

## My Reflection, by Luu Tiffany

An old man sits on a tree stump, gazing at the bitter forest that once was a beautiful greenery, lost in his own despair.

*Every abandoned house was once  
A treasured home after all.*

His mother would always take him to a jackfruit tree that soared above all others at the heart of the forest like a parent looking over their herd of children, sharing stories under the shade.

As years flew by, transitioning to high school turned their daily discussions into dry conversations then to swift greetings. Soon, they consisted purely of criticism or complaints. No drinking, smoking, spreading rumors... Does she even want her son to have some fun?

Eager to flaunt his freedom turning 18, he spent the night with bare acquaintances, speeding and opening live car concerts. Tomorrow had risen when they arrived at his doorstep, the sole light among the street.

He sensed his mother's presence as he reached for the keys. The sight of her teenage boy lifted the heavy bags under her eyes.

"How was your night?"

"It's alright."

"Are you hurt anywhere?"

"What? Um no."

"Good, it's late, dear, go to bed."

Stunned at her request, he shut the bedroom door. Charging his depleted battery, 15 missed calls from a mother desperately worrying about her son's whereabouts caught him stock-still. Her silent cries echoed deafeningly in his mind.

*She was never angry, just broken.*

Decades later, the man currently owns a million-dollar company facing multiple environmental lawsuits. "The few trees bulldozed or wildlife lost were merely collateral damage," he declared.

He is surrounded by subordinates at work, yet returns every night to an empty penthouse. One day, he revisited the path that once brought him nothing but smiles, for he rather sat on a tree stump than mountains of meaningless wealth.

Tears trickled and dropped in a nearby pond. He glanced up at the water surface, perplexed at the face staring into his soul. For so long, he sought everywhere for a helping hand, scapegoat, or rescuer but failed to look at his own reflection.

A voice whispered, "Mother hasn't given up on you."

*Mother?*

He saw a magnificent jackfruit tree was blooming in the spot of the stump.

*Mother Nature.*

Humanity has hurt her sons and daughters, and a mother's love knows no patience.

As parents, we vow to guard our offspring with our lives, yet it is we who are behind their unbreathable air, drowned homes or wilted crops. Our children cry for our attention as we had robbed them of a childhood, a green planet, a future.

I woke up to an ink-black sky with my body drained and my mind fully awake. Was it a dream, or a vision? The towering jackfruit tree still stood outside my window, but so was the looming threat for its life and ours.

It is time for us to pick up the quill again and begin a new chapter, to write a story where we shall be the hero, not the villain.