*Beech Tree*

By that morning, I no longer knew who I was. Where I’d gone. Who my family was.

Who cared?

The sun began to rise, its brightness blocked by a towering figure. A building?

A castle. The grass was green, long strands billowing down the lawn, sloping toward the lake.

I noticed the grass was dead,

a dead ring around the beech tree. When I returned to the trunk of the tree years later, there were so many carvings and professions of love that I could no longer tell what color the bark was.

I still couldn’t figure out who I was. The city was a new place I’d lived in, quite the opposite of the sloping lawn with the long, billowing grass. The city had been somewhere that I’d wanted to live since I was a kid, and here I was.

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My sister would thrive in this environment; in fact, she did. She braced the sloping lawn, the sunlight always snaggedin her eyes, but she didn’t mind;

she could see perfectly.

The beech tree was always conquerable, never too tall or too difficult to climb, so I moved to the city to follow her, as she had become bored of that same beech tree every day.

She took pleasure where it pleased her and ventured on. She always told me, “this is your path and you will pursue it with excellence”.

It took a period of reflection before I realized I didn’t belong in the city next to her.

It ruined me.

All at once, I wasn’t in the right place anymore. Somewhere I had longed to be, for years, so when I returned to the beech tree, it looked taller than ever;

I knew my sister could climb it faster and braver and better than I. As kids,

climbing toward it we felt exhausted. But in our own way:

For her, she was unstoppable, exhausted by how easy it was, exhausted by dragging me up. For me, just exhausted.

Having never reached the top. Today, my heart is lonelier than ever, as the beech tree grows higher, the dead ring grows wider, the castle looms larger still.

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The sansevieria in my apartment died. As I placed it in the dumpster, the echoing boom reminded me to examine the fact that it may not have been meant to do anything.

The unusual state of being is alive.

She always told me, “find what you love and let it kill you”. I’ve found that I’d kill to walk on solid ground.

I take a step back from my life and audit it. Maybe I’m being too harsh on myself. I usually am. Nothing has changed, but

I consider the beech tree

And wonder how I’ve made it so far to see the fresh bark that wraps around the warm, brown branches greeted by the eyes of the sun.

The castle still leans over me, as I return to my place, and

I ponder how I used up so much time.