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The Worth of a Whittled Life

Kindergarten was the first time the amusing tale was read to me. The aspect my elementary mind adored the most, was the simplicity of the story. *The Giving Tree*, features a young boy who loves to play in the branches of a particular apple tree. The tree loves to provide the boy with shade, apples, and a place to climb. As the boy grows older, he visits the tree less and less frequently. The boy “matures” and desires more *grown up* things like, money, a house, and a mode of transportation. Although the tree misses the days of the boy frolicking beneath her leaves, she is happy to bestow upon him, the things he requests by sacrificing her apples, branches, and trunk. The story comes to a satisfying conclusion when the boy, now a man, returns and all he wants is a place to rest; and the tree, now a stump, is overjoyed to let him rest upon her.

With more knowledge in my head, I reread *The Giving Tree*. I pitied the tree; she gave everything she had to the boy and all he did was ask for more. The poor tree loved the boy so blindly, he whittled her away with his wishes. For much time, I sympathized with the tree, ‘How could she be so foolish? Her poor life was wasted.’

Eventually, I no longer believed the tree’s life went to waste.

Last year I approached the scary world of driving with great hesitation. In order to become more comfortable, every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday my mom encouraged me to

drive us to my ballet class. Every time I drove, we left sooner, drove slower, and occasionally arrived late. I started to feel sorry for my mom for all of her time I had been wasting. It is a reflex of mine to assume myself an inconvenience ,so I try my best to avoid wasting the time and patience of others. I love my mom more than anyone in the world and she never fails to remind me of how inconceivably much she loves me too. She would do anything for me, and that is exactly why she, of all people, was the one upon whom I did not wish to impose. I felt twinges of guilt every time I returned to the car after my two and a half hour dance lessons to see her there waiting for me. In the winter it got so cold that she kept her sleeping bag in the car so she could stay somewhat warm while she waited for me. I usually found her writing lesson plans or grading papers, but she *always* looked up at me and smiled, asking me how my practice was. I could not fathom a more selfless human being.

I began to feel more at ease behind the wheel and started to eagerly await the day I could obtain my license so my driving didn't have to consume three out of seven nights of her week. I expressed that to her after one of our drives and she turned to me, misty eyed and woeful. It was there in a frigid, empty, lamplit parking lot, that my mom altered my unshakable conclusions on *The Giving Tree*. She told me she dreads the day I won't need her anymore. She has never once felt as if she were sacrificing anything for me because I don't understand how the privilege of participating in my life, fulfills hers. To my mother, material items are just that; material. She holds back no love, no time, parts of her being, and no *things*. I believe my life will be most wisely spent, growing to love with my entire self, until myself is all I have left to give. I would rather be a stump, whittled by love, than a blossoming tree with bended boughs, unneeded and untouched by love.