

## **The Fallen**

*This tale was inspired by the 20% of the Amazon biome which has already been lost on the biggest deforestation front in the world.*

Staring out across the compound, all I can see is nothingness. It's as if my brain has tricked me into transforming the world around me into a blur of the familiar, a mass of sight now unseen.

The cattle seem as listless as I am, for they fumble around in the midday sun, desperately attempting to seek out pockets of shade.

When I was younger my father and I spent a long time trying to grow trees for the cattle's refuge, but we have since been resigned to the soil's inability to sustain life. Father told me that years ago this whole area was covered in trees, a green carpet as far as the eye could see, rising and falling over the horizon. Now it is as if the land is stripped of life.

My whole life has been lived here, as confined by the drystone walls as the herd which our livelihood depends on. Cattle is all I know. Sometimes I feel just as dumb a beast as their bulky forms possess, condemned to graze a narrow plain until my time has ended. Apparently my grandfather and his generation used to live until the age of eighty. Now we're lucky to make it much past sixty - so poor is the quality of air. But with a life as limited as this one, how many years more would one possibly want?

Father always said our profession is integral. He told me almost nightly how important an export beef is to Bolivia. He said that meat which doesn't rely on a complex habitat is highly valuable today. He even said we should be grateful for the simplicity of today's climate. But I remember, when I could reach no higher than a cow's udder, I remember my Grandpa telling me of how life used to be. We don't come from a tribal background, but our little village in the Amazon was communal enough to satisfy anyone's needs, or so Grandpa told me. He told me about the joy of looking up to the treetop canopy bustling with life untouched by humanity, about the delight of feeling the mist and rain descend like a fresh day upon his shoulders. It's strange to think that we have scarcely moved location since then, despite the transformation of the landscape all around us. I have begun to believe that this is all the world consists of now, that I could walk forever and never reach a new view.

The droughts last year were the worst in my lifetime. Almost half of our herd died. We scarcely had the energy to dispose of their corpses, and my little sister had to be kept away from the window for weeks at a time, so as to spare her tender gaze the sight of their rotting forms strewn across the compound. That year broke the spirit of my father. With every report of merciless heat, his skin wrinkled. With every crackling indication of prolonged drought, his eyes drooped. With every suggestion of endless devastation, his hands grew limp. I saw him fade, helpless to aid him, to comfort him, to relieve him. Mother could only look on with wide-eyed despair. I don't know whether I can blame the droughts for my father's death, or whether it is the world I should direct my anger at. All I know is that I am now tied to this farm and this place until my own bell tolls.

There is no escape. Our tale is echoed across the globe, reflected in the faces of so many populations. I long for the sweet relief of rainfall which my Grandpa missed so greatly in his final years. But there is little left for it to revive.

*This is a fictional tale set in the not too distant future, in a world without climate restoration,  
condemned by continued deforestation*

While forests still cover around 30% of the world's land, deforestation is one of today's most pressing issues. Between 1990 and 2016, 502,000 square miles of forest was lost. 17% of the Amazonian rainforest has been destroyed in the last 50 years alone. Trees are essential as they absorb the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as well as providing a key habitat for millions of species, although the temporary nature of their CO<sub>2</sub> storage makes them inappropriate to be considered a long term restoration solution. They are however at the frontline of both the climate, and biodiversity crisis. WWF estimates that 27 per cent of the Amazon biome will be without trees by 2030 if the current rate of deforestation continues. Cattle ranching exasperates pressure for deforestation in South America, particularly in Bolivia.

It must be noted that this is a fictional tale which envisions only one potential future of a world in which deforestation continues without mitigation. Although this tale involves changed rainfall patterns and a decreased air quality, these are not the only possible impacts of climate change. However, climate restoration involves not only reducing emissions of Greenhouse Gases in the atmosphere to zero rapidly, but also involves removing huge amounts of greenhouse gases that are already in the atmosphere, and thus has the potential to prevent the truth of the author's imagination from being realised.