

Tree Love Story

You've heard love stories before; the typical guy chases the girl, the forbidden love and the lovers with never ending drama. Well, this love story doesn't quite fit those descriptions. This story is a bit more... grounded. Allow me to start at the beginning. It was late spring when I sprouted. In a charming little garden of flowers, surrounding a pond filled with itty bitty fish. Though, I was the only tree in sight. It was then I met the lady, as she came and watched over me. I would even go as far as calling her my very own guardian angel. Her movements may have betrayed how fragile she was, but her mind... well it was as witty, as that of a fox's. She always seemed to sense when I got thirsty, or when the bugs got a little too much at night. Coming to my rescue with her watering can or telling me goodnight and covering me from the bugs. As the days went on, I found myself wanting to communicate my thanks more and more. However, it was not to be.

The years quickly passed and I grew; I was a strong young tree if I may add. Each day my heart ached a bit more for the little lady as I watched her slow decline. So, you can imagine my surprise when I watched this seemingly fragile and old lady haul something covered with a bag twice her height... all the way across the lawn to the pond. With the only sign of how much it had affected her being the puff of exhaustion escaping her the moment she sat it down. I then proceeded to look on with astonishment as she rolled up her sleeves, grabbed a shovel and got to work digging a hole. Elderly yes. Stubborn and determined? Also yes. It took a while but finally she stepped back to admire her work. Before dragging the strange thing over and burying the base. Her small worn hands moving and compacting the fresh soil.

Standing up, she reached up onto her tippy toes and uncovered the mystery object. Revealing another tree.

Wow... She was stunning. Though may I say quite different too. While I stood tall and proud, her trunk was only visible to me through the gaps in her leaves. They were odd leaves too, wide and drawn-out tear shaped while my leaves were needles. After thinking about it we were complete contrasts beside each other. Especially her treefrog green compared to my deep rich green. The lady brought me back to the present as she said goodnight and started to make her way back to her cottage. It seemed to be a bit more of a trek than usual as I heard her gasps and watched on as she made a few more stops than normal. But I didn't dwell on it too long for my attention was quickly snapped back to the tree beside me.

The following days went by quickly and I watched as the tree thrived in her new environment. I must mention how she lit up the area, to me she was every bit of perfect. Though I don't think it was only me, for the birds took a liking to her as well. Singing their tributes to the morning while perched within her branches. It had become the highlight of my days, watching her of a morning, swaying to the birds' songs. I knew the lady would love it too, but I hadn't seen her recently. Come to think of it I can't remember the last time I seen her. Wait no I can, it was the day she brought the new tree to me. Strange. Strange seemed to be the new normal, like the wailing that pierced the air one morning, growing louder and louder till it came to an abrupt halt on the other side of the house. Several rushed and woeful voices

reached me, but I couldn't understand what the urgency was. The birds didn't sing that morning, as if a cloud of fog rested on everyone's mood.

It wasn't long till the days started to carry a chill, like a whisper of the winter to come. It was around then, that I spotted a tinge of amber that had tainted her leaves. The usual frog green retracting and dull. At first, I didn't understand, I even had an appreciation for this new change. Oh, what a fool I was. For the following days were some I would not wish upon anyone. I watched on helpless, as her leaves started to go. One. By. One. A slow drawn-out process, leading to the inevitability of my heartbreak. I hated how I was restrained, while I so desperately wanted to help. Sentenced to watch her slowly drift away from me, bit by bit.

A feeling of dread filled me when that final day came with only one leaf left. It's ok, I've got you, how desperately I wanted to whisper to her, just to reassure her. Oh please little lady, come and save her! I beg you to help her as you've done for me so many times... My silent plea was met with just that. Silence. I can't begin to describe the helplessness I felt as I watched her final leaf give way to the relentless whipping of the wind. Only her frame was left but it appeared soulless, simply existing beside me. I felt the heart of me crack inside; the pain was too much too bare. She's gone... A bitter feeling edged its way into my trunk. Why had the lady brought the tree here for her to only suffer, not come to her aid when she needed? Why couldn't the lady have cared for this tree as she had done for me? That's not fair. The lady had always been there for me, but she hadn't even come for my sake lately. Unless something

was wrong. That would explain her absence. In that moment, already overwhelmed with hurt, I sank even further into the darkness of my pain.

I will never forget those long winter months, waking to an icy garden. The mornings bare without the birds' songs, the lack of vibrant colours and the fish retreated to the other side of the pond. Seeking refuge from the harsh cold my shadow caused on the water. All these small things that I hadn't seemed to notice before her. Isn't that ironic. Everything was fine until I got blessed with her presence. How could I be so happy before but without her it no longer seemed enough, was beyond me. She managed to create a hole that wasn't there before.

Finally, the grip winter held began to release. Though the agony gripping me remained firm. The sun shone for longer, the fish returned to this side of the pond and colours started to paint the landscape once again. But despite the uplifting change, my mood remained sombre. The birds once again sat in the tree, except this time I had a perfect view of them, for they were no longer hidden within her leaves. Instead perched on her bare budding branches singing their songs. *Wait... Budding?!* I couldn't believe it. Sure enough after triple checking, I realised her branches were dotted with tiny little buds starting to form. I danced and swayed in the wind, I felt my mood rise as high as my treetop reached and I felt as though I could take on a tornado. She was still there. That's when the magic began. Over the next few days, I watched as she transformed. From just a silhouette of herself to the most picturesque thing I'd ever seen. For when the buds began to open and her leaves started to grow, she was no longer just frog green. Her flowers were a pure white that faded into a soft duckling yellow at the centre. *Gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous.*

Just as I was admiring her beauty, a gasp of appreciation reached me. Drawing my attention to the source. The little lady was back! My heart throbbed with happiness, but she wasn't alone. Another lady dressed in blue pushed her, as she sat in a strange contraption. They exchanged a few words than the newcomer left her, parked between both of us trees. Oh, how sunken her features had become. She hadn't abandoned us, well at least not by choice. She glanced up at me and smiled. It was the kind of smile that stays with you forever, one that you can see the bittersweet memories replaying in her eyes. But it was the pride, joy and contentment that also shone on her face that I took to my centre. In that moment I realised the good isn't permanent, but neither is the bad similar to the changing of the seasons.