

There Aren't Conversion Rates in the Forest

It was a hot winter day. The sun swung a flag of orange and magenta hues in the sky. I ran further into the dying, hazel forest. Sweat dripped down my chin to the bottom of my throat. My legs were putty on the moist mulch path. My lungs were panting to the rhythm of my heartbeat. With a constant *moderato* filling my head, I thought my head would explode. But they didn't care. The haze of trees and blonde wheatfields danced to the wind's inconsistent metronome. Resentment stopped my fatigue from growing further. I screamed at the top of my lungs, shaking my hands.

"Why am I here!" The trees sharply whistled back. The blistering winds silenced the weak reverberations of my voice throughout the shifting echochamber of branches and bark. Leaves scattered and dirt was swept to the side. The world continues to move. The temperature rose. I wanted to carve a permanent cavity into their sides. My hands twitched.

"What do you want from me!" The coarse melody persisted. I felt each and every twig, stick, and branch in my body snap in half. The wind brushed my hair and would cause a tremor that permeated throughout my spine. I ran and ran and ran. With each step, craters formed under my feet. My mind could only think of release. I wanted to lay waste. My blood rushed from forearm down to my fingertips. My hands instinctively flexed into a fist.

I wasn't afraid of the forest.

"Where am I supposed to be!" The world stood still. This time, I had silenced the forest. The wind couldn't speak. I made eye-contact with the cavity that had crawled up the tree using the bark ladder. The tree nodded back and forth. The only sound that could be heard in this cell of decaying trees was myself, still panting. I could only pant.

We were breaking, but I began to crumble first. My stomach twisted and contorted into indescribable shapes. My vision was spilling. My legs shook and stirred. A wave of malaise washed over me. But instead of shoving, the trees swayed and swooned in the wind. Their branches moved back and forth like a wooden pendulum.

I punched my fist into the sturdy, dark oak floor. I was left simmered and pacified. I buried a part of myself in that forest to release a fertilizer made of spite and anger.