



Resonance

By Wayne Visser

The bark felt rough against my hand, as I knelt beside the felled giant. I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply, listening for a pulse. The mountain air was cold, crisp, bracing. Timing was critical. Unless I could detect a heartbeat and locate its source before it faded, nothing I did afterwards would matter; nothing would restore the life I had just taken away. My mind was still, my senses highly strung, listening, waiting, hoping.

And then I felt it, a mere ripple of a whisper in the pool of silence, a faint stirring of life's essence. With invisible hands I reached out, searching for its subtle form, stretching to make esoteric contact, and finding its definition at last, tentatively exploring its shape, her shape, the curving contours of her body, the enigmatic expression of her face, the alluring warmth of her being. All my attention was focused on absorbing this magical image, embedding it in my tactile memory, before it disappeared, as I knew it would, as so many others had before.

The first sign that my time was running out was a blurring of the edges being traced by my trembling fingers, then a fuzziness of the emotions being evoked in my solar plexus, then the creeping onset of an icy chill in my bones, before finally a solemn, deadly silence crushed my chest. It was enough, I thought. I had been in time. There had been enough breath left in it to communicate its secret desires for the afterlife to me. I felt honoured and mouthed a simple prayer of thanks to the spirit of the tree.

Then the pace changed dramatically. Dormancy gave way to activity, sedentary thoughts to frenetic activity, reflective contemplation to driven taskmanship. I ran my finger lightly against the axe's razor-sharp blade and felt a glow of professional pride. The moist bark stripped off easily, exposing a lusciously smooth, beautifully naked trunk, glistening with a silvery film of perspiration. My eyes lingered for a moment on the natural flow of its grain and the swirling eddy of its tones.

Marking out the most interesting section, which was awash with turbulent rapids of tawny colour, I sawed top and bottom. The clean cut ends, like a melon cleaved in two, opened to reveal the intimate secrets of a remarkable life. The lure was irresistible and I placed the back of my hand on its cool, damp surface, allowing my fingers to be drawn into the vortex of its maze. With the freshly unleashed wetness like arousing spice in the air, I inhaled long and slow.

Almost at once, I felt a surge of impatient desire emanating from within the enormous log, a longing to be born, to be unrestrained. I knew it was my mission to free her from inside. Labouring in a frenzy, I set to work with a smaller axe, hacking at the walls of her prison until her rough shadow figure was just barely visible. The possessive sense of volcanic urgency simmered down into a calm bubbling expectation. I swapped the axe for a machete and,





more slowly and carefully now, began chipping away at the encrusted layers that still kept her hidden from view.

I knew now she would live. Yet still, her fate was in my hands. I would determine whether she remained an indistinct facsimile of her true self, or emerged as an iridescent embodiment of her full aesthetic glory. I felt the weight of the chisel in my hand and the nervous tension coursing through my veins. I smiled. This is what I was born to do, what I was born to be. A breeze and a flutter of wings awakened my tactile memory and she shimmered into crystal clear vision, radiating pure light.

My hands moved in tandem with an invisible guiding pair, and as each curled wood shaving dropped to the floor, the brilliant disembodied form that hovered still in my imagination merged a little more with the gorgeous sculpture that was taking place before my eyes. Time ceased to be a measure. Perfection manifests when it will. I stopped often to trace her emerging features with my dusty fingers, to cup the swathe of her curves in my rough hands.

And when I had finished painstakingly etching the laughing lines on her face and felt an overwhelming urge to embrace her, I knew that my job was very nearly done. I thought I detected a sigh of contentment as I caressed her velvety skin with successively finer sheets of sandpaper, and was it a quiet moan that escaped her ever-so-slightly parted lips when I massaged oil into her tanned body? Finished, I felt relieved and satisfied, exhausted and exhilarated.

The wood felt smooth against my hand, as I kneeled beside her graceful figure. Once again, I closed my eyes and breathed deeply, listening for a pulse. This was the final test, to determine whether I had succeeded in my quest to restore the life I had taken. My ear rested quietly against her breast for what seemed like an eternity, hearing nothing but a lifeless silence. Slowly, as the silence deepened, a feeling of dread spread like poison through my frozen body.

The icy grip of failure tightened around my throat. Sharp needle-like points of immanent tears pierced my eyes. What had gone wrong? She seemed so perfect. Had I not recreated each and every nuance of her sensual form, recalled faithfully by the trace of my invisible hands? Had I not been true to the glorious vision that had lit up my inner sight?

All of a sudden, violent waves of emotion crashed in on my senses and pulled me under into the dark depths of despair. Uncontrollable sobs wracked my broken body. I had neither the strength nor the desire to fight the malevolent tide. Let me drown! I deserve it.

I was given the gift of Inspiration, and I have failed to breathe life into Beauty in return. Now, she will wither and die like a delicate flower cast aside. A flower! Like a lightning bolt striking me between the eyes, I remembered. Of course! Something was missing.





I rushed into the wood, wiping the tears from my face as I ran, and searched frantically until I spotted what I was looking for. Dashing back to where she stood, I tenderly placed the purple flower I had just picked behind her ear, tucking it into the folds of flowing hair.

Even before I had finished arranging the pretty blossom, I felt the throb of life renewed. Perhaps it was the dappled light through the trees, but her eyes suddenly seemed alive and full of passion. And perhaps it was just the echo of my own pounding heart, but I swore I felt her breast rise and fall, in perfect resonance with mine.



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