

## Was it worth it?

The rainforest.

Sweat dripping off your back, eyes glued to the abundance of flora. Creatures writhing on the soft ground below. Light gleaming through the thick, lush curtain atop the broad treetops.

You wander through the luscious green leaves. You wander over the entities lying below your feet. You wander over the moss-covered, mushy ground. You wander past the tree, a mossy green tree, a tree with a vibrant red cross encrusting its thick trunk.

You stop, tuning your hearing in. You don't hear the sound of crickets chirping, or the birds cawing from the treetops. You don't hear the whispers of wind that pass through the trees.

You hear the pandemonium of bustling machinery. You feel the soft wind come to a sudden halt.

You smell the burning of fuel and trees. You taste the toxicity, the poison. Finally, you open your dazed orbs, observing what lay ahead of you. The gray smoke climbing its way through the sky, the ground ablaze, the devastating heat radiating onto you.

You watch as they destroy the flora and fauna. You watch as they mark your ground with their fire. You watch as your home becomes a wreckage. A nightmare.

Over time when more and more of you disappear, people ask questions. "How do we save you?" They query.

"We need you" They claim. Campaigns start, attention is brought to the ruins of what used to be your home.

But this isn't a story.

It's real life.

You can not rewind the clock.

The damage is done, You provided them with oxygen, water, medicine, food, shelter and more.

But where did that get you?

They take more and more, bit by bit until nothing of you is left.

Once you are gone they begin to realise their mistake, they were needy, greedy. Always wanting what they didn't have.

Given their history, you should have known. This world is beautiful but it has a disease called man.

Maybe over time you will evolve, adapt. But you will always have the things people want, need and they will never learn from their actions. They don't fully comprehend the toll it takes on you. All the energy it takes you to regrow your limbs, the pain of losing over and over again.

Because they don't want to.

Creatures like them want to stay ignorant, brush it under the mat, pick up their paycheck and move on to destroy more of you.

Will you ever escape?  
Or will the feeling of impending destruction loom over you until it's too late?

They will continue to question "How do we save you?". You will never answer, you continue to watch as your life gets swallowed up by the flames coating your leaves. Continue to watch as individuals try to change the ideologies of people like them. Watch as they cut down your last limb.

Until you can no longer watch,

Instead, you lay on the ground, nothing more than soot. Generations from now, people will no longer know your history, the life you used to hold within the palm of your hand. The ecosystems formed within.

They will grow watching their impending doom come to fruition. They will grieve for the life they have taken, the life they will lose.

They will beg for a do-over, none will come.

Because mankind must know that they cannot live without you.

You are the ground they walk on.  
The food they eat.  
The water they drink.

You are the medicine.  
The shelter they sleep under.  
The oxygen they breathe.

And they will not survive without you.  
Because you don't belong to them, they belong to you.

- By Sarah Polkinghorne