

# Sycamore Tree

*by* Tyler Koch

I remember the first time we met, out in the open field with the Sycamore tree. She looked at me with eyes blue as sapphire. We spent many days under the tree watching the clouds pass by and spoke of things inconsequential and perfect. I love you, she used to tell me. I love you too. She smiled at me. But I love you more.

She cried for the first time under the leaves of the Sycamore tree. I whispered in her ear as her head rested upon my shoulder. Her soul preciously fragile. Between clutched fingers was a picture of her mother and father, their faces permanently and forever happy, as she would never be. Tears fell unbidden from my eyes. I love you, I said. A beautiful smile struggled through the pain. But I love you more.

We made love for the first time at the base of the Sycamore tree. We gazed at the ever present darkness of the night. Her arm wrapped around my body, legs intertwined. The silence spoke everything unsaid. You know I love you, she said. I kissed her cheek gently. And I love you. She was quiet for a moment. But I love you more.

We buried our first child beneath the roots of the Sycamore tree. We stared at the patch of fresh dirt and reminisced on what never was. The pale moonlight our only witness. She bent down and evened the earth where our creation lay, dirt covering the crystal on her finger. I miss him, she said. No I don't. I miss the idea of him. She stood and interlocked her fingers in mine. I love you, I said. She whispered back at me. But I love you more.

Little children ran around the Sycamore tree. My wife and I sat in lawn chairs shaded from the sun and watched our family grow. Our boy hung from the branches. You're a monkey, we said to him. He puffed out his cheeks and we laughed. His sister followed her brother in the way that younger siblings do. They carved their initials into the trunk of the tree. That way, we won't be forgotten,

they said. You won't be forgotten, I replied. My wife smiled at me. I love you, I said to her. But I love you more.

I remember the last time I saw her, out in the open field with the Sycamore tree. I stared at the polished stone protruding from the ground like a thumb, twisting the ring around my finger. The wind whispered her name. I walked away from the Sycamore tree never to return. I know you love me, I said before departing. I leaned on my cane as I walked through the uneven field. But I love you more.

