

Lost in the Forest
by Swami Mahamoha

You have spent your life wandering in a deep and mysterious forest, drinking from the springs of forgetfulness. As your life flows by, you have gone farther and farther, away from the open lands where the sun shines. Perhaps you have even forgotten that there is a place where the sky is open above you, where your heart can leap unbounded into the firmament.

But here is a messenger with a scrap of paper. On it is a map. It is scrawled and difficult to read, but it shows the way to the edge of the forest. Not just one way but many ways: the border can be accessed on all sides. In some places it is very far off and in others it is breathtakingly near. Some paths are difficult while others look straightforward and simple.

The messenger wears the semblance of a smile, but is otherwise undistinguished. He extends his arm, offering you the scrap.

In your pride and embarrassment over your predicament you disdain the offering. Trees are what hold you captive, and paper is made out of trees. How could something related to your enchantment ever provide salvation? You are determined to get away from the trees completely, so why not start by disregarding the one being waved in front of you? Nothing could be more logical than this. Besides, if you acknowledge the trees, wouldn't that only increase their hold over you? And why is this fellow here—what is his game? You must plunge on into the forest and hold to the hope that you will find your own way out through your own resources.

Lost as you are, you can take satisfaction in one thing at least: you didn't give in to that messenger. Others preach that you should ignore the trees and they will lose their hold on you. That sounds satisfactory.

And you've gotten used to being surrounded and closed in by the forest.

(2004, Mahamoha means The Great Delusion, that's me.)