My mum told me the tale of the birds. She always started the story by saying, "nothing is ever useless, but not everything useful is good." It never really made sense to me, not until later.

There was a tree in the distance, it was practically barren. It had no leaves on its branches, not to talk of flowers. It bore no fruit and its wood was never good enough for a fire. It stood at the top of a hill, far from people and creatures alike. Even birds avoided it as the branches were too thin to build nests on and so the villagers concluded it was haunted, and warned their children never to approach it.

On a certain chilly night, while the people of the village at the bottom of the hill huddled in their corners and slept, something unusual happened. A bird flew on one of the tree's branches. A few seconds later, another flew on another branch. In less than ten minutes, the tree was filled with singing birds, birds that sang until the villagers woke the next morning.

The people were surprised, never in all their decades in the village had that ever happened, and so they counted it as a good omen.

The children began to play around the tree with the birds, up and down the hill. In another fortnight, the villagers slept, woke up and to their amazement, their barren tree had leaves, actual leaves that cast a shadow the ground, were so green and full of life and so the men of the village rested their backs against the tree and took shade on sunny days and rest on cool evening.

Soon, to the amazement of the villagers, the tree sprouted again something new, this time flowers. The flowers were so bright and golden, unlike any other seen before so much so that the young males used it as a way to proffer affection for a girl and to be given one gave them such great delight.

And lastly in about a moon after the birds perched on it's branches, the tree began to bore fruits. These weren't ordinary fruit, their skin was purple and dark, full of spots all over. The fruit was full of juice and tiny seeds. It was round but not a perfect circle. It was the most delicious fruit ever tasted. It wasn't sweet, in fact it had a tinge of bitterness but still tasted far better than any other. The women served their husbands the fruits even for dinner and the children were always seen munching on it and soon enough, they had gone through more than half of the harvest until no more than a few dozen remained.

At that time, the people decided to be cautious and do something about it. A guard was elected to stand at the tree all day and ensure no one took more than one fruit a day. The people abided by this rule and so things were going smoothly for a while.

Until one evening way past the time for sharing fruits, a child snuck up on the tree, expecting the guard to be asleep but what he saw shook him and so he went back to tell his mother.

She came and was equally shocked and so went back to call his friend and so and so on. By the time the guard noticed them, half of the village was by the tree. He had been eating the fruits on the tree and now there were only 5 left. The villagers all kept quiet, they were all watching each other pensively,

trying to gauge the other and all that was on their minds were the fruit. Eyes darting from the tree to the eyes that were beside them. It was so tense, some couldn’t breathe.

A child broke the trance by running towards the tree in haste and behind him all the rest of the villagers charged. It was a stampede as all the adults crushed the little ones and the men using brute force broke their women into half all in the name of the fruit. The ones who finally got to the tree fought amongst themselves until there were only seven men left who then were able to roughly share the fruit amongst themselves.

When they had eaten it all and they were calm, they looked back at the destruction they had created. All the women and children of the village dead, and even the tree broken down to its root, back to it's initial barren state except without branches and a stem this time around. The men couldn't live with themselves after what they did and so they ended their lives. Everyone in the village laid to waste, all except one who ran to the next village and told all who cared to listen about the story. They all thought him crazy and he ended up living the rest of his life as a mad man, an outcast until he plunged himself into a large body of water knowing he couldn't swim.

My mother would then end the story by saying, "Nothing is ever useless but not everything useful is good, because out of greed men make almost anything useful, unsafe. "

Looking down at the broken limbs of my mother, her mangled corpse dried up of blood, blood that had gone into me. A lot of it on my face. I finally understood. The power is useful but with a result like this, is it good?

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