

The Truth of the Tree People

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Once upon a time, there was a child; and once upon a time, there was a tree. The tree grew wide and tall and shady in a lovely old woods.

When the child was done with chores and school and snack, the child could run and run the leaf-strewn paths of the woods to visit the tree. The child lay down on soft moss staring up, up along the trunk of the tree, watching the fluttering leaves and feeling a little bit dizzy. And the child asked questions of the tree.

And then the child waited for answers. A very long time. Sometimes the waiting carried over until the next day after chores and school and snack.

Finally one spring day, the tree answered. "I can tell you only the four great truths of my people. The first is to sink your roots down deep and out wide into the dark, cool Earth. Grow around the rocks, send out as many rootlets as you can, and drink of the cool, pure water that is the source of all."

Now, listening to a tree takes a great deal of time, and the bright afternoon had passed, and the child ran home to supper.

For several days and weeks afterward, the child and the tree rested together in the lovely old woods, thinking about the first great truth and the spring turned to early summer. In time, the tree spoke again. "The second great truth of my people is this: stand tall and proud and reach as high as as broadly as you can and drink the warm, radiant sunlight that is the source of all."

More days passed in friendly contemplation. Sometimes the child asked questions or told stories or made bridges out of twigs and small stones. Mostly, the friends thought together and grew toward one another.

On another day the wind from a distant hurricane rocked the woods and the child huddled close to the tree's trunk, ear pressed against the bark. The tree said, "This is the third great truth of my people: bend in the wind, allow smaller creatures to nest under your protection, cast your seeds joyfully into the world, and wait, wait patiently for change that is the source of all."

Time passed between the two. Now the child wore a jacket to come visit the tree each day after chores and school and snack. Still the child asked questions or told stories or played with stones and twigs or rested in comfortable silence. Now the leaves of the tree were green on the lowest branches, but higher up they blazed in a vivid, bright orange and seemed to shimmer in the light, cold breezes. The

very highest branches had begun to lose their leaves, and the child collected a small pile of them, brown and crinkly, for a pillow from which to gaze into the glorious colors of the tree.

“The fourth great truth of my people, child, is this: bring beauty into the world, and when you sleep, sleep without anger or fear, sleep deeply and long, sleep under a white fluffy blanket when you can, and wrap yourself in gentle dreams of the Love that is the source of all.”

The child and the tree were friends for a very long time after that. In fact they still are friends. And it turned out, over many years, that if a question were important enough, it could be answered by the four great truths of the Tree people.