



From within the darkness

By Maryse Rochette

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On the canvas of light rays that penetrate the web of brush and branches, the breath of trees reveals itself. Held by their embrace, I tread the damp ground - softly, softly - my feet touched by the sodden floor. The great columns rise out of the ground; all around me, sinuous limbs that pierce boldly through space, creating sacred place. As the early fog dissolves into the ethers forest, the symphony unravels in silence. My heart rises in soprano ribbons that dance upwards as if swirling curls of smoke, when Fire Spirit meets Air. All the while, my feet tread – slowly, slowly – to earth’s pace, tapping the rhythm of bass notes. Roots reach down and deep sounds resonate as they push through rock and soil of ancient earth, push through life decomposed and decomposing – leaf piled upon leaf, millennia upon millennia. Tenors and altos join in harmony through the senses; cedar incense, fir resin, leaf mould all tickle smell into being. Sap runs through my veins and arteries; my limbs heed conifers’ call to stand tall; my heart spreads its wings with the fern unfurling. Timber sounds on instruments of bark and moss.

Held by Forest, we are, as in a scroll that changes with every heart beat and soundless breath uttered - I, treading sodden floor, softly, slowly; beetles, doing their work in the dark of dirt, quietly, quietly; birds, weaving dreams of trees between leaves as their feathers flutter from thicket to bough to brush; and Grey Wolf, pacing, pacing, playing, chasing, becoming wilderness, wildness beautifully. Grey Wolf catches my eye and flame meets flame – fur and skin, paws and hands, claws and nails – together in one glance. This is the dance (!) to the music that plays itself in electrical pulses that escape our sight. The dance: the undulation of fur as paws pace. My own shoulders and arms long to dance, long to feel muscles’ rippling underneath the skin’s surface; the pads of my feet yearn to stride through the untamed terrain of mammals. I too am mammal.

Time passes like a perched bird on a branch – still, but with the promise of flight folded in its wings, and soon my feet



are tired. My body lusciously slumps into the warmth of dark shelter. Soil finds its way under my nails, into the twisting folds of my ears, into the cracks of my elbows and knees and penetrates the pores of my being; all that is flesh and bone surrenders to the deep pull of dirt. From within the darkness, sleep comes. Dreams visit the soul. ... a city, an industrious city, and I, a fare maiden, living within its bounds. Confidence wraps me; I am an independent thinker, intelligent, imbued with a strong sense of self. My apartment sits on what used to be an oak forest. Peering into the rooms, I notice timber everywhere: an oak table, pine paneling, cedar shingles, cherry bowls... It smells of stillness, insiderness, staleness. My chest constricts, my insides stir: I need air! I make for the nearby wood and penetrate its walls – a fir plantation – it is a wolf-less wood, a rather lifeless wood. I look at the trees but can't see them: they seem purely material, labelled "resource", without breath, without depth. Why do I feel so cold, odd, stoned? ...as if walking off-beat, as if I'm dreaming...when reaching the end of the wood I behold the sight of a forest felled by the fire of progress and a wild outrage bubbles to the surface from the depth of heart and prickles my skin so it... feels the bark...then in the singing breeze, as I spot life dancing through the trees, I remember...seeing myself in the eyes of other creatures...I remember, I remember, I hear...I hear at a distance the symphony sounding through the earth of me.

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