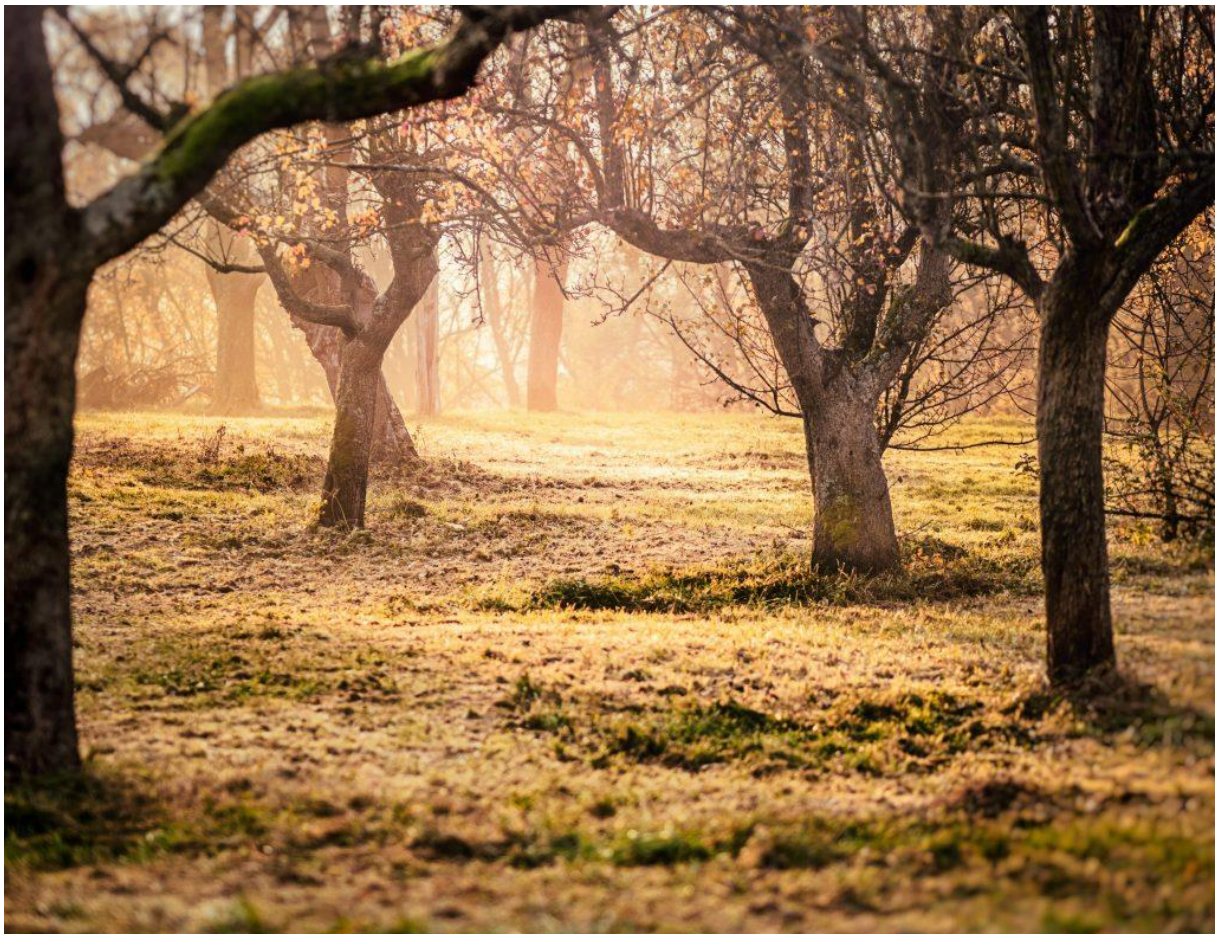




The young apple tree

Grass doesn't grow faster if you pull it ...

Once upon a time there was a young apple tree. It was his first summer on earth, standing not yet tall in a big orchard of apple trees. Totally excited and with awe he watched what was going on around him. In springtime there was all this blossoming in white and pink. It was immensely beautiful. And now in late summer the older trees were laden with big apples in red and yellow and green and their branches were hanging down from the weight. And people were coming and picking the apples from the trees and eating them with joy or making delicious apple pies and other things from it.



The young apple tree was so inspired about this, that he decided to grow apples too, as soon as possible. After all he was an apple tree and it was his destiny to grow apples. But as he didn't know how the apple thing worked, he decided to ask the more experienced trees about it. So he said to some of the older trees standing nearby:




"Hey folks. I watched all springtime and summer long how you grew these beautiful flowers and apples and I decided to follow your example. So, can you tell me how all this is working? How can I grow apples? I want to learn it quickly, so I can give my apples to the world." The older trees chuckled a little hearing this inspired young lad and they told him all about the flowers and the bees and the buds and how at last an apple grows from it.

And the young apple tree said: "Oh, I understand, that's easy. I think I can do that too. After all, I am an apple tree. I have a trunk, I have roots, I have some leaves too. I think I will need about 3 months to learn how to grow blossoms and attract some bees." But the older trees said to him: "But in three month it will be wintertime. It will be cold and there will be no bees around. And from our experience we must tell you, that it might be a little bit too early for you to grow apples. You need first to grow yourself a little bit more and to gather all the strength, that is in the soil, in the water and in the air to develop strong roots, big branches and a dense dress of leaves to be strong enough to produce apples and hold them. Just wait a little, it might take you three or four summers to make yourself ready."

Hearing this, the young apple tree was somehow taken aback and got angry. In his anger he said: "Three or four summers? Why are you trying to stop me? It is my destiny to grow apples. And apples are so important for the world – they are healthy and juicy and delicious, and they can feed a lot of people. Why do you want to stop me from delivering my service?" And the older trees answered: "We don't want to stop you. It is your destiny to grow apples. And because apples are so important, it is important to make yourself ready to be able to grow good apples." But the young apple tree was not convinced and said: "You don't know me at all, you cannot know, if I am ready or not. And the world has changed, everything is going faster. The soil has changed, the water has changed, and the air has changed. So how can you know? It's a totally different situation with me than it was with you back then."

Still angry the young apple tree bent away from the older trees and talked to himself: "These old stiff trees, with their outdated opinions. They just want to hold me back, to have all the glory for themselves. They are only afraid that I could grow bigger and more delicious apples than they do. And then all the people would only eat and praise my apples instead of theirs. They are just jealous." So, he didn't talk to the older trees anymore and turned instead to the other young trees in the garden. And the older trees were very sad about it, because they really wanted to be in contact and to support the younger trees. But they had the impression, that their experience was not wanted or misinterpreted as bad will. So, they didn't approach the younger tree anymore, because they thought it made no sense. Like this it became a little bit silent in the apple orchard.

In the months following the young apple tree took all his strength together to manage to grow blossoms. He soaked as much energy as he could from the soil, from the water and from the air, but his whole structure was not yet made to hold more than a certain amount of energy. In wintertime it became cold and there were no bees as the older trees had told him. But instead of going to sleep during this period he still tried and trained to grow blossoms, with all his strength left. In the springtime he again used every



little bit of energy for his project of blossoming, so that there was no energy left to grow leaves. And he also hasn't grown taller since last summer, because he concentrated all his strength in this one goal. But lo! In the end he managed to have first blossoms. It was only three or four of them, but nevertheless. He was so proud of himself, that he achieved his goal, that he was really happy. Perhaps he was the youngest apple tree ever to grow blossoms. Okay, there was a certain price he had paid – no leaves, no growth in height, but who cares! After all it was his destiny to grow apples! And now he was so near to his dream.

The older trees in the orchard watched what happened with growing concern. The young apple tree had not grown taller since last summer, and – what was still more concerning to them – he had not grown one leaf so far. Instead, there were three or four little naked blossoms on his branches. This was not at all as it should be. But still they didn't approach the young apple tree, because they thought it made no sense. So, the young apple tree concentrated next on attracting as much bees as he could. The fragrance of his blossoms was not very intense, so there were only some bees occasionally passing by and choosing his blossoms by mere accident. So, he started to invite them with his voice. But obviously the juice of his blossoms seemed also not to have a strong taste, so the bees once they were there, they never returned. But still the young apple tree was full of hope. And after some weeks he saw that one of the blossoms had transformed into a bud. "Wow! Yes!", said the apple tree to himself. And with the time the bud grew bigger and bigger and transformed into an apple! And the young apple tree said: "I made it. I have grown my first apple and soon more will come!" And he was grinning all day long and watched and waited for his apple to grow big and red.





And as the days grew warmer and summer moved on, while all the apples of the big trees turned from green into yellow and red and they grew big and round until they seemed to burst, the young apple tree's apple stayed small and dark green. And the young tree got more and more anxious that his apple would not mature. During one night while he was sleeping a strong wind came up and turned into a thunderstorm. And the wind was so much rattling at the branches of the young tree and pulling at the little apple, because there were no leaves to protect it, that after some hours the apple gave up and fell from the tree to the ground. So, the young apple tree lost his only apple. When he woke up in the morning and saw what happened, he was in tears. He was so frustrated and sad, that after all his effort and hard work, he lost everything. And the young apple tree was nearly giving up himself. He would have liked to talk to the older trees to ask, what he could do now, but he was afraid that they would only say: "We knew it before!".

One of the older trees saw what happened and started talking to the young tree: "Hey lad, what is going on? What happened to your apple?" "The wind took it away", said the young tree. "I'm so sorry!", replied the older tree, "It's always hard to lose apples." "Yes,", said the young tree, "it seems that I am just not able to fulfil my destiny. I am useless." "Why do you think that?" asked the older tree, "as you are an apple tree, it is not possible to NOT fulfil your destiny." The younger tree looked at him quizzically, trying to understand what the older tree just said. He replied: "But I wasn't able to grow and hold an apple – so I missed my destiny as an apple tree." The older tree started to laugh in his deep and rolling voice. "If you go on like you did the last months, you will surely miss your destiny, because you will never grow strong and tall. But the destiny of an apple tree lies not only in the apples!" "What?", said the young tree, "What else could it be than growing apples?" "Ahh," said the older tree, "it seems, that you focused too much on the apples to see all the other things, that your being an apple tree provides."

"Can you say more about that?", the younger tree asked. "Of course, if you want.", said the older tree. "You know, as soon as your first little sprouts are coming to the light you are in service as an apple tree. With your roots, your trunk and your branches you give home to a lot of little beings. And the first stage of your training as an apple tree is to master the relationship with these small beings. When you grow taller and your dress of leaves becomes denser, you can give home to breeding birds or small animals like squirrels. And you can also start to provide shelter from the sun or the rain for other beings. And that without you ever having a blossom, let alone an apple. And then, when you have mastered this, the next step is to grow blossoms and to provide beauty and food for again other beings. And even if none of the blossoms turns into a bud or an apple, you are still in service as an apple tree. And then, when you are strong and tall enough and have made enough experiences with all the services you provided, it is time to provide apples. And it will come without effort – because it is the next natural step, and you are ready."



"Thank you very much", said the young tree. "I never saw it like this. So, I didn't miss my destiny! I was just so fascinated by the apples, that I missed to see all the other things an apple tree can provide." Then he started to laugh, because suddenly he felt a tickling at his right side. And as he looked down, he noticed a line of ants crawling up his bark. And happy with the new perspective the older tree had given him, he greeted them with a big and happy: "Helloooooho! Welcome to my bark!"

Love,
Patrizia