

## Tree

Once there was a tree who had no leaves. Every year, when springtime arrived, the tree always felt embarrassed. All around his brothers and sisters grew all kinds of leaves of different shapes and sizes, hues of all kinds of greens and yellows. Their leaves spread upwards and out in delightful fractals. Some grew flowers brighter than the night sky, others prepared to bear fruit to share with the world. In a world of exquisite beauties, who was to blame our friend? For this tree was little more than a gnarled and knotty pillar of wood with a few empty limbs to boast.

Through time, the trees of the great forest continued to grow. Here, our friend had great hopes. *Without any leaves to weigh me down*, he told himself, *I will grow big and tall*.

And yet, again he was disappointed, for, if anything, the *other* trees seemed to grow taller and taller. Yes, he grew, but nowhere near to the magnificent heights as the others.

“Fear not,” many of the trees told him. “Beauty is not all that matters.”

The tree would say nothing to that. Inside, though, he knew that was not the case. It was easy to say beauty did not matter. However, when all anyone ever saw was beauty, it was hard to believe anything else.

As time marched on, the tree needed to strain to see the other trees, how tall they grew.

“Do not strain yourself,” they called down to them. “For there is beauty down below, too.”

*How?* The tree could not help but asking. He was too tall to see the flowers below, but too small to see up to his brothers and sisters. All he had was himself -- and of such little value that was. He continued to strain up and down and all over -- everywhere except himself. And, as he strained himself so, his sight weakened, further and further. He soon struggled to even drink in those sights and, before long, he lost his vision altogether.

He could sometimes hear the other trees talking, whispers, but too ashamed was he in the loss of his sight to cry out to them.

And so, when the children of man finally arrived, he could hear the children playing and squealing beneath him. Though he could not see it, these human children were all about, running and climbing various trees.

“We’ll climb this one!” one voice shouted amongst them all. “It is perfect, there’s nothing to block our way up!”

The tree felt a small hand, then another, then two legs hop up. Before he realized it, one of the children was climbing him. And then another. And then before he realized it, all over, up and down, young humans were all over his trunk, climbing and swinging and hanging.

“The smiles of the children!” the trees above him shouted. To him, they said, “You see? You, too, have beauty! For upon your branches hangs the most beautiful of all of us!”

The little tree wept, for he still could not see it.