

FIRE TO FOREST



By Erin Haycox



An illustration of a brown bear splashing in a blue pond. The pond is surrounded by green grass with yellow flowers. In the background, there are several tall, dark, vertical tree trunks and a small, bare tree. The sky is light blue with white clouds. The title 'FIRE TO FOREST' is written in a stylized, white, outlined font across the top of the scene.

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Ciri loved living in the forest on the mountains.



It had all the berries she could ever want to eat and the lake the humans visited had enough fish for the occasional treat.

The plants in spring were one of her favorites after hibernation.




One summer while Ciri was wandering from thimbleberry bush to thimbleberry bush, she heard a sound.



ROAR!

But the roaring didn't stop
and it didn't sound like any of
the other animals in the forest.
Then she spotted a wall of
flames headed her way.



The image is a blurred, first-person perspective of a bear running through a forest. The bear's brown, textured head and ears are visible at the bottom. A dirt path leads from the foreground towards a blue lake in the distance. The background is filled with green foliage and brown tree trunks, all rendered with a motion blur effect. Several bright blue streaks, resembling lightning or magical energy, are scattered across the scene.

At a cheetah's pace, Ciri ran
to the only safe place she
knew.

The lake.

ROAR!

A brown bear is running through a forest. The bear is in the foreground, moving from left to right. The forest has tall, thin trees and green bushes. The ground is a mix of brown and green. The bear has a small tuft of hair on its head and is looking back over its shoulder.

The fire grew louder as she
ran.

Her paws hurt.

Her legs ached.

Her lungs burned like the
forest behind her.



Ahead she saw what she was
looking for.

Now she could feel the heat
behind her.



With a final push of her legs she leapt into the mountain lake.

The water cooled her the moment it touched her fur. Safe at last.

By the time the fire had passed, the forest Ciri loved was ash and dust.



A few shells of trees still stood, but they were not alive anymore.

A brown bear is walking on a yellow path through a forest. The forest floor is covered in grey, textured ground. Several tall, dark brown tree trunks are visible. In the background, there are green coniferous trees and a light blue sky with white clouds. The bear is walking towards the right side of the frame.

The red sprinkles of
thimbleberries she had been
feasting on were gone.

All of her friends were gone.
So she left too.

Ciri found a new place to call home, but it wasn't the same as her old forest.



"Will it even grow back?"
She pondered.



The next year Ciri visited her home forest and spotted the human family at the house by the lake.


The approaching sound of wings was what caught her attention though...

“Welcome back Ciri!” Chirped
a songbird.

“Hi Betsy, how have you
been?” Ciri said.

Betsy fluttered like a falling
leaf to a nearby branch.



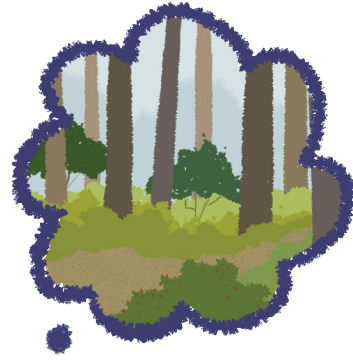


"All my nesting spots are exposed now so I'm visiting, but there are so many bugs right now, it's like a buffet!"

Ciri did in fact hear a lot of buzzing and insect chatter. Perhaps the flowers sprinkled between the ferns and moss were to blame.



But still Ciri didn't have much to eat, and she wished the trees were still here.



The flowers were beautiful though.

Within a few years Ciri found
she was able to move back
home. Enough of the berries
dotted the landscape for her
to return to feast on.

Her thimbleberries had
returned at last!





"Aren't they delicious!" Darren the deer surprised her.

"They're soooooo good," Ciri burped, "I want everything back the way it was before the fire".

"Me too, Ciri, me too" Darren sighed.
"I can't wait for the trees to be back,
it's too hot sometimes without them"



The sun must have been listening because it peeked out, heating her dark fur. The thimbleberries were delicious though.



A few years later Ciri was enjoying the shade of some small trees. The tree branches stretched over her head as if waking up.



Shade felt very nice blocking the sun from her fur. She was very grateful for the coolness. But it still wasn't the trees she knew.



Ciri spotted Betsy flying her way and sat down while Betsy landed in front of her.

"I'm so glad to have the small trees back!" Betsy exclaimed.

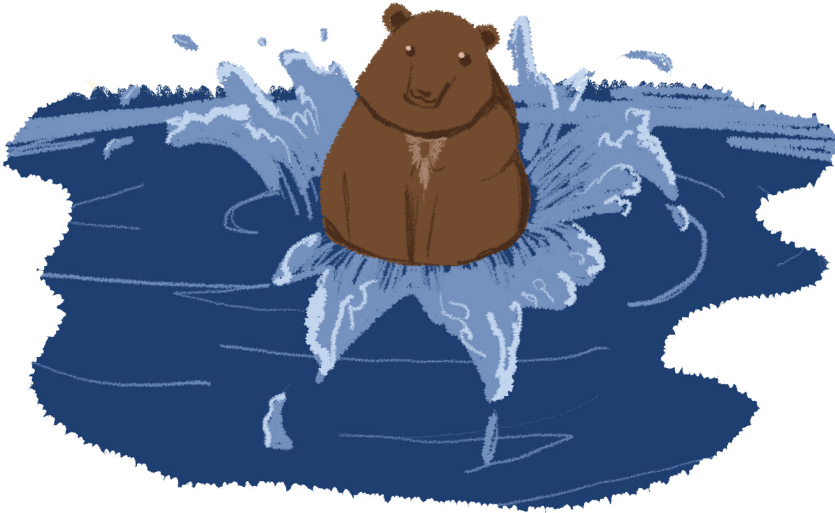
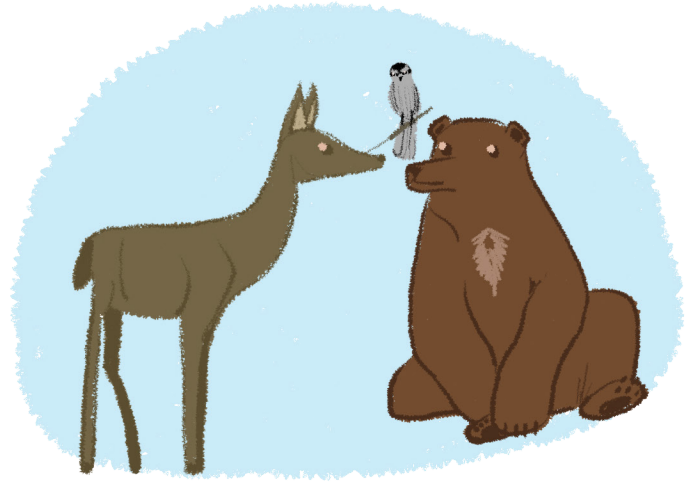


"I am too! But I do wish we had the big trees back, I miss them so much" Ciri said. "The trees aren't big enough to scratch my back on"



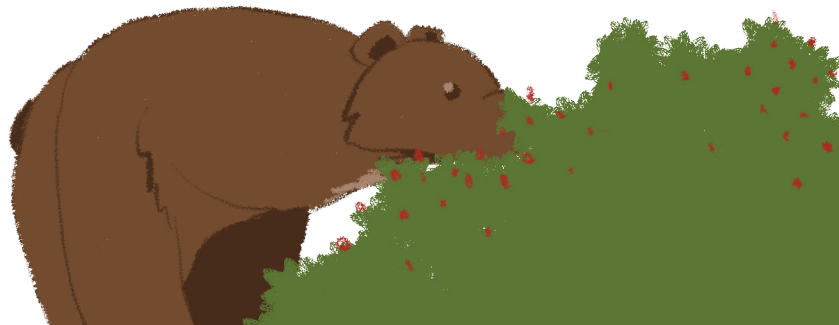
Betsy chirped in agreement and flew off into the forest.

As Ciri grew older the forest
grew with her.



She spent time with her
animal friends, swimming in
the lake the humans visited,
and eating berries.

Each year the trees grew,
and grew, and grew.



By the time Ciri was old and her bones were creaky, she recognized the forest she loved.

She was home again.



With the trees to scratch her back on once again, she realized the forest was there all along.



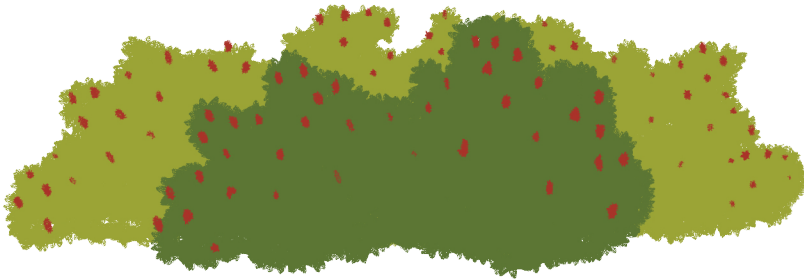
The forest was in the moss



and the trees which provided
the first shelter from the sun



and the berry bushes
birds ate from



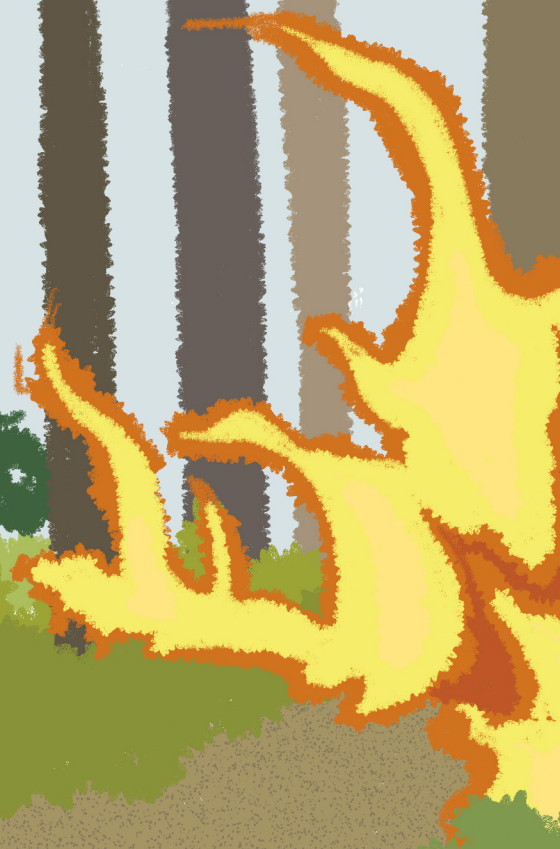
and the flowers the bees
buzzed around.



The next year a new fire

ROARED

through the forest again. Ciri ran again from the fire, with not quite the cheetah's pace she had before.



She stumbled across a bear cub she had seen before named Stanley. Together, they ran to the lake for their safety.



After the fire had passed Ciri and Stanley surveyed what remained.

"It's all gone!" Stanley sobbed.

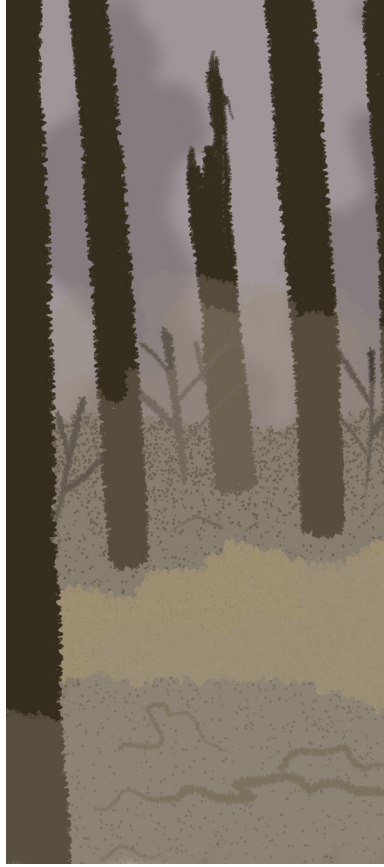


"Don't worry little one, the trees grow back" Ciri comforted him.



Fire

Forest fires usually start because of campfires, downed power lines, or lightning. About 85% of forest fires in the US are caused by humans.



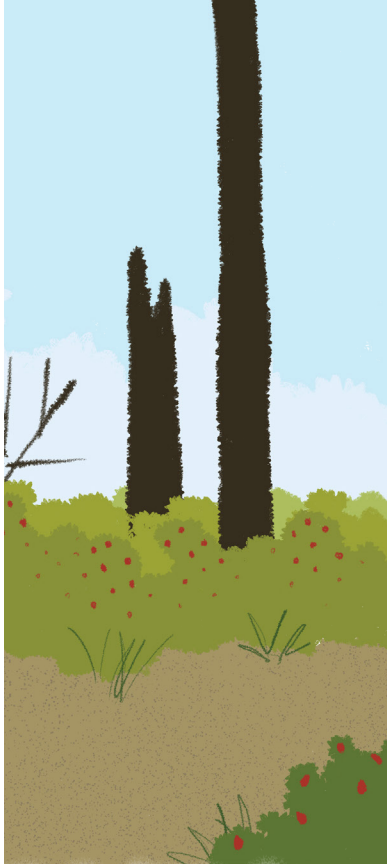
Burned Forest

All that's left after a fire is burnt tree trunks (called snags) and ash from burnt plants. The ash has nutrients for the plants that will come back.



First Plants (1-5 yr)

Many of the first plants to come back are grasses, wildflowers, ferns, and moss. These first plants bring lots of insects with them which attract birds.



→ Shrubs (5-10 yr) →

Shrubs like Ciri's favorite thimbleberries return next. The shade from shrubs keeps a lot of the grasses and flowers from growing anymore.



→ Understory (10-30 yr) →

Shrubs like Ciri's favorite thimbleberries return next. The shade from shrubs keeps a lot of the grasses and flowers from growing anymore.



→ Mature Forest (30+ yr)

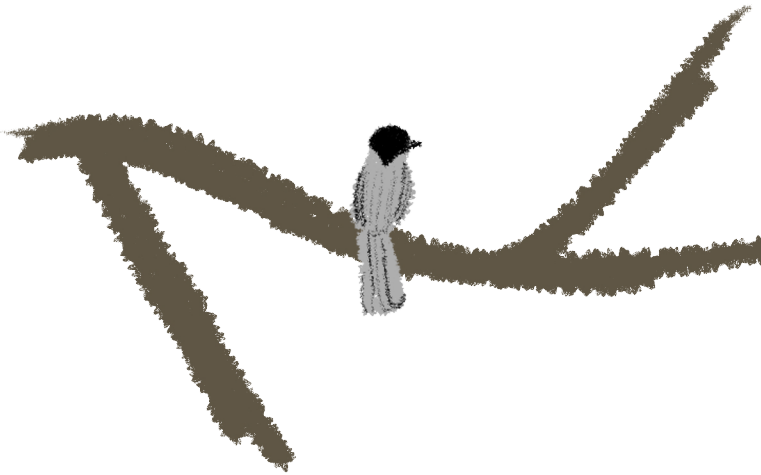
Shrubs like Ciri's favorite thimbleberries return next. The shade from shrubs keeps a lot of the grasses and flowers from growing anymore.

FUN FACTS

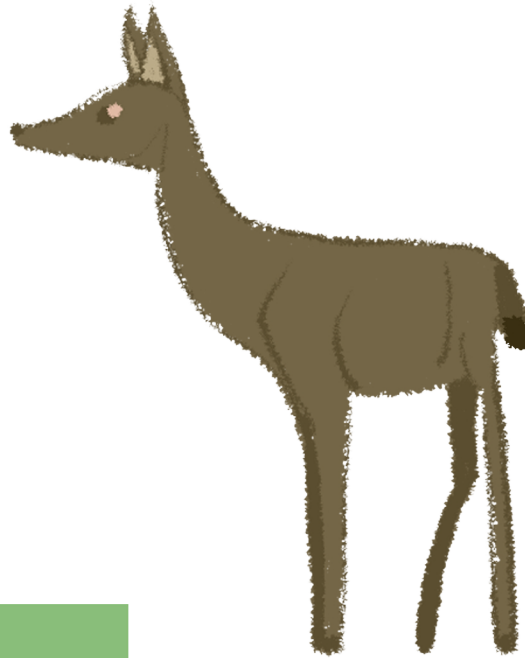
Ciri is a black bear. So why is she brown? Black bears are often black, but they can also be brown, cinnamon, or blonde.



Betsy is a mountain chickadee. Mountain chickadees live in dry evergreen forests in the mountains of western North America.




Darren is a black-tailed deer. These deer typically live on the forest edges where they have both food and shelter.



The forest that Ciri lives in is based on a real forest in the Siskiyou Wilderness Area of Northern California.





The forest is Ciri's home and she loves it. But
what happens when a big fire comes and
burns it all down?

Follow Ciri as she discovers what happens to
her home after a forest fire.

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