
Treespeak

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A True Story

by Maggie

4th Grade

One fine Sunday afternoon, while autumn still had some summer in it, I went hiking through the woods behind my grandparents' house. My mother wanted to show us these woods before the bulldozers razed this forest to make way for the new intercounty connector. The neon survey tape we saw along the way marked the edges of the new highway and I tried to imagine how different this place would be as a highway. We stopped several times while hiking just to look around and catch our breath.

My brother led us down the trails with a running commentary on the state of the forest. He likened it to a battlefield and told us that many of the trees were already dead soldiers. He pointed out trees that had fallen into other trees, seeing that they seemed to catch the dying. He hurried ahead of us, calling us onward over his shoulder, eager to be the first to see, to arrive, to experience an adventure.

As I chased him down the path, I looked back to see that Mom was hardly moving at all. When I looked around to see what she was staring at, I saw that this part of the forest that was different.

Here there were no fallen trees, none that were broken or bent. They grew straight up to the sky and the ground around them was like a carpet. There were no sticks and branches littering the forest floor. There were no thorns or thistles or vines barring the way. The sunlight was white and unbroken. It was especially quiet and the atmosphere was sweet with a presence made of light and fragrance, caught with your eyes closed, perceived somewhere between sight and smell. I saw my autistic brother point again but I didn't hear his words. I saw tears on my mother's face as she watched him, finally recognizing the gift in his storytelling and gestures. It felt like I was in a dream. We had stopped moving. Seconds passed, full and heavy.

In the silence, the wind began to blow and the trees began to speak and for a few moments, we understood their language. They bowed and waved over our heads, hailing our arrival, children of the King. It was the same waving of palms that we do before Easter but the trees were a hundred feet tall and their song was much louder. It went on and on. They welcomed us as friends, beloved in spite of the bulldozers, not because of us, but because of Him. Mom was my age when she had first run through those woods, when her family moved here and she said she was a sad, lonely nine year old girl. As we stood there, it seemed that the trees remembered those days, that they knew about the pain in all of our lives and that they even knew their own fate. They told us then that everything will be alright. And I believed them.

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