

A Monkey's Smile

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I reside high up in the canopy. I am one rare, exceptional monkey. I am one of only 250 remaining in my species. I wear azure eyes. I have minuscule fingers. Strange, because the rest of my family had elongated fingers. Usually, I would have a prehensile tail adapted for an arboreal lifestyle, instead I have a linear, flat-ended tail. I am also expected to have the ability to swing from branch to branch, yet I do not have any such talents. I am different from everybody else - I have no family left. I lost them to those nefarious, apathetic men, that were armed with those steel contraptions that snipe blazing fireballs. That is why I have such an extremely deep hatred for them. I am the only one left in my troop.

Swinging, swaying, dangling ... all the things I do to keep myself preoccupied and joyous. Sadly, ever since I witnessed my family die in the blink of an eye, I cannot bring myself to smile anymore. I ponder to myself, why? Am I *still* traumatized from when those cruel, imbecilic hunters murdered my beloved ones? Smiling is so simple! Fake smiles, especially. I keep striving to be my before-self. The effervescent version of myself. The one that could smile at the drop of a hat. Nevertheless, I still can't do it.

Today is a somber day, my vision is murky in the rain. As the heavens crack open, I can hear **drizzle, drop, plop**. I try to imagine a sunlit day, when I, for once, am finally feeling warm. Be that as it may, I can not. **Drizzle, drop, plop, drizzle, drop, plop**. Therefore, I lie down and forest bathe, except, I am

looking at the emergent layer, not the canopy. All I can see are rain droplets aiming at me like those fireballs that those men used to take my family away from me. Like a wounded soldier, I pull myself up. I see a scrawny branch ... stretching from my inferior shelter to a ravishing, roofed home.

Now *that* is joy! Astonishing. Did that thought actually come from *me*?

Keenly, I stagger across the tightrope-like branch. One foot forward, and then the other. One foot forward, and then the other. The performance is repeated until I arrive in paradise. For the first time in forever, I feel at peace and forget about that gruesome memory of torment. The ready made camp makes me feel endearment. I am finally able to crack a slight smile.

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot a bunch of ripe bananas sitting right there. I dart towards the vibrant yellowness and start to devour them. Every single one of them are of immaculate taste and of the perfect ripeness. Almost as if... it is too good to be true. Could this culinary heaven just appear out of nowhere? The whole thing is so suspicious. Perhaps I am overthinking everything, and this is a gift from god.

Abruptly, I hear someone shout. "HEY, look up there! We've lured it into our trap. Hurry up and SHOOT!" I closed my eyes and blissfully smiled from ear to ear. I can finally see my family again, high up in the wispy clouds.

Pow.