

BACKGROUND ABOUT 'OUR FOREST GIRL'

I've been writing for as long as I can remember. I love discovering stories, and weaving words together.

A lot of my stories have started out as experiments with different styles and techniques of writing, and this one was no exception.

I had previously written a short story in fourth person – using a group of people to narrate, instead of a single narrator. I loved this type of writing. The fourth person allows the reader to achieve a wider and more detached view of the events of the story, making it easier to write a more vague and metaphorical story, rather than one deeply entrenched in facts, times and places.

But this time I wanted to take it a step further – what if the group of narrators weren't people, but were trees?

What if there was a story narrated by a forest?

This was the core idea of my story, and the rest flowed from there.

At this time my dad was reading *The Lord of the Rings* aloud to me, and we had noticed how Tolkien used subtle alliteration to help his prose to flow, and read easily, especially aloud. Not alliteration always at the start of words, or in words next to each other, but similar sounds, in words near each other. I made use of this technique to make my own prose flow well together.

I love the power of the paragraph in writing. Putting a sentence on a new line makes the reader pause that moment longer than just a full stop. Giving that pause makes the next sentence far more powerful. I used this technique, along with repetition, to emphasise events, and create emotion during my story.

I also made use of contrast in this story, showcasing the differences between the beauty of the untouched forest, and the ugliness of the battle. I used more subtle alliteration, and longer sentences when describing the forest and the forest girl, and shorter sentences when describing the soldiers and the battle. Longer sentences tend to create a feeling of peace or relaxation, whilst the short, repetitive sentences create feelings of tension, dread and brokenness.

I believe that stories exist to help us in life. Yes, to entertain us, but also to show us different perspectives and give us empathy. Stories are a filter through which to view life, giving us new ideas and perspectives. A story written without a point, except to make money, or entertain, is, frankly, missing the point. Stories are one of the most powerful forces humans have to influence each other, and I believe we should harness stories for good.

A theme that has always resonated with me in my writing is the danger of hatred.

I am a Christian, and my faith has deeply impacted my writing. I believe that we should never, for any reason hate another person. All humans are precious, created in the image of God. Evil certainly exists, and we should hate it with our whole being. But we should hate the evil itself, not the people doing the evil.

This is the theme of my story. Hating people cannot solve anything. It will just enslave us, and cause needless pain and suffering.

Humans are naturally evil. Even what we think is good, is often evil. I tried to demonstrate that fact by not naming either army, nor the actual causes that they're fighting for. Both claim to fight for 'freedom', but both are evil, because both are full of hatred. Even the soldier who fires the shot, and begins the battle, believes that he is doing a good thing. Hatred can do that, misguide us, and fool us, causing only more pain in the end.

This story's most prominent theme, however, is power of the individual. I made a point of demonstrating this theme in multiple places. The one girl, who stood up to the army, speaking for goodness. The one evil man, who in his hatred shot a bullet that started the battle.

The one good soldier, who was touched by the actions of the girl, whose life was changed forever by her sacrifice.

This theme of the individual is a key element of my story, demonstrating the power each of us has, in our choices, to change the world, for good, or evil. This theme also contrasts considerably with the style of the story, being narrated in 4th person, as a group. The forest is made up of many trees, as is our world. But the individual still has great power.

Each of us has a choice, each day, to live in love, or in hatred. To do good, or to do bad.

Sometimes, it seems like evil has won, when the bullets are fired.

But sometimes, it's in the battles, that our hearts are touched most deeply.