

Autumn

I scuff my feet across the feeble forest floor, the soles of my hefty boots scratching the earth and its sodden surface. My unstable steps graze the autumnal dusting of multi-coloured leaves that crease beneath my stride. I can't help but consider that we are all, at some point, autumn leaves.

We have all been let down by the branches of support that we rely on the most. They feed us, filling us with the maintenance that we need to thrive. The branches provide a scaffold for you to grow, to develop from a diminutive clasp of insecurity into a budding opening, letting in the light and nutrients you need. And from that small surge of growth, you become a flourishing life form, reaching out to the plentiful environment surrounding your every move. This may last a lifetime – you may be lucky enough to grow from the compassionate divisions of an evergreen.

Or you may be like me, simply developing from the likes of an oak tree, their leaves constantly regenerating with the seasons— causing the more mature leaves such as myself to be rejected and forgotten. The branches gradually lose their ability to care to your ever so simple needs. Your own capability to proliferate has been weakened by what you thought was there for you the whole time. The branches were your lifeline, providing everything that you felt was important to you. Over time, you begin to realise that this wasn't the branch that you had hoped to evolve from. The branch gradually loses its grip and your stem progressively dwindles until what was once a tight grasp...becomes nothing.

They let you go.

You drift with the gentle breeze, hoping that it'll take you somewhere safe. You glide amongst other leaves like yourself, surrounded by the many whispers that still course through your wearying veins. Although you put in some sort of effort the battle with the driving wind, it carries you elsewhere and as it slows, you tumble to the lifeless ground with whatever self-respect and grace that you have left.

Your vibrant green used to represent a prosperous life that you had once had. Now your skin glows a dull yellow in the hope that you'll be noticed. But the ground is rarely looked at, and so your golden tint blends into a damaged red, impaired with orange and brown bruises until one day, you are invisible amongst the ground and its chaotic layers of limp lives, deceased dreams and unconscious feelings. You're trodden on by careless organisms until your delicate armour becomes a fragile skeletal structure. Your feeble body is weathered by the beatings of gusts of wind and the poundings of inconsiderate feet. You continue to be wounded within the battlefield of a forest floor, hoping to be grasped by the earth to once again grow from an affectionate branch. This time, you want it to be stronger, wiser, and more considerate of you and what you desire from this bond.

I long to grow from the more accustomed and devoted branches of an evergreen. To have a bond so strong that not even the bitterest of winters can destroy. I hope to one day belong to a branch that provides for me, and tends to my doubtful demeanour. All I want is to have confidence surging through my veins and a resilient layer protecting everything that I am. I

desire to have a lasting bond with a branch, and to have faith in that branch that it won't let me down like all the others that I've relied on before.

I can't help but consider that we are all, at some point, autumn leaves. We are all autumn leaves at some point, trampled on and stricken down, but we are also the trees that sprout branches – the branches that leaves just like us trust. We are all trees. We are all branches.

We are all autumn leaves.