

Eric Morgan

Meela and the Trees

When Meela was young she moved through her world, straying into the forest to trace her paths with feet bare in the leaf and moss. She loved poetry and all things that rhyme, not only in words but in the living. Venturing ever deeper, her eyes were touched by endless patterns, by light and shade, scent of wet stone, fresh flower and fern filled her nostrils. Her ears found the crunch and rustle of her shifting feet with the soft white noise of leaf against leaf. On her freckled forearms lay the dampness of the fine floating mists. In these places she would linger and sing, the rhymes flowing from her lips mirroring that which she found in the forest, each alike, yet different.

Meela may have tired of speaking to the trees had they not replied, answering with their gnarled voices, twisted by a hundred winters or in the subtle song of the sprouting of spring. They spoke to her of breeze in branches, of water into root and stem and of tearing wind in storm. They cried of flood and drought, of all things flowing, growing, reaching out. She felt a desire to go with them in their search for the sky so she reached up into their branches, eagerly climbing higher and higher into their canopy where they cradled her body, rocking her in wooden limbs. There in tops of trees, she found a whole new world of rhyming, patterned, swaying friends.

Then with time and care the lightly spinning filaments of friendship linked in a web of knowing, till life of girl was bonded into life of trees. Tendrils softly entered her, welcomed into her mouth, nose, ears and eyes. They penetrated the softest of skin, growing into her, strengthening, knowing. She felt not bound in her place, but instead freed from her tiny body. There is awareness let loose to touch the surrounding land. Through the vast tendrils of funghi she feels it all.

They know her, eyes shut through the slow burn orgasm of spring, the fizz of photosynthesis sparkles between her synapses. But she also feels a darkness woven into heartwood, etched in vein of every leaf, the shadows of slaughter burn into her soul, into her rings of growth. She is one of them, their hurt flows in sap under skin, in blood under bark.

Sun spins over and over. Moon blinks in monthly rhythm, Earth rocks slowly to warm and cool. Fused, tree and girl are part of the last forests.

They watch, intimately aware, the edges slowly eaten, observing humanity gorging itself. The entwined souls feel the approaching fall. The shreds of human in her weep and tremble with fear, but Meela no longer belongs to them. Her capacity, even her desire to flee is gone.

She simply watches, aware.

Then at last her barely moving mouth opens to release a tearing shriek of breath over root bound vocal chords. Through heightened senses a vast agony sears its path through sap, cell, bone and organ, tearing the nerves of twisted girl and trees. Her faded bleeding eyes see the blurring earth twist and race toward her and with a rush of wind to thundering splintering impact.

One day in the rubble a boy finds a piece of wood in the shape of a hand. He picks it up, the long root like fingers fitting perfectly around his.