

The Tallest Tower

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Distant from the present lived a boy whose name is long forgotten, born to a world much less chaotic. His people, neighbors of the oldest forest, bathed in Honesty Lake and toiled in the grateful for food on the table soil. But he, who was young in a time now considered old, began to have an ungrateful bitterness in his heart monstrously grow tenfold. During a meal sometime ago-- when he began to doubt the teachings of his food for the soul parents-- he swallowed the chalky pill of ignorance which goes down smoothly only with a bucket full of reckless water. And instantly, a new strength he did receive, which urged him to question, to protest, and to disbelieve. "No! This cannot be. I do not understand. I do not see. What significance is life lived by the forest of oldest trees?"

His mother calmed her son with calloused hands that hadn't forgotten love, which is soothing: "Don't fret at life. This is how we live. We live life at peace and never try to take it away; we only give." These words of a woman wizened by the sun had no effect on her restless questioning son.

Muscular father, taut and well bent, scratched his whiskers and pointed to the field with his massive wrinkled finger. By this is what he meant: "Go to work my son. This is your choice. No matter whether you'd like to go off and discover, life is here with mother and father."

These words of a sturdy father became lost in his head like treasure cast into an aquatic abyss. "I want truth beyond the horizon," he declared. "I want truth beyond our fields. What is life? Tell me is it more than feast and famine? Tell me is it more than all I have put my hand in?" With this question he sought one last voice of help, the Oldest of the Eldest, the lady of the trees, the lady who heard life's answers whispered on the breeze. But her response left him deeply bewildered, for she said, "Look here, not ahead- the distance is shorter than farther. Look inside not outside, the wilderness isn't yours to bother."

This young boy, not nearly a man, took these wise whispers as foolish flings of sand by an old sand crab. "I'll set out my own for the answer cannot be found in my home. I'll set out to the trees and see what truths I can hear on the breeze." For he thought the lady must have misheard or that the breeze was interrupted by the massive flutter of a startled flock of birds.

In the oldest of the oldest forest, which no longer breathes during our modern age, he traversed the mossy snake-like path that slithered around massive trunks of living things, living things with at least 3,000 rings. But this youth was not aware these trees were so old, and in truth wiser than the Oldest of the Eldest, for countless times they had occupied seasons long forgotten in stories that were no longer told. He only saw them as obstacles in his way, as rocks prevent water from traversing a more direct path that a riverbed may take. A nuisance they served to the course he desired to tread, for he couldn't travel directly like the eagle that had just swooped overhead. "Umph!" He threw a rock into the air as hard as he could, and the eagle climbed sharply like an arrow shot towards the sky, escaping the bitter stranger in the woods.

Days had passed and then some weeks too. His answer had come no closer as he ventured further on blistered foot. "I can not take another step. Not one more inch can I tread over stone, fallen pine, or painful gravel. Here, the truth I seek will not be unraveled." Exhausted and distraught, his spindly-hinged pillars gave up their will; down he plunged to the unforgiving ground at the edge of a grand granite hill. The wind suddenly picked up as if on cue, but not one whistle of wisdom nor one sonority of truth came to the boy to relieve

and to sooth. Instead, bitterly it blew lashing and whipping the stubborn boy who wasn't quite ready to budge. "If I could be like a god, and witness all of life from the very above, then surely I would find my answer. Surely I would find the truth. All of life would be under my eyes to see, and then I would be able to judge. I'll need no mother or father or wise elder to deliver words twisted by their tongues. I'll get my answer without help from friend, foe, or anyone."

Right then and there he halted his horizontal travel and withdrew his hatchet from his satchel. "I'll cut down these trees and construct The Tallest Tower, past Earth to heaven, where with sight I will have power." He went to work hacking away till time had passed one grueling year and thirteen sweaty days. At last, he had cut every tree in the oldest forest that had stood in his way. He, whose ignorance sacrificed the wizened old, focused his energy on reaching the upper unreachable realm where no one had been, not even the mighty bold.

Like a bear cub on his first ascent, he grasped at the trees, only to gain a couple of inches before falling back on the uprooted soil. But determined was he, no matter his waning strength or lack in size, to ascend his arboreal tower up beyond earthly skies. Like an ant that does not recoil from an object one hundred times his size, he leaped at the trees with his newly grown courage and strength and began to climb higher than high. But as he climbed higher and higher, his movements of limb caused the tower to sway; the tower responded to each inch he crawled as if it were ready to collapse and to fall. Earthly and celestial wind, always violent in manner and mood, thrashed the boy and his tower about, trying to change the tower's status from standing to stood. But no matter what came his way to put up a fight, he was able to scale the tower to points of increasing height.

At last he reached the tippity top of the tallest tower, not one or two days but three days and the three hours after. His final progress had arrived as much of a surprise, for now the direction upward no longer contained whispering and wispy clouded skies. Above the earth was he, and an unfamiliar stranger, Black, enshrouded him and all the objects that were held in cosmical rhythm. "What amazement, what wonder!" he thought. "The deities' abode is a constant unwavering heavenly night. The stars are like candleless candles, whose flames burn infinitely brighter. Perhaps now, from this divine perch and aided by heavenly light, clarity and life's true meaning will be apparent to my sight."

Earth bound he looked from his perch tallest of tall, squinting his eyes to decipher the detail, but detail is not what he saw: absolute generality was all. He saw Earth as a great round ball, a perfect stone made smooth in a swift river of celestial wind. "Many years it must have taken for the Earth to become so smooth and round!" There were no grassy plains, clear blue waters, or mountainous ranges. Only present were mingled shades of gracious green, benevolent blue, and muddy malevolent brown.

"Brown?!" the boy questioned, his awestruck face fronting a frown. Brown is for the desert, disastrous and full of deceit, but the desert is not my home. Why, where I look, the forest should be green but it is not. It is empty brown!" Like a seismic fault that runs wild over luscious land, an unusual lifeless shape split the wealth of green that filled the continent so grand. Upset, he stared with his mouth agape and pondered the actions he had so long ago decided to take. "From this point far beyond the skies, it is now apparent that everything presents itself so generalized. I cannot see people, nor animals, nor any other life move on the ground. Movements that were so mammoth on Earth are now too minute to spy. Perhaps the gods have better eyesight than I; but, that is their power and their power does not present itself to my eyes."

Human was he at last acknowledging his mortality: "I am hungry and eternally tired. There is no life up here, no resources to help a weary boy whose life hangs at a state so dire.

Oh Earth, your name is synonymous with Life. To you I must return and face the reality that I may never find the answer to my question.”

Gravity, whose name was not yet known at that time, gently guided the boy and eased his descent, allowing him to return to the origin of his point of ascent. As his feet returned to soil, his defeated heart skipped three beats in its recoil. So traumatized was he at the view before his eyes: no longer was there fertile mossy and evergreen green nor living scent, animals abound, nurturing earthly ground. Here, where the wisest had once resided laid a barren desolate land where life had been denied. “This can’t be what I have done. This can’t be the result of my quest. Oh, I did not mean to create such a disastrous mess!”

Both hands he placed over his eyes, and as if an arrow that was shaped by the sharpest knife had pierced his heart, he felt indescribable pain and began to writhe. All around, even by the shores of Honesty Lake, was heard an awful howl, a bellowing cry, an altogether painful and suffering sound of one who was too young to foresee any and all consequences that were to befall. He who swallowed that chalky pill of ignorance not too long ago, began to realize his foolish folly. In anguish and anger, with no strength left nor willpower, his feet planted in uprooted soil gave way, allowing his body to fall against The Tallest Tower. The wise trees now withered dry and piled so tall, gave way to their destroyer’s fall; plunging down, they crashed into the once so nurturing soil, finding their final home where once they had grown.

The foggy moisture that once gave life in the night began to settle in as dusk gave up its fight to maintain daylight. Still the boy laid at the foot of his disintegrated tower, and there he did not move nor blink an eye till morning came with more unwanted surprises. It was the sound of the eagle he had once thrown a stone to, hunkered close to the ground trying to defend her broken home: a shattered nest that once was shelter for three chicks, but two now laid lifeless. Not far from his feet sat a pile of bones: docile deer who once had found food, shelter, and protection in their forest home. A rustling of dead debris brought his attention to the wolf who had devoured the last of the meat on the deers’ bones. Emaciated, she weakly carried a pup in her mouth, while another attempted to follow but could not keep up. They had no other choice but to search for scraps that no longer remained and to aimlessly roam trying to ignore the feeling of loss and pain.

And so too did the boy roam after he got up on his feet. He roamed to discover the extent of damage he had done to the forest home. Squirrels scurried on lifeless ground, searching for the pine nuts that no longer littered the once fruitful foresty ground. Raccoons stood with a ravenous glare, bears had balked and decided to give up, foxes faltered and fled to their dens, and all of life wandered on the barren floor exhibiting such strife. Each sad sight caused tears to well up in his eyes and at this point, it was as if at last he could see. Through teary-eyed lenses, beyond death and ruin, he began to slowly understand. No lofty perch in the heavens so grand could compare to what he now was beginning to comprehend. “Oh, I feel such sorrow for the grave mistakes that I made yesterday have paved the way for me to learn and live more wisely tomorrow. Now I see the words of the wise are very wise indeed. If not for my ignorance and inexperience, their words I would have heeded. I needed not go further than too far, nor cause those who were alive to suffer and deathly bleed. Life is here in this world, my only home. And it is not further than this point that I should have roamed. The truth to life must reside not with the gods that occupy the lofty high, nor with the road that the lost may follow, but in the deepest of our deepest insides. It is a choice we make whether we consciously make it or not, to live in one of three ways, and in two I have participated in up to this very day. These two are the worst of the choices one can make, but misguided and blind, I chose these to take: The first is the way I

lived life as a naive boy, working and playing in our tribal fields. It is to live life neutrally, to never hurt nor harm, but also to never help, improve, and heal the world around you and all of life in Nature's never ending wheel. The second path may very well be a crime to take, for life is lived with a negative influence on world and those who in life have a stake. To satisfy my questioning quest, I devoured the great and wise oldest of oldest forest. Creatures kind to the earth and to the people who live near by suffered because of me and my desire to spy from the highest of high. Here they scamper away, avoiding the carcass of those who died, and live with no hope to regain back the glory of their old lives."

At this moment a squirrel starving but curious, crept up quietly to the boy's feet. Bending over like a tree in the wind, the boy lowered one of his young limbs. Onto his arm the squirrel crawled, pausing as if to ask the question: "Pardon me, I mean not to be rude. But as you can see, our plight is desperate and we are in the need of food." Wiping the tears away from his once forlorn face, the boy searched for a scrap of food in his little leather case. "Squirrel, your happy reply to a little piece of bread stale and dry is the greatest reward. It is the third choice to life that I am now going to live from this day forward. To live life with a positive influence, to never take away, to only better, and to give makes life worthwhile and well lived. When time moves on and my age becomes too old, I will know that I played a significant role in life lived by the forest that once was so old. For right now, when time is young and the lesson learned is as fresh as cool crisp air, I will bring about new life and new trees with everlasting love and great care."

Now the boy who was still young but grew a mind of the wizened old, put forth all his effort to live as he had told. He worked harder than ever to sow tree seeds of hope and happiness, helping to rebuild the homes of all who had been distressed. Although it may have been better his destructive deed never transpired, he lived out the rest of his life benevolently as he had so aspired. And to this day, even though his name remains long forgotten, the ancestors of those he had benefited generations ago still live thanks to his good deeds and wizened growth.