

## The Forest (by Kyra Williams)

The forest remembers a time when it stretched across the entire land, almost to the sea. Wild bears had once lived there and back, back even further into the folded pockets of time, large, tongue-flicking lizards, nicknamed *Dragones* by early menfolk. Creatures forgotten by all, except the forest. It has a long memory. On this dazzling, blue-sky day, it is quieter than usual. Only the insects are loud, thrumming with energy. On the outskirts of the forest, a tired king is limping and heaving his bulk away from the hunt. He stops to rest, placing a thickly-ringed hand on the bark of an Elm and tries to catch his breath. He is not himself today. His mind is filled with images – a young girl, lifting her face to the sky as his men drag away her mother into that deep, shaded part where they would be shielded from view. Had the girl called out to the birds? Or to God? He can't remember now. Neither had responded. But he can't shake the image of her upturned face. Other scenes surface and he wipes the sweat from his brow as if to erase them. The trees seem to quiver and for a moment he hears their whisperings "We remember". It takes all his strength to pull his hand from the Elm's trunk. He lurches back towards his men and his horses and his house. The forest watches and wonders – who will be keeper of memories when its trees have all gone?