



The Apple Tree

by Colleen-Joy



Once upon a time, there was a young tree born in to the orchard of life.

As the little tree stretched his limbs, he was so excited to be alive. He looked up and he saw that all around him were many big trees.

As soon as he was old enough, he cried out to the trees with great happiness.

“Please tell me. What is my life purpose? What is it that I’m supposed to do?”

And the trees looked down tenderly.

“Well in order to fulfil your purpose, you must make bark that looks like this...” they said looking down at themselves, “...and leaves that look like these. And if you do this well enough, one day you will be able to stand proud, and you will make oranges that look just like these.”

The little tree was thrilled; he finally knew what his life purpose was. And so as the days turned into weeks, he tried his best to make bark *like that* and leaves *like those*. But sadly, he soon realized that no matter how hard he tried, he could not get his bark to look like *that*, or his leaves to look like *those*. And so he felt the bitter disappointment of someone who had failed and not only himself, but those he cared for. The orange trees never spoke of their feelings, but he felt their disappointment and it stung.

The little tree grew slowly. One day he was tall enough to see beyond the orange trees. To his amazement he saw that at the edge of the orchard, were trees that looked very different to the orange trees.

And so he called out to them, “You over there! I see you are also different. Perhaps you can tell me, what is my life purpose? I long to know. Please tell me what it is that I must do.”

These trees would not say much.

“Your life purpose is to grow thorns that look like *these*,” they said. “If you do not grow thorns you will fail in your life purpose and you will surely perish. This world is filled with creatures that will destroy you, if you do not protect yourself.”

And they would say no more.

So, the young tree sat and thought about this for a long time.

I have grown far too relaxed, he thought. *I now understand that this is a dangerous world.*

He tried his best to create thorns. And yet again he failed – none would grow. Each day that ended, reminded him more and more, that he was failing to fulfil his life purpose. The frustration that grew within him started to show. He could not grow thorns, and so he grew thorns of an even more dangerous kind – he grew invisible ones. And the birds and

the insects that once were his friends, he chased away. Even though the orchard was bustling with life - he now felt completely and utterly alone.

And the days dissolved into weeks, and the seasons changed.

One night in the darkness and in his aloneness, he woke to hear the thunderous cries of a death light. A fire had come. It swept through the orchard destroying everything in its path, leaving only blackness in its wake.

Everything that could run did, but the trees could not. Even the thorn trees were defenceless against this hot predator. The fire approached with angry speed and was shouting with a noise that was louder than anything the little tree had ever known. Just when he thought the fire would take him, the winds changed and the fire retreated. He eventually fell into an exhausted sleep.

In the morning light he woke to see an orchard that he didn't recognise. All around him was – *nothing*. Instead of green, there was black. And instead of trees, now only columns of smoke, rising from patches of earth that hissed and spat. He was the only one that had survived the fire. He realized that he was now truly, completely and totally alone.

He cried out to the sky and to the burnt orchard – “Why?”

The reply was an eerie silence.

Utterly alone, he stood. The days dissolved into weeks and he felt himself retreating inside of himself, deeper and deeper still. With no one to speak to, he began to do something he had not done before – he began to talk to himself. After a while, he realized that if he kept quiet and went to a still place inside himself, a peaceful inner voice would emerge. This voice sounded just like his, but it was somehow wiser and more peaceful than he knew himself to be. So he began to speak often to this inner voice. It eased his loneliness and it greatly eased the burden of the empty orchard.

As the days blossomed into weeks, he nurtured this new relationship within himself, and then one day it occurred to him. *Why don't I just ask the voice inside of me, the same question I once asked of the orange trees and the thorn trees?*

And so he breathed deeply and put his attention inside himself. Then he asked, “Please tell me, for you seem wiser than I. What is my life purpose? What is it that I am supposed to do?” His heart felt pain because the question was so deep. He opened his mind and waited.

The quiet voice inside of him whispered, “You are asking the wrong question.”

“What do you mean the wrong question? I want to know what I must do. I want to know my purpose,” he replied.

“You are asking the wrong question,” the gentle voice continued. “Instead of asking what it is that you must *do*, you should rather ask, ‘*Who am I?*’”

A moment of silence passed, and then the voice explained. “If you do not know who you are, *how* will you know what to do?”

If I do not know who I am, how will I know what to do? He repeated to himself.

As the understanding hit home, he felt sadness and he said, “But... but I don't know who I am.”

And the still voice replied with kindness, “You are who you have always been. Nothing has the power to change who you are. Only you have the power to forget, that is all. Even you cannot change who you are, you can only forget or hide.”

He looked down at himself, small and unimpressive. *This is on purpose?* He wondered disbelieving.

“What if I can't remember who I am? How do I remember me?” he asked.

“In order to remember who you are,” the gentle inner voice replied, “you must learn to feel the sap rising. Your sap, (your tree’s life blood that is inside you), is your purpose compass. It will only rise when you speak, think or say anything that is a part of your true self. When you think, say or do anything that is NOT a part of who you are, the sap will fall, and you will feel empty. Emptiness means you are not fulfilling your purpose, because you are not being you! **Your purpose is something you ARE, not something you are supposed to DO.** The sap feeling will tell you when you are being who you were born to be. When you are being yourself, you will do what you are supposed to do, and it will bring you great joy.”

The little tree, thought for a moment. For as long as he could remember, he’d only felt empty.

“Emptiness is a clue. And so is being filled with peace or joy. When the sap fills your veins, you will feel it. It is inner warmth, a presence, a feeling that happens inside of your heart. You will also feel it gently rise within your branches and even to your leaves. It is joy – the joy of *being* on purpose. Love yourself free, and who you are will be revealed.”

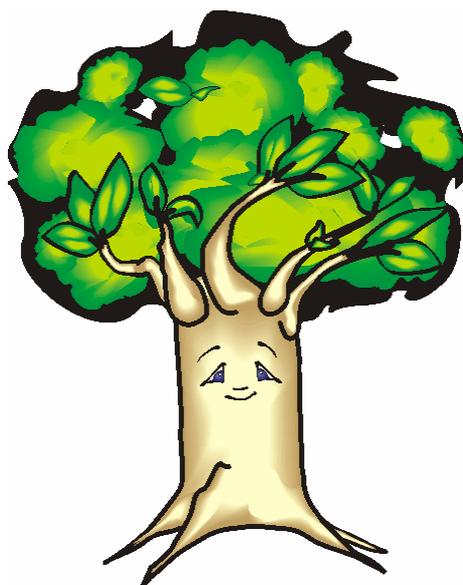
The more he thought about these new insights, the more a new feeling became real within him. When he thought about loving himself more, he felt the sap. He felt the gentle feeling his life force more strongly in his body. It was a gentle and beautiful feeling.

“How have I forgotten this? How could I forget who I am?” said the young tree.

“You have been so focused on the orchard...” said the inner voice, “...on the orange trees and on the thorn trees, that you have forgotten YOU. Now young tree, follow the clues of the sap rising in your body and love yourself free.”

And so the tree looked down at his body and he said, “This is *me!* This is who I was born to be! My leaves look like *this*, and my bark is like *this*”. He felt the warmth of purpose fill him.

He began to gently do something that most of us have forgotten – he began to love himself *on purpose*. And the little tree began to really grow, for now the sap was flowing strongly through his veins, feeding him with the inner strength he needed to be visible in the world. He watched his branches growing, stretching outwards and upwards. His leaves unfolding in the sunlight. He invited the birds and the insects back into his heart and into his life. And everyday he began to see more of himself revealed to the world.



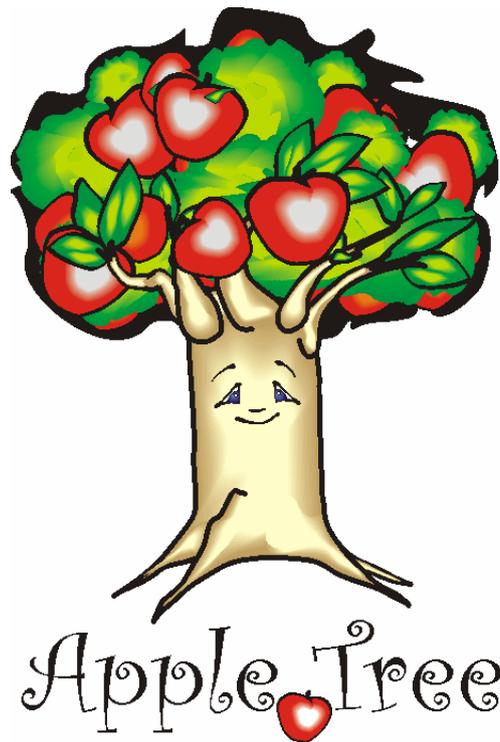
One morning he looked out and with great excitement he shouted out to the orchard, "I know who I am! I know who I am! Finally... I know... I am the maker of little pink blossoms!"

And the little voice inside said with the feeling of a smile, "Ah... but wait, the fruits of your true self are yet to be revealed."

So he waited, patiently.

One morning as the dawn light peeped over the orchard hills, he looked out and his heart was filled with joy. He took a deep and beautiful sigh as a tear rolled down. He spoke softly but with great presence, "I am an Apple Tree." For there, packed on his branches were many apples.

He came to know, that the still, wise voice inside had always been the voice of the Apple Tree. The sun rose and set, and he grew into a beautiful Apple Tree.



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Life and death dance together, and so the death of the orchard made way for new life. All around him, the Apple Tree saw the saplings of new young trees growing. And as soon as they were able, as young trees are prone to, they looked up at him and said, "Hello. We see that you are much older and wiser than we are, so please sir, please tell us. What is our purpose? What is it that we are supposed to do?"

He smiled broadly. And his heart was filled with joy, because he knew exactly what to say...

He answered. "Ah young trees, the answer is simple – you are asking the wrong question!"

THE END



**Thoughts from the Apple Tree,
to include in your contemplation, meditation and prayers.**

1. If you don't know who you are - how can you know what to do?
2. What makes your sap rise? What makes your sap drop?
3. It's not what you **do** that matters most; it's **who you bring to what you do**.
4. You are a human being not a human doing, BE FIRST then DO from your being!
5. Who were you born to be?

My greatest wish is that you will know the joy
of finding and freeing your Apple Tree.

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