

When I was a kid, I wished that “growing up” would come a little bit faster. Hiding under covers from monsters and sitting alone were things that I’d become tired of over the years of my childhood. There are many things from my youth that still scare me, things I would do anything to forget; but dreaming came a lot more naturally to me when I was young, and I envy that about my old self. Through my dreams, I made friends with my monsters. I gave them a world to live in, people to hold, a voice that would carry them; I made my dreams come true. When I needed somewhere to belong, I’d close my eyes and find those monsters—my new friends. I always used to think that my dreams were messages from the stars, and it was my duty to keep their stories alive.

The purpose behind my painting was to capture a specific scene from a dream, which was an enchanted forest. Not only did I want to visualize it, but I also wanted to capture my feelings. If you look deep enough, you’ll realize that every single brush stroke on this piece of paper was made with the hands of a boy that will never stop dreaming. I also want to give this painting to the world. Many people rely on fictional fantasy for the purpose of escapism, to take them away from reality and bring them to a place that will forever glow in their eyes. I want my dreams to become a safe space for the dreamers and I’ll appreciate seeing the eyes of myself in them.

My original idea for my painting included some of the characters and creatures I’d written about, but halfway through, I realized that this was about giving my fantasies to the dreamers. I placed my fantasies into their hands and instead of showing them what to see, asking: “What creature do you see running behind that tree? Who lives in that bush, who wanders those skies?” I can at least appreciate that if I can’t dream as easily, I can see their faces a little more clearly. With my painting, not only do I lend my dreams to a world that needs it, but I also give thanks to them, the places that saved my life.

THE FOREST

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