

An illustration of an old man with a long white beard and a young boy sitting on a grassy hill at night. They are both looking up at a large, gnarled tree on the right. The tree's branches are filled with many small, glowing yellow lights. The sky is a mix of blue and green, suggesting a twilight or night scene. The title 'The old tree' is written in a yellow, cursive font across the middle of the image.

The old tree

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Dedication

For those who have lost someone special, the journey does not
end here.

Grandpa bent,

His knees on the ground,

His ancient bones like a heavy door

Swinging on rusted hinges,

Creaking and cracking,

An ominous sound.

“Can you see it?” he whispered,

A sound as soft as a prayer.

Max leaned over and stared at the earth.

“Yes, I do!” he responded with glee,

There, the seed they had planted

Only a week ago,

Was just beginning to grow,



With only a hint of green to see,
Pushing itself through the dark brown soil,
Stretching and yearning, and
Fighting and turning to
Find the warmth of the sun,
For only with light can the
Growing be done.

“So it is with all of life,” said Gramps,
His voice as old as the ages,
The lines on his face,
Telling of stories that many will never know,
“Everything starts as small as a seed,
A life, a thought, a smile, a dream,
And when we nurture and care for that seed,
And work the earth and
Remove the weed,
Then the seed will grow,



Beautifully,

Fearfully,

wonderfully

made.

Every flower and every tree,

From the highest mountains to the

Deep blue sea,

It all starts like this:

A whisper, a thought or a wish.”

“And then?” asked Max,

“Ah, my boy, that is such a glorious question,

For nothing stays as it is.

Look at that tree,

Way over there and tell me what you see,” said Gramps.

“The tree is old,” said Max,

“Yes, it is, what else?” asked Gramps,

Prodding Max to look more closely,

Pushing him to see beyond the tree itself, and

See instead, the *story* of the tree.



“The trunk is large and withered,

Many summers and seasons have

Passed among its leaves,

Children have played there,

A treehouse, maybe,

And families feasted with picnics and blankets,

And maybe a boy proposed to a girl?” Max was imagining

Wonderful stories that played out under the tree.

Gramps approved and waited in silence,

“There were winters too, of course,

Snow gathered around the roots and

Men with axes needed wood to

Warm their hands and warm their hearts,

And the tree provided, willingly, for

Nothing stays as it is,” said Max.



“Yes!” said Gramps,

“I think you see that life is not just “gain” and “get”,

Or summer or spring,

There are picnics and blankets and

Axes that swing,

There are modest beginnings from a tiny seed,

And even mighty trees or giants,

Can bend or break or bleed,

Someday the mightiest tree will stop growing,

Returning back to the earth,

Giving new saplings a chance to grow,

To tell their stories,

Of summers and snow,

“The tree will be missed,” said Max,

“By the birds that lived there,

The children that played there,

The lovers that dreamed there...”



“Yes, it will,” said Gramps,

“But as long as it is remembered,

The tree lives on in the hearts of those it served, for

That is why we are here;

To serve,

To leave the world a better place,

Seedlings come and

Old trees go,

Wherever you’re planted,

Promise me this,

You’ll live,

You’ll serve, and

You’ll grow.”



Max turned to his children,

The boy drawing shapes in the sand and his

Baby girl who was holding his hand,

Pointing at the hill where the tree had been, he said:

“That is my favourite memory,

And that is how I’ll remember Gramps,

Talking of trees and birds and bees,

And how we must live

- really live -

Through every season of life,

For nothing stays as it is, and

All we can do with the time that we have,

Is to *Live*,

to *Love*,

to *grow*.”