

A man walked along a dirt path. He wore a thick coat, lined with wool. As he walked, he pushed his head into the core of the coat. He would check often to make sure the hood covered as much of his face as possible. He stalked the world through the window of his coat hood, making sure no one was watching him. Though, he'd amateurishly forget to check behind him.

He walked fast but not too fast as to tire himself in the winter cold. On this walk, he had forgotten to bring his gloves. Constantly, he'd pull his hands out of his coat pocket, and adjust his hood. This cycle made his hands a blistering red. It would have been wise for him to get to where he was going soon.

As he approached a bend in the road, a small lemon tree stood on the side. Immediately, the tree caught the man's attention. It was horridly out of place in the wilderness of snow covered pines. It wore no snow on its leaves. The leaves appeared as if spring were in early bloom, and a flock of lemons decorated its branches. It was like nothing the man had ever seen before, and he had traveled this road many times.

As he approached the tree, he felt the tree. It understood his human warmth, and in response, it exuded warmth as well. The tree beat in the tune of the man's intrigue. The air around felt easy, as if the oxygen in the environment was revitalized. The tree outstretched its arms towards the man, its smile bespoke to the man's desires.

He did not rush towards the tree, he merely stared at it. Only inching closer when he believed the tree had diminished its attention towards him. He

reached his arm out, plucking one of the lemons off the tree. The tree smiled at him, and so did he. He split the lemon with his hands and indulged in the sweetness of the fruit. Each bite he took with care, slowly munching down, slowly sucking in the juices, and slowly processing the flavor. The lemon was perfectly ripe and perfectly sweet. It was like no other taste. The sour aftertaste was magnificently addicting, yet intriguingly flawed, almost on purpose. Because, as the man tasted the sourness, the lemon's sweetness called to him further.

As he bit into the next lemon, his skin flaked. He paid no mind, continuing to indulge. Though, his skin continued to peel away. Rapidly, what was once a bright red on his hands, became a dark flesh. As his joints moved around the lemon, they bled. And, as the juices of the fruit engulfed his tendons, they burned and stung. Yet, he paid no mind. He continued his indulgence, enjoying every bite of the yellow delight. The strength to move was sapped from his body, every bite was slower than the last, yet all the more fulfilling. Soon, the cheeks around his face began to fall away. Skin dropped to the ground, exposing flesh, bones, and nerves. With each offering, the tree consumed, soaking the man's blood and protein into the soil. His eyes began to dry up, his vision shriveled, yet the lemons remained juicy. One after the other, his eyes plopped out, landing in the skin of the lemon. Without his vision to guide him, he ate his own eyeball. He choked on the unfamiliar flavor, it stunted him. His trance dissipated but it was too late to run. His legs had already sunk into the dirt.

Soon, all that remained of the man was his coat, pants, and a puddle of deep red nutrients. The tree smiled, and soaked it all in. The sun shined on it that day.