

The old man stepped slowly  
Around and around the old tree.  
All his life, this tree had been there.  
As a child, he hid behind it  
In games of hide and seek.  
As a boy with scraped knees,  
He had climbed its highest branches.  
In the heat of many summer days,  
Its shade had been his resting place,  
And the spring rains, his shelter.

It had been part of his skyline;  
An outline in his mind all his life.  
It stood in the garden, not alone.  
Yet, there were no others like it.  
Bent with age from southern storms,  
Heavy fruit, and climbing boys,  
Its bark was gnarled and scarred.  
Yet in its long and rocking boughs  
It ably cradled life in many forms.  
By daylight, its grey-green leaves looked old.  
By moonlight, a whispering silver sentinel,  
But as the fading sun set in its course,  
A golden glow now captured every edge.

The old man stepped carefully  
As if trying not to disturb the old tree  
He knew the view from its peak  
He could still remember its secret places.  
He'd watched as many creatures  
Found haven and made their homes  
Generations of birds had nested here,  
Mostly undisturbed.  
It was a reference point; a marker,  
No safari was lost in neighbouring fields  
While within sight of this watchful treetop.  
It was a joy throughout this man's life  
But had he ever stopped to see the tree?



Still he circled, at a slow and steady pace.  
Now Ent-wise in nature, his eyes saw anew.  
At dusk, and at the end of his days,  
Filled with pleasant memories,  
He wondered how to meet his old friend.  
Old! It would cradle his grandchildren yet.  
An opportunity for adventure,  
And for sheltered rest to those who stay  
It would hear their secrets,  
As it had known his own.

The old man spoke, and then wondered  
Gazing once more to the heights above  
Had it felt his presence, his gratitude?  
Would it feel his departure?  
As he sat and leant against it  
He did not need an answer  
For this old friend was planted in his soul,  
As his own footsteps and fingerprints  
Were embedded in its grain  
And so, two creatures, both old and wise,  
Felt the fading autumn light warm their hearts  
So he sat and gently hummed a lullaby  
Content to stay a while.

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26<sup>th</sup> July 2002

Look upon me and see  
Examine me and know  
Watch me and discover  
For I am more than I know myself  
And so are you