

Childhood Memories

Did you ever have a favourite scent during your childhood? I did, still remember it as if it was yesterday. My mum's fur. It might sound a bit controversial, but I would never deny it. Every time I hugged my mummy there it was. That feeling of motherly love, comfort, safety and warmth from inside of her pouch... Those little everyday trips to go get food for me. She did it all. My dad had never been in the picture. He was only a part of the process which made me. I didn't have siblings. Mother koalas could only bear one joey (baby koala), so I did feel quite lonely at times. Anyways, we koalas mostly ate eucalyptus leaves. I must admit it wasn't tasty, but we did what we had to for survival. All the essentials were there. We felt peace, we had a home and that was all that mattered. That's all gone now.

We didn't know what was coming. I remember the smoke being unbearable, it was almost as if someone had put me in a dark stormy cloud. My eyes burned. I couldn't open them. For a slight moment I peeked out of the branches to the best of my abilities. All I saw was raging fire. Thousands of animals scattered everywhere not knowing what to do. Terrifying screams from birds up above. Were they warnings...? I couldn't comprehend what was going on, I was just a baby after all. I felt cold which was weird considering there was fire spreading everywhere. I couldn't do a thing, all I could do was sit in one spot, waiting for someone to rescue me. It didn't make any sense to cry, there was no need to. My animal instincts wouldn't allow it and besides it would not have changed ANYTHING. Slowly, it started to hit me. This hell-like chaos. I wouldn't survive this. At least that is what I thought. What did we do to deserve such an end. Was it our fault?

We were only God's creatures trying to survive our whole lives. Suddenly, it struck me. Where was my mother? The realisation made me panic. I couldn't see her, was she still on the tree holding on for dear life or on the ground amid the fire. Perhaps she was searching for me. The only reason for me to live disappeared and I couldn't do anything to change that. My home was no more, it ceased to exist and all I could do was ponder around on the ground and wait. I didn't want to stick around in a world without her, it would feel too big and too empty. Why did YOU have to take her away from me? You had no right and yet you did it your way. It was infuriating. Is it because we can't speak like you do? Is it because we can't move like you do? You're supposed to be animals too, but I can't sense it, all I can sense is greed. Those were my last thoughts... or so I thought.

Those events seemed like distant memories to me now, except my mum. My memory of her hadn't changed but alas I could not remind myself of her comforting and safe touch. Back to the present, it turned out that, miraculously, I was saved by animals who called themselves humans who then stuffed me in a place called a zoo? I was supposed to be safe there, but it felt quite the opposite to me. This wasn't home, it was a prison. A prison I couldn't escape even if I tried because I was just a measly koala with no say against animals (humans), who had the power to do anything. The so called "ZOO" felt more like a fashion show. Countless people walked by looking, smiling, observing. Either they would love you and take loads of pictures or they would find you repulsive and walk away immediately. "Mummy, what is that? It looks weird" small children would say as they passed by me and the other koalas. How could I possibly know what those grim faces meant. Sometimes I was thankful

for the glass wall separating us. Why could these people walk freely? There was no answer. Was this going to be my future? A display for other animals to see and judge? Over the days, I grew desperate. Desperate for the support of my favourite trees, desperate for my favourite snacks, desperate for my mother but it was selfish of me to feel this. I'm all grown up, I shouldn't have such childish thoughts, should I? All of that got sucked out of me during that terrible day. "Was Mother Nature watching?" I wondered. Those feelings felt like constant harassment, not leaving me for even a second. I decided to escape. Dead or alive I would do it. I would never surrender to such a future.

Maybe if I behaved badly, they'd let me go. I started to throw tantrums every now and then, started being aggressive towards other koalas. Of course, the others knew about my plan. I would reclaim what was taken away from me by force. One day the workers had enough of me. They viciously grabbed me and took me out of the room. After that I found myself in a room, lying down on some table, feeling drained and unable to move. Just barely I could hear people talking close to me as if from above me. "We need to put him down immediately; he is a danger to the other animals. We cannot afford an unstable creature like that roaming around for people to see." a doctor exclaimed. "We've got no choice, if we don't do this less people will come and we'll lose our money rapidly". "Put me down?" I thought. I would have never thought those would be the last words that came from my mouth. They started to shove syringes in me, oh it was so painful. Suddenly, it went pitch black. Was I dead? Is this where animals like I rested? Did I escape? There in the distance, stood a silhouette. A very familiar one. I stilled in shock as I asked "Mum, is that you?"

Julia Juroszek, kl. 2B
II LO im. M. Kopernika w Cieszynie