



Ancient Woodland

For Childlike Souls

by Lizzy Farmer



"... Small moments, any moments of time engaging with nature are, to my mind, valuable. Nature is everywhere; you are nature..."

▲ Nature Calling



We are all children. We just got taller. When we were younger than we are today, we would have all picked up a stick, had a ladybird crawl over our hand or tried to catch a grasshopper or perhaps a butterfly. Us, the younger us, would have been enchanted. Watching this creature making its journey across our skin, tickling as it went, or witnessing its journey along a leaf, or fluttering by. Our gaze naturally following it, the insect totally unaware of its magic spell bestowed upon us fully captivating our attention and taking up our time most beautifully.

We lost ourselves in these moments. I too, today lost myself again for a while, wandering half crouched over and soaked to the bone, scouring the peaty woodland floor for edible fungi, chanterelle this time. Did I expect to find them? I truly hoped that we would, but the things I saw during my search for these elusive treats far outweighed the golden prizes that were foremost on my radar.

A frog, shiny wet, and dripping akin to me, from the torrents of rain finding their way to us both beneath the dense ancient tree canopy above us. I reached for my phone to take a picture, hardly worrying about my own noises in doing so, due to the thundering rain smashing into the ground as I snapped away at it quickly. Then it was gone. With a giggle at its sideways hop, and at my own small success of having got a decent shot, I continued my search between the two fallen trees ahead. There, peeking out

from under a smaller branch was the delicious prize that had me out on this quest in the relentless rain.

We came away today with 'only' five small inconspicuous to most, mushrooms. Running half-heartedly back to the shelter of the car to get back to my son's school on time, and feeling like we had won a marathon or panned for gold and found a nugget proportionate to the size of one of the larger specimens that we had procured from the wood.

Now as I type I truly do wonder what the real prize was today? Was it the handful mushrooms so sought after by many this time of the year or was it the frog? Or was it the feeling of rain on skin that in a previous life was skin that spent far too long after childhood in warehouses, offices and underneath artificial lights for many hours at a time, unknowingly craving and needing this time, this precious time outside.

We all must do what we have to do in this life to get by. We cannot all realistically elope to the woodlands daily or go live in a hut. Or give up our 9-5s. Some do, and those lifestyles too, are not without their difficulties.

I am now sat slumped upright in my bed, in a manner that is likely bad for my posture, under a duvet made not of natural materials, with a lightbulb illuminating the room with manmade light that is not good for my mammal eyes, and I have forgotten to put on my glasses.

However. I must write this piece whilst the moment takes me, and I can remember the finer details of my wander this afternoon.

I think we should do this, each and every one of us where we can, this getting outside lark.

