

Moss

It was a lovely day. The sun was shining, and the air hummed with a gentle heat. Perfect for relaxing.

On this day Jonathan Young decided to go for a walk. It was the weekend and “such a lovely day” that he thought it a waste to stay indoors, so he headed out. The walk was calming, he felt free from the stresses of everyday life. He was following the path he normally used, heading toward the local park. But as he neared the park his tranquillity was disturbed.

It seemed Jonathan was not the only one who had decided today was a good day to be outside. He could hear the barking of dogs, the yelling of children and the general muttering of people.

He no longer wanted to walk this way. But the day was still too perfect to head back home so he looked around. Next to the park, there was a small wood. Jon looked into the cool shade of the trees and felt a rush of peace enveloping him. So, he turned and headed in.

He was not unfamiliar with these woods, but he rarely had the time to go on walks like these, so the trees still looked new to him. As he walked the sounds of the general public faded from his senses and he felt truly at peace.

With the shade from the trees blocking the bright sun, Jonathan began to feel tired. The warm breeze began to lull him as the leaves rustled in a wonderful lullaby.

He chose a large tree and sat down next to it, resting his head against the bark. He looked up into the tree’s branches and watched the sun glinting through the leaves. He felt happy. This was what life was for. The moments that were free from stress, the moments where he could just be.

As these thoughts gently moved through his mind, his eyelids began to close. The warmth of the day wrapped around him like a blanket and the bird sang him songs of sleep. He accepted the peace the earth gave and slipped slowly into unconsciousness.

Eventually Jonathan Young awoke to a painful itching. It was much later, and the woods had become darker. But the peace Jon felt was just the same. He tried to move, more out of habit to scratch at his itching skin than any real desire, but he found that there was strong resistance.

He looked down at the arm he had tried to move. He saw moss had begun to creep up around it, his arm almost half buried in it. He looked at the rest of his body and found it in much the same condition. The moss appeared to have grown around him and now held him captive. This should have worried Jon, he should have been trying to tear his limbs from the moss, and he should have been scared. He knew this. But all Jon felt was that overwhelming tranquillity and peace.

The moss kept growing. Crawling across his skin until they became one. He felt the moss's rhizoids seep into the pores in his skin. And with it, the painful itch spread. It grew and grew covering his whole body in a lush carpet of green. And though his mind screamed at him about how wrong this situation was and how he should be fighting or running and tearing the moss off him; Jonathan felt content.

Now he was one with the moss, he could feel it growing across the wood's floor, and he could feel the water it fed on and the oxygen it produced. He sat there in wonder, feeling the songs of nature run across his skin. The itch it had caused drained of pain and became a new comfort.

Then he felt something new, an agonising pain seared through his legs and spread across his whole body. He wanted to scream, wanted some release but could not as he felt his muscles harden and grow, locking his jaw shut. He felt as if on the brink of collapse as every nerve in his body screamed in unison. Through the stupor, he felt his legs pushed through the dirt, digging deeper and deeper, the soil around them growing colder and colder. He felt his fingers lengthen as they dipped in and out of the earth, the tips resting in the ground a few meters away. He felt his back sink into the tree as it merged with the trunk.

Jonathan's mind was fighting for control. But the yelling it caused began to be easier to block out. He could feel the tree's roots, branches, and leaves as if they were his limbs. He felt the roots of the other trees as they intertwined with his own. As his body tuned to roots and merged with the tree he slept against, he felt each of his nerves die as the pain slowly ceased to have meaning.

As the sun set over the park and the wood and Jonathan's house, he felt relief. There was no more pain to be felt as there was no more him to feel. And as the light began to fade his organs turned to dirt. He felt that too, he felt his insides wither and fade, and he felt each speak as it broke away, but there was no more pain just a gaping hole where his guts used to be. As this decay slowly crawled to reach his lungs, he took a final breath. His brain had stopped resisting.

There was no final exhale as Jonathan Young ceased to be. Just a whisper in the branches of that one single tree.

The earth marks all its children and one day you will return. Do not try to resist as once you are claimed, the earth will never let go.

Now life continued without Jonathan Young, as it always does. And a few years later the land in which the woods resided was sold. Plans were made for a new housing estate and so the woods were to be cut down. However, these plans did not last very long as with each tree that was cut a skeleton could be found embedded within.