

Mon

by James Knight

It is suddenly very cold.

Mon opens his eye. He sees fog, the ground. A skeletal tree.

Where am I? he thinks.

...

Mon listens. He can hear distant noises through the fog: laughter, gunshots, cars, birdsong.

So I am in the world, he thinks.

...

Mon shivers. He's naked. The need to warm himself is sudden, imperious.

His body's other demands soon follow. He's hungry, thirsty, horny.

...

With a lurching motion, shivering violently, Mon propels himself through the fog.

...

Sloping ground gives way and he finds himself on a road. The fog is thinner here. The road is empty.

The distant sounds seem fainter.

...

Mon curls up against the cold, foetus-like, on his side.

Despite feeling frozen, Mon wants desperately to get up and hunt for food. His stomach moans mournfully.

And he has an erection.

He feels like a marionette, pulled one way then another by his bodily needs.

So this is life, he thinks.

...

Mon falls asleep.

...

When he wakes he's so cold he can't move.

Is it possible to be alive and have rigor mortis? he wonders.

...

A rat crawls onto Mon, taking him for a corpse.

He waits until it is near his face, then opens his mouth. A slow, painful operation! The rat is curious. It peers into Mon's maw.

Mon waits until the head is in his mouth, then bites it clean off. Nutrition at last!

...

Mon has eaten his fill. This gives him the strength to straighten out from his agonised coil. He stands, walks.

Rat is tasty, he thinks.

...

Further along, the road is overrun by vegetation. He trips, collapses onto his belly and starts slithering through the tangled green. He's aware of movement.

Insects are at war. They seethe, scurry, make bristling formations. Mon sees heads, abdomens, legs, thoraxes, severed, crushed.

To make matters worse, his progress is impeded by the aggressive erection whose pangs continue to torment him.

Maybe life would be better if I were a girl, he ponders.

Around him, creation agitates, cries, eats itself.

...

Fog, wracked undergrowth, insects, the slaughterhouse of nature. Mon closes his eye in horror.

...

Mon has slept again. He opens his eye and weeps.

He wonders what he is. He looks down at his body, taking in every sorry detail. He concludes that he must still be in his larval phase.

...

Something is becoming visible in the grey haze: rounded, fleshy forms, vaguely coalescing. Mon goes nearer. It is a woman. He stares at her.

The woman moans, weeps, grizzles. When Mon is within her reach she gathers him in. Her teeth are little gravestones, her hair wickerwork. She smells of burnt wood.

He tries to speak, for the first time. His mouth twists.
A word, barely a word, a syllable, repeated, a non-word dragged
up from his core: "Mama."
Again. "Mama."
Gaining confidence, he says it over and over.
"Mama, mama, mama, mama."
It accelerates, becomes a mad burble.
For the first time: joy.
The woman slams an oily hand over his mouth, so he stops
talking. He scrutinises her inscrutable face.
Then the fog erases her.
...
He finds himself back on the ground, on his back. No sign of the
woman. The road presents itself again.
He is overcome by a sense of loss. And he needs a piss.
...
Mon stands and continues along the road. The fog is at its
thickest here and he can't see his feet.
No sounds now. He keeps walking.

