

## *Still Standing*



There once was a tree. An invisible tree.

It was in a beautiful garden surrounded by other trees, some who were actually noticed. There was a Dogwood, kids picked flowers from it, people noticed it, and it brought light to their faces. Across from it was an Eucalyptus, a plant of healing, a savior of children, one that everyone relied on. Next to it was a big and beautiful tangerine tree; its fruits were so sweet; it was the place where all the kids ran to while the adults stood and smiled. And then there was me; I did not have any specific features, I did not provide fruits, nor was I a breathtaking sight. I was just a tree, one that was ignored, forgotten, and overlooked. I was just there watching them being recognized while I was simply in the dark, unnoticed. They got names, applause, and cheers; while I, well, I learned not to expect a name.

Time slipped by in quiet sameness, each moment folding into the next, until one ordinary day brought something none of us expected. The father came into the garden, carrying something that looked like a saw, cut the Eucalyptus, put it on his shoulder, and just left. All of us were confused; it was supposed to be the provider, the indispensable, but it was the one disposed of. I was just standing there while all the other trees were shaking, scared that they were next. It didn't make sense. They were loved, they were seen. Why the sudden change?

But it all became clear a few seconds later. They were replaced. There was no longer a need to spend hours concocting some syrup when they could just buy it in a few seconds. Why try to reach flowers when you can get them already arranged? Why risk the fruits being a bit rotten when you can get a full basket of ones guaranteed fresh? They were still big, still eye-catching, but somehow became forgotten, abandoned, just like me.

After the sudden loss, they all gradually lost their spark, each of them fearing they would be the next to fall. They stopped blooming flowers magnificently, they stopped making fruits as fragrant, they grew small and ordinary. They became like me, and were consumed by it. They could not endure it. They were so easily crushed by something I went through for so long. That's when it made sense. They were loved conditionally while I was ignored consistently. At the end, the one who was never seen is the only one left standing.