

Small

They are so small from up here. My water rushing off the edge and down into the gorge. The droplets casting rainbows against the cliff face. They look up and point with their mouths agape. They take photos on little bricks and send them through the air. They haul backpacks and tents and hammer pegs into the ground and the rock. They climb and fall. They light small fires and they light big fires. Fires that turn my water hot and evaporate the droplets before they make rainbows. They cut down the trees and they build.

Humans come by me every day. Walk and jump atop me. Couples propose and get married and breakup. Families take corny photos for the bland walls of their house. Every day I watch as they move like ants over boulders. Yet the ants leave my boulders as they were. I hear the bellow of their trucks as they carry out logs and carry in concrete. The shiny hats the men wear as they cut the logs and set them in place. Trees are gone and houses grow in their place. But I cannot feel them. The roots of a house is metal. Refined and unnatural. Water that runs freely from the cliff is confined to the pipes. Flushed and sent into the river.

The grass is ripped up in the valley and black asphalt lays in its place. The animals are gone and the hum and beeping of their cars takes their place. They scream when an animal forgets what happened. When a kangaroo jumps through a street. But they come up to me and laugh and smile and wonder at the water as it falls off the cliff. They don't scream when they see the kangaroo up here. It doesn't make sense.

Perhaps they don't think the kangaroo is in the right place among the houses and roads and cars. But it is not in the right place here either. They changed this place like they changed that place and only pretend I am still nature. They don't walk on the dirt as they once did. They build walkways of rusting metal that creaks so noisily every day. They hold onto the railing as they point and stare at that old kangaroo. They prune the trees they planted here. They pretend I'm nature even though the fabled *view* they all come to gaze upon is of only their houses now. Gloating to me every day. The rolling hills of green are gone. Slowly plateauing to tiled roofs.

The human laughs at me. They poke and prod. They pull out the trees. Damn my river to a trickle. Then they invite all their friends out to look at me. Deformed. Unnatural. Human. They rip up every blade of grass till I am naked and then they can have their way with me. Turn my surface grey with concrete or black with metal. They char my beauty with fire. Then they cry about the dead kangaroos.

The kangaroo is used to fire. The koala and the possum and the wombat are used to fire. The sheep and cow are even used to fire. I am used to fire. But I am not used to humans. I am not used to their cruelty. Not yet. They are so small, but they rip me apart and take what they want from me. They don't ask permission. They don't apologize. They live happily ever after with their stone and metal and tile and fire.

They choke the air. The clouds are dust and exhaust and smoke. The haze blocking their *view* as they dismiss the smog. They dismiss the heat. The red trucks careening down their tight streets in the summers that get hotter and hotter.

They cry with me now. Watching their houses burn as the fire rips through the valley. Their dogs, so cruelly ripped from me millennia ago, whimper. I remember how they used to sound.

I remember how humans used to be. And I cry for them all. They came from me as all things have. And they burn. Their houses don't grow back like my forests. They hide with me from the fire, but the fire will take all things. They run back to the one they pulled apart and crushed and ripped and think that I can save them. It is the nature of the fire to take. I cannot deny nature as humans do.

They are so small from up here. And the fire is so large. And I cannot remember if they started it. Or if I did.

By Connor Finn