

THE MAN IN THE TREE

Written by

Weber Griffiths

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EXT. ESTATE YARD - DAY

Tall autumn maples surround a well kept grass yard. WILL (11), a spindly boy with short unkempt hair, stands at the edge of the yard.

THUD.

He is enchanted by the trees wild and chaotic shapes. In his hand he holds an old well-used text book. It is open to a picture of a tall yellow maple.

THUD.

Will turns. A large house dominates the clearing. EDWARD (40) chops wood near the home. He is a dark man with sharp features and a thin build. He is out of his element.

THUD.

The axe sticks. Edwards heaves and twists. It doesn't come free. He tosses the axe away from him in frustration. Will SIGHS and heads towards Edward.

EXT. ESTATE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Edward kicks a piece of woods and grabs a bottle of water nearby. Will approaches.

WILL

Dad, are you going to work today?

EDWARD

Will! Um, maybe. Just...Just getting the blood pumping.

Edward notices the yellow textbook in Will's hand.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Don't take mom's books outside Will, you'll lose them.

WILL

(matter-of-factly)

Its not like she'll miss them.

EDWARD

Don't say that. Give it to me.

WILL

No! I'm actually using it. It was just gathering dust anyway.

EDWARD

Will show some respect.

Edward moves to grab the book. Will backs away.

Edward grimaces. He steps forward. Will turns and dashes away towards the forest.

Edwards throws his water bottle to the ground in frustration. *

EXT. MAPLE FOREST - DAY

Will stumbles through the leafy autumn wood. Edward follows.

EDWARD

Will! Come back!

WILL

Why don't YOU go to work!! Get over it DAD and stop moping!

EDWARD

Will!

Will runs deeper into the trees. He loses sight of Edward. His distant YELLS fade.

EXT. MAPLE FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Will slows to catch his breath. Silence. Edward is gone. *

He holds the yellowed text book tightly as he scans the trees around him. It is perfectly silent.

A dark shape catches his eye. A large, gnarled tree. *

Will approaches it. A CRACK shatters the eerie silence.

Will whirls around, looking towards the noise. Nothing. He looks back to the tree. He jumps in surprise!

Embedded in the side of the black wood is the horrible visage of man. Will stares wide-eyed.

The shadowy eyes of the face suddenly ignite, amber gold. Will falls back in shock.

Strange SOUNDS reverberate through the trees. The mans gnarled head breaks from the surface, eyes burning bright.

Will stares in horror. The head turns. *

THE MAN IN THE TREE

A boy.

Will GASPS. The creatures eyes stare straight at him.

THE MAN IN THE TREE (CONT'D)

A beautiful boy...

*

Will stumbles up and away from the creature.

THE MAN IN THE TREE (CONT'D)

Your mother...

Will freezes. The man emits a strange laugh.

THE MAN IN THE TREE (CONT'D)

...lost in a strange land. Departed
from this quiet earth.

*

*

Unsettling NOISES echo softly from behind. Will spins around.
Nothing.

WILL

Who are you?

THE MAN IN THE TREE

A friend of the dead, a ferryman
between strange and quiet lands. A
man who can bring others back...

*

*

*

Silence. Will looks at the book in his hands.

WILL

(beat)

Back from the dead?

*

THE MAN IN THE TREE

Fetch me something and we will
trade.

*

WILL

Trade?

THE MAN IN THE TREE

We must always trade. Your mother
for something I much desire...an
axe.

*

*

*

*

WILL

In the shed...You want to trade my
mom for Dad's axe?

*

*

*

THE MAN IN THE TREE

A boy needs a mother...I need this
axe. Bring it to me and we will
trade.

The Man's eyes dim. Will backs away. Unsettling NOISES sound
again. Will looks around. Nothing. Will turns back. The
creature is gone.

EXT. ESTATE YARD - EVENING

Will runs into the yard breathing hard. He spots the garden
shed. His eyes scan the lawn. No dad.

He looks back at the forest and then down to the yellow text
book in his hands.

EXT. GARDEN SHED - EVENING

Will yanks the shed door. A padlock keeps it shut. He peaks
in between the slats. The axe rests on the far wall.

EDWARD

Will!?

Will whips around. Edward is walking towards him.

WILL

(hurriedly)

Dad! I. In the. I was--

Edward snatches Mom's book.

EDWARD

You CANNOT run off like that.

WILL

I'm sorry.

Edward takes a deep breath and looks at the text book. He
stares at it in silence.

WILL (CONT'D)

Dad! I think--

EDWARD

Go inside. Your grounded.

WILL

Dad! Just listen--

Edward's piercing stare stops Will. He points to the house.
Will's face hardens and he storms off. *

INT. WILL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will stands by his window in his PJ's. The maple trees sway
gently in the moonlight. *

His door RATTLES and opens. Light spills into the room. *

Edward enters and gently sets the yellow text book on Will's
nightstand. *

EDWARD

Here Will. I'm...your not grounded
okay.

WILL

Okay.

Edward begins to speak and stops himself. He rubs his eyes. A
worn-out man. He goes to leave. Will turns to his dad. *

WILL (CONT'D)

Dad...We'll see her again. She
promised. *

Edward gives a tight smile, eyes planted on Will. The only
one left in his little family. He hesitates for a moment, and
then leaves the small room. *

Will turns back to the window and the wood beyond. *

WILL (CONT'D)

We'll see her again. *

INT. BEDROOM - GOLDEN HOUR - DREAM

Will's bedroom, full of golden light. A beautiful woman,
MOM/LILY(34), reads from the yellow textbook with Will. *

She points to the many different trees, excited. Young Will
can't help but share her enthusiasm.

Will is alone. Mom is gone. Will looks around in surprise.
Across from him a door opens.

The tall dark tree in the forest looms beyond the frame.
Golden orbs ignite on its trunk, staring straight at Will.

INT. WILL'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Will's eyes shoot open to a sun not yet risen.

The Maples stir ever so gently outside. Will looks at the text book on his nightstand. *

EXT. GARDEN SHED - DAWN

Will violently slams a rock on the padlocked latch.

With several strong blows, the latch cracks off the wood frame.

Will flings open the door and snatches the Axe off the far wall.

EXT. MAPLE FOREST - DAWN

Will marches through the forest with heavy breaths. He cradles the axe.

The dark tree looms ahead.

Will walks around the trunk slowly. No man.

WILL

Hey! I have it! I have the axe!!

The NOISE of the forest fades. A BREEZE blows through the leaves. Will rounds the trunk once again. Golden eyes ignite. *
The visage has returned. Will stumbles back in surprise. *

THE MAN IN THE TREE

A boy with a purpose now. *

WILL

Where is my mom!?

The Man in the Tree stares.

WILL (CONT'D)

My Mom!

THE MAN IN THE TREE

Yes...cut my roots.

WILL

Then I get my Mom back!?

WHISPERS and Unsettling NOISES echo all around. The WIND has picked up.

THE MAN IN THE TREE

Yes.

Will stares at the shiny axe head in his hands. He grasps the handle with both hands and swings the cold steel into the roots of the dark tree. *

CUT TO BLACK: *

INT. BEDROOM - GOLDEN HOUR - DREAM

Will is sitting on the floor of his room, golden light pouring through the window. A beautiful woman with radiant green eyes and pitch black hair kneels in front of him. His mother. *

LILY

Will!

She hugs him. Will hugs back.

WILL

Mom?

LILY

I missed you so much, Will! *

WILL

I knew I'd see you again.

A golden light briefly flickers in Lily's eyes. Will's smile falters. She caresses his cheek. *

MOM

Such a beautiful little boy.

Her grasp tightens slightly. Will squirms. His "mom" pulls him in closer, face more youthful and radiant. The room darkens slightly. *

MOM (CONT'D)

Beautiful...

Will yanks away, stumbling backwards. Lily stands, the room now dark and gloomy. *

Her eyes light up gold. A violent CACOPHONY, loud and horrid, shatters the air. Will stands and faces his Mom. He yells over the torrent. *

WILL

WHERE IS SHE!?

The SOUND stops. Lily looks normal again. The room is warm with golden light.

LILY
I'm right here Will, my love. *

Will blinks in surprise. Lily moves to hug Will. He backs away. Lily looks hurt.

LILY (CONT'D)
Will? *

WILL
...Go away. *

LILY
What?

Will sniffles. The room grows dark and grey.

WILL
You're not my Mom...just go away.

LILY
I am your Mother. *

WILL
GO AWAY!!

Lily's eyes ignite. The CACOPHONY shatters the air once again. Will stumbles back and runs out the nearby door. *

EXT. HOUSE - GOLDEN HOUR - DREAM

Will stumbles out of a freestanding doorway in the middle of a forest. His forest...but gold and surreal. Wind HOWLS violently. *

Before Will the dark black tree looms, an axe sticking out from its roots. He rushes towards it and looks back.

Lily stands in the WIND, eyes a blaze.

LILY
Stay with me Will... *

Will yanks the axe free from the roots. WIND shrieks.

LILY (CONT'D)
Your mother loves you... *

Will hesitates. He stares at the specter, crying. *

WILL
My mom's gone.

Will brings the axe down into the dark surface of the tree.
CACOPHONY. The earth shakes. The ghostly Lily stares coldly
as Will hacks away, eyes burning like the sun.

SCREAMS and HORRID SOUNDS rip apart the air.

EDWARD (O.S.)
WILL! WILL!

EXT. MAPLE FOREST - MORNING

Will shoots upright, SCREAMING.

Silence. Edward kneels before Will, holding him tightly,

EDWARD
Will!? What happened!?

Will is dazed, covered in filth. He glances around. The dark
tree looms behind him, surface cut up and thrashed.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Will!?

Will looks at his dad, BREATHING deeply.

EXT. ESTATE YARD - MORNING

Edward and Will walk into the yard. Will lags behind his dad.
Edward stops and waits for him to catch up.

Will stops in front of him and grabs him in a hug. Edwards is
surprised. Will buries his face.

Edward relaxes and hugs his son in return.

EDWARD
I'm sorry Will.

They hug each other tightly and mourn.

EXT. MAPLE FOREST - DAY

The yellow textbook lies on the forest floor, pages blowing
in the breeze. Trees CREAK and GROAN in the still wood.

THE END