

My Apple Tree

by [Søren Sørensen](#) (October 2024)



The Apple Orchard (Emile Claus, 1910)

In the middle of March, when the last snow melted, I bought a beautiful little apple tree. Brought it home and planted it in my backyard, added a full bucket of water. I entered the house, and my steps brought me right to the window. I looked through the pane at my apple tree standing there alone, looking deserted.

After lunch, I came back to the window. The tree looked the same, but it seemed to me that the leaves were a little

crumpled. I walked to the backyard to my apple tree, stood there for some time, and it looked all right. It was past midnight when I went to bed and saw my little tree in my nightly dream.

My little apple tree was growing slowly as days were rolling. Sunshine, rain, rainbow, morning, evening, night, the tree was standing slender, firm and straight. By next spring, the tree was as tall as myself, adorned with beautiful pinkish-white flowers like a beguiling bride, with tender foliage and limber branches, spreading a refreshing, emerald shade.

In summer, my tree ran into trouble. The leaves grew covered with ugly dark spots. It was all my fault; I had not taken good enough care for my little tree. I bought medicine, treated every single leaf one by one. And by fall my tree came back to normal, but then the leaves turned yellow and brown, and soon the tree was standing bare-branched, covered with fluffy white snow.

The spring came again, and my apple tree looked hale and healthy. New leaves were unfolding and shining in green. Soon my yard was brightened by a brilliant blossom, with bees cheerfully buzzing round the tree.

One morning, when I came to the window, I saw some branches had become leafless. I ran to the yard, hoping I was wrong. But, alas, the branches were stripped of their leaves. I gazed around, and no-one was there. Then I looked down and noticed footprints, each footprint was like a split heart, just like mine. I had seen deer in the nearby woods. They had obviously targeted my tree.

I called my college and told my students I am staying home. Then I called people for backyard fencing. I asked for today, and by the evening one-half of the yard was securely fenced. I turned on the light and stayed up overnight with my wounded tree. The next day the whole yard was surrounded by fence.

My tree recovered and endured the loss. After one more year it was a big tree, much taller than me. Still, I would call it *my little apple tree*. Then out of the blue the trouble hit me – my college refused to grant me tenure. I started looking for a job elsewhere and found just one. It was far away, but I had no choice but to accept it.

So, I had to move, to sell my house... But my apple tree? First, I thought I could take the tree with me, but the roots had grown too deep and too far. On my departure, I asked the new owner not to cut the tree, to take care of it, and got his consent.

Only years later was I able to revisit my state. It was a rainy day. I drove down the road to my old house and rang the doorbell. Nobody answered. I walked to the yard, with my heart racing, and peeked through a gap between the panels. My tree was standing amid overgrown weed. The rain was pouring, and it was twilight, still I could see the tree looked battered, with dried-up branches spread out desperately into the air.

The next day, on my way to the airport, I felt by my guts that my tree was crying, pleading for help. I made a U-turn. When I rang the bell, the old man opened the door and stared at me. "Remember me?" I asked, trying to smile. "Oh, yeah, you...", the man spoke slowly, and then continued, "I just cut the tree." "You cut the tree? Why?"

All the words he said were meaningless to me. We walked to the yard and saw a fresh stump where the tree used to be. The trunk and the branches were piled at the wall. I felt a big void and deepest remorse in my interiors. I'd failed my poor tree. Last night, had I waited long enough, the tree could be saved. I picked a large twig, abundantly forked, and toddled away.

I brought the twig home and made a statue of my apple tree, complete with beautiful little white flowers. It is not

growing, but now it is safe. And most important, it's a real piece of my beloved little apple tree, a tree that became so dear to me, so mysteriously connected to me, my poor apple tree...

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