

# SOULFUL FLORA AND HE, THE THINKER

*Jay Mason*

A breath of life was just as fleeting as He. It knew this, deep in Its soul – though It couldn't think, It knew. It did not know who He was, nor did It wonder (for It was incapable of wondering). And while It could hold certainties, It also felt; Its conviction and emotion were a force that held insurmountable power. A force that was It.

The sound of pounding on the muddy earth was rather unpleasant, thought He. Merely a boy among the ranks of seething bodies, he was (should have been) gripped by the heart and welded into the collective conscience of the soldiers rushing by. He was not. Apathetic, a passive pebble skittering calmly along inside of a deluge, he allowed himself to be swept up in the frenzy. In his mind, there was a plane. It was grassy, open, not a goal in sight. Why? There was no why. A shout came from somewhere over the snow-dusted mountain tops and he realised that the crush of bodies around him had become suffocating. There was nothing he could do but hope he was not thrust into a boulder. Perhaps he could find a way out of the torrent – ride a current and arrive away from the intense swirl of men.

The army rode as one, surging over the landscape, trampling the shrubs with little regard for their beauty. The mass shared a single thought; 'move quickly, tire not. We will arrive.' Much like It, they were fuelled by emotion and conviction. This was their power, raw and unstable. A drop of pain swept into a tempest of rage, fury, and hate, until it disturbed the flow of their collective conscience, forcing the little trickles of their minds to converge into one heaving swell.

It winced as a ripple of the purest loathing reached It in Its pool of calm,

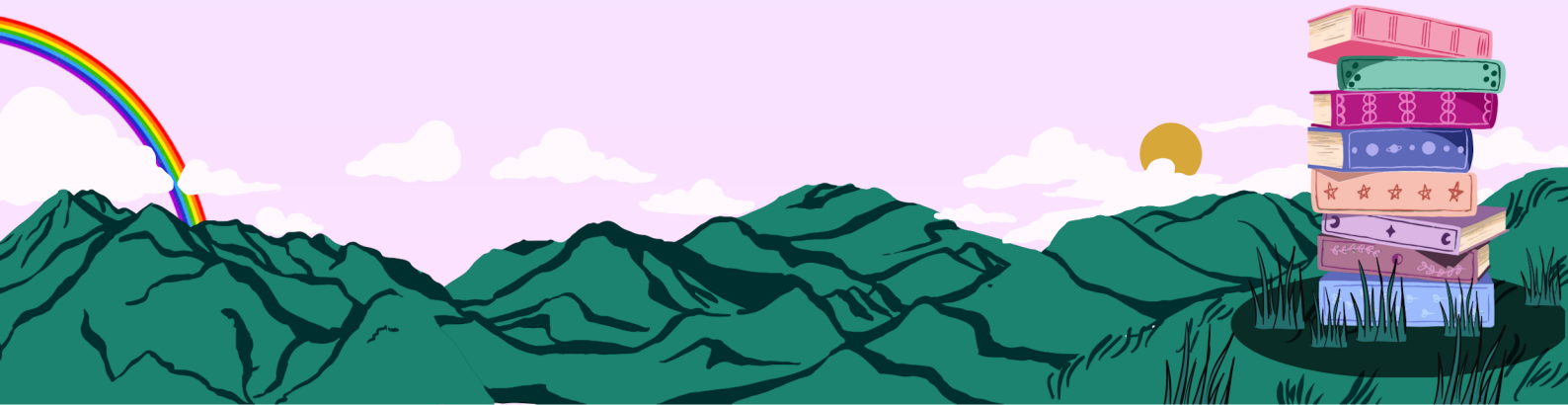


recoiling at the smell of death and thoughtless orders. An orchid was ground into the dirt – a sickening wet crunch. It was aware now, of the disturbance in its forest. It felt a tug, a tug on its dormant mind, and it reached outwards, toward. A boy. A little tadpole caught amidst the roiling amalgamation of currents, a beacon of calm.

The boy's heart was being pulled. He felt a momentary thrill of fear – the welding torch was sparking, ready to melt him into the whole when he came to a realisation. The force was entirely devoid of the destructive compulsion the army held so close to their heart, the abrasive feeling of fear shrouded in a mist of anger. No, the tug on his heart was gentle, a hesitant touch skating the surface of his mind. He felt inclined to comply with this sensation, so foreign to him who had been submerged in violence from the very day he learned to think. It was a kind touch.

There was a certain point where safety had to be discarded in favour of other, more important things. It felt this as it existed in its plane, felt the boy slipping in and out of the fractures in its consciousness. Perhaps it was time – it knew now that this was the single most important thing it would ever do, if only because its ultimate conclusion would come soon after.

It surged upward from its passive position in the pool, gathering force from the trees, the rocks, and the stone as it stretched forward, searching for the boy with urgent clarity. Something so small should have been impossible to find in the ocean that was the army, but the boy's mind shone at it like a beacon through the storm. He was so close that the creature's infinite fingers could almost trail through the trickle of his thoughts, could almost close around the entire expanse of his open psyche. The boy, somewhat willing, gradually drifted into its grasp until he was resting in the palm of its hand, his mind swirling leisurely.



It felt strangely melancholic as its fingers tightened around the boy, a closed fist representing his departure from the forest. It was unsure of what It had done, whether the boy had drizzled into the afterlife or had simply ceased to exist. It did not wonder.

The boy felt as his very self was held by another entity, one that he trusted for no particular reason. His mind was being enclosed in something larger than anything he knew, a fist of everything all at once that was squeezing the viscous liquid of his mind into a substance that could be absorbed. The army would not notice his absence, not even as he fell from his horse and was trampled underfoot.

Something that was neither the boy nor the creature observed the pool of calm, agitated waves crashing about as it attempted to recover from the past disturbance. The thing noticed that something was occurring in the forest (the forest it had sworn to protect), ripples of death echoing through its thoughts. It was time to end the flood.

