

Arborist Abridged

by Brian Michael Barbeito

Jacob looked at the tree and knew that the tree had to go. The old saw was no longer useful, its teeth too decayed and cavity ridden from years of misuse. It was a wood-saw anyhow, and wood-saws were not best for wood. Jacob knew what was needed, and that was a hacksaw. Its fine teeth and steel protocol would slice through the tree almost instantly. In the store he bought gloves and the saw, plus some other items for good measure, and felt confident and even happy among the colors of the air hoses, the thousands of marrets, the good and strong steel, the handsome crown moulding, and all the knives with replaceable blades. The smell of the wood was well also. The world was made for things, he thought. It was not a phenomenological world but it was a world... of real things, and no mind trips were needed. He thought that the bridge makers, automobile manufacturers, and captains of industry knew this well. Things were...well, something.

Back at the tree he cut, and it was a cool autumnal day full of small victories and joys as the squirrel made peace with the forest not too far beyond and the snake moved briskly through the glen to its hole. After he cut the tree down and moved it to a barren spot, it lay as an old dead soldier proud and fulfilled. Its thorns and deep purple berries even seemed to glisten a bit in the proud morning sun. As Jacob surveyed the scene, he knew that he had a few hours of cutting ahead of him. He would have to wear the requisite gloves, and stand making the tree smaller and smaller, placing the bits of branches in bags, and then raking up the rest of the old soldier. Then he thought for a moment more, and then another moment yet again, and a proverbial light bulb went off even though there was no light bulb in the book of proverbs.

He would shorten his work-load, and at the same time give the soldier a fitting funeral instead of having to cut him to bits. Jacob reversed his big truck, opened the back, and put the soldier in there. Now this old general was ready to meet the dark and peaceful larger

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forest beyond. Somewhere there, among the mighty Oaks as they call them, and the agile deer, the general would lay it down forever, and become one with the good and true earth. Besides, that might have been the area of his birth, and if so, Jacob was now the director, priest, pallbearer, driver, and custodian of a hometown funeral. While driving Jacob thought of the seasons prior, when the tree had flakes of snow sitting on its seemingly infinite and intricate branches, or of days when the rain came and forced itself on it violently and the tree had stayed still with integrity, grit, and a lasting and brave sort of benevolence. But mostly he thought of the bright summer afternoons that the tree was built for, and how it just waited in the hours of the world calmly and somehow knowingly.

