commented [CM10]: Why sinister?

Commented [CM11]: What's a lapsack?

Commented [CM12]: Hmm. So this paragraph is "close third" point of view – we are in Charles's head, and we know this because we see the vision that only he sees. However, at the end of the paragraph, we are not in close third, because Charles knows where he is but the rest of us don't. If you leave off the last sentence, that will probably fix the problem sufficiently.

Chapter 3

Basil S. Treewood rocked slowly back and forth in his old elm chair. It was a struggle for him just to remain **conscioiusawake**. The crushing depression that he suffered, due mainly to the lack of sunlight, made even the most basic of physical movements a chore. With the passing of each insufferable day his mind, body and spirit grew steadily weaker.

Commented [CM13]: I don't think depression can make you fall unconscious

How long ago was it since his grandfather left the forest? He couldn't remember exactly, but he knew it was at least **a hundred years**. The very notion that such an alarming length of time had somehow slipped by unnoticed made him shiver, but his anxiety was short lived, for within moments, his dull soggy mind returned to its usual state of lethargy and he lobbed another marshmelon into the icy lagoon.

Commented [CM14]: I assume these creatures photosynthesize? If so, ow could they possibly live so long without sunlight?

Suddenly, in a flurry of dead twigs and dried leaves, Harry and Herbert F. Treewood - the Hawthorn brothers from next door - burst through the hedge like an avalanche, shattering both the silence and the fence surrounding Basil's plot.

"Good morning, Baz," the brothers announced in unison. Their boisterous entrance gave Basil such a fright that he fell from his chair and landed, face down, on top of the open sack of marshmelons that lay by his feet. "What's good about it?" he grumped, picking himself up from the ground. "It's just like every other rotten morning. Damp, grey and miserable. The only difference being, that this morning, you two have destroyed my fence and half frightened me to death in the process!" He wiped the sticky melon gum from his face and set off huffily across the muddy lawn in the direction of his house.

"I've had enough!" he stamped, cursing and **grizzling** to himself along the way.

Commented [CM15]: This doesn't seem to match his near-paralysis in the beginning of this chapter.

"Precisely!" Herbert called after him. "We've all had enough. That's what we've come to discuss!" He turned to his brother and prompted him with his elbow. The sharp, unexpected prod

Commented [CM16]: What does this mean?

YA: SEARCH FOR THE SUNLIGHT - A TREWOOD ADVENTURE BY CRAIG A. THOMSON

momentarily aroused Harry from his dreamy twilight state. “Y-Yes, we’ve got a plan,” he stammered. “We need to talk!”

Cold, wet and grumpy, Basil climbed the stairs that led to his front door. But before he entered the house, he stopped. ‘A plan,’ he thought. ‘What kind of a plan?’

With his curiosity suitably aroused, he turned slowly to face his shabby little Hawthorn friends and with a loud sigh, and a sideways nod of his head, he beckoned them both inside.

Commented [CM17]: Good chapter ending.