

A Mayfly in the Wind

When I become conscious, I feel the heat of the planet's star. The air of the atmosphere permeates my mechanical compartments and I see trees I believe. Trees with unwavering trunks protruding from the planet's surface like nothing I have seen. Many inhabitants of this planet, so my system tells me, rely on them to live. Bringers of life, I'm awed by their diversity in size, form and color as I wander through the planet's flora. The warmth and softness of the soil gives me a feeling of safety even though I'm uncertain where I'm headed toward.

While I walk the planet, I further query my system about it. Like other planets, this one has aggregations of water that are essential to the inhabitants. They render life possible for outsiders but are ecosystems on their own. Fascinated by my findings I nearly oversee the two antlers peeking out from behind an oak tree. I'm careful to approach this inhabitant, but when I face them, they gaze at me with the same curiosity as I gaze at them. I sense no hostility which prompts me to feel his surface. Their hair is firm just like their antlers which remind me of trees, branching off to unfurl their beauty and to taste more of the planet's offerings. Each branch is testament to the skillful maneuvering of survival, the relentless making of art. It is always a privilege to behold nature's doings.

I proceed to venture forward. The biodiversity on this planet is unprecedented to my newborn memory. I wonder whether my people have seen the like. In the vastness of the ever-expanding cosmos, I often find my mind traveling to places I have not yet seen or will never see. My time is limited while the possibilities are not. And while the planets I see in my lifetime will only make up a minute, insignificant fraction of what I can possibly see, it does not sadden me. Every partition on my memory card holds a beautiful, singular experience that cannot be replicated by anybody else, not even by myself. Each experience is part of my narrative, evidence of my being. I have accepted the reality of my fleetingness in the face of infinity. All I can do is fill it with as much wonder as possible.

The temperature decreases and I hear music that is thunder-like growling in the distance. As it crescendos, I see how the forest slowly gives way to a large body of water. Just like the air, the water flows through my physical body when I enter it. There are small, nimble inhabitants winding through the life-giving substance I'm enclosed by. In the many attempts of touching them and feeling their patterned skin, I come to the realization that these inhabitants are too quick for me. They and the other inhabitants underneath the water surface differ considerably from their upper kin. So seemingly unlike, yet so adjacent; the children of this planet. One organism.

Again, carried away by what I see, I do not notice the change of the sound landscape. The loud, uninhibited growling turned into a subdued, guttural simmering. Once out of water, I again hear the music that has accompanied me to this sight and, for the first time, I see my physical body on this planet. It is reflected on the water's surface, slightly blurred and interwoven with its inhabitants underneath as if they were extensions of my physicality. I have short, black hair which is stiff and vigorous, brown eyes in which a star's last breath is frozen in time. I study the rest of my body and find myself once more intimately joined with my surroundings. Although I know my bodies are of inorganic matter and cannot be assimilated into the planets'

circle of creation, a part of my consciousness tells me otherwise. I feel like I belong nowhere and everywhere. I'm an omniscient explorer, a knower of all worlds, yet none bear my roots. What does it mean? To belong?

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I hear only the humming of the helicopter. The amazon beneath us with its myriad of branches reminds me of my time here. It will end where the lungs of the planet are.

I stand at a threshold between arrival and departure, future and past. In the end I know that I should reside. Yearning the past and searching the future divert the mind from the present. Yet, I dwell in these memories of the bygone 11221 days as if they were home. From my first encounter with an elk to my last days in the land of the rising sun, traveling the east coast up to Wakkanai; earth is a cosmos, where celestial objects unite and part on a cross point of their trajectories or remain forever intertwined. The dynamics between the inhabitants have made me feel at ease, warmed my core, but also made me avert my eyes for I know the cruel necessities of nature. I wish to remove the moments of ruthlessness, of violence and death, but I can't. My system does not permit the removal of memories. Besides all, I'm a collector and if I want to see, I must see everything.

As I go through my memories, I realize that the warmth of human nature has often transported me to the forests. This did not come to my mind, living through the moment itself. Perhaps the beauty of life solidifies when we look back, while it is indistinct when we paint it. In this instant I'm creating memories of memories, yet no part of my painting is repeated; I attach new emotions to the old and paint them afresh in a new shape. What makes memories persistent is the ascription of our inner world to them. Now I know. I never saw what I have collected as I have been busy collecting. The surge of feelings invoked by my revisiting the past overwhelms me and I feel a stirring in my core. I'm at home.

I tell the pilot that I have never been here and that I will be having no guidance. Taken aback, he wishes me good luck with subtle derision. I watch the helicopter take off and enter my last stop on earth.

For the last time, I feel the soil beneath my feet and the great trees. Inhabitants indigenous to the rain forest, their last sanctuary on this planet, greet me with their presence. I'm grateful. They may not witness the centuries to come, their beauty vanishing.

I walk into a clearing where there is a small pond of water. The rain gently falls onto the leaves, the ground and creates softness for my hearing when it touches the water. This is where I will go, I decide.

And as I assimilate my vicinity before my consciousness occupies a new physical design on a new world, I ask myself once anew:

What does it mean to belong?

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You are at home; thus, you belong.

I'm not from here; I'm not from anywhere.

Does it matter? You are here, on this wide plane where everything exists.

No, it does not matter.

How fortunate I am to be able to hold onto these memories, to be able to hold onto my being. What I choose to see is what I am. I gradually shut down my compartments which I need to wander and see this planet. I lose the feeling for my surroundings and my sight blackens with each passing second. I am detached, yet so intrinsically linked to everything. I know they exist despite my not sensing them. My memories are real, they do not lie. Fragments of an unending stream of events, they are simultaneously testament to the all that ever was. Is there anything more beautiful?

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