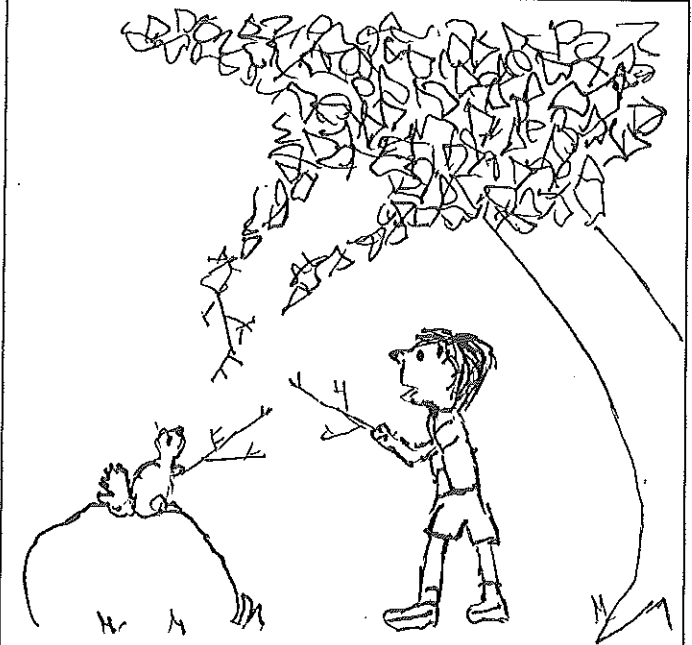
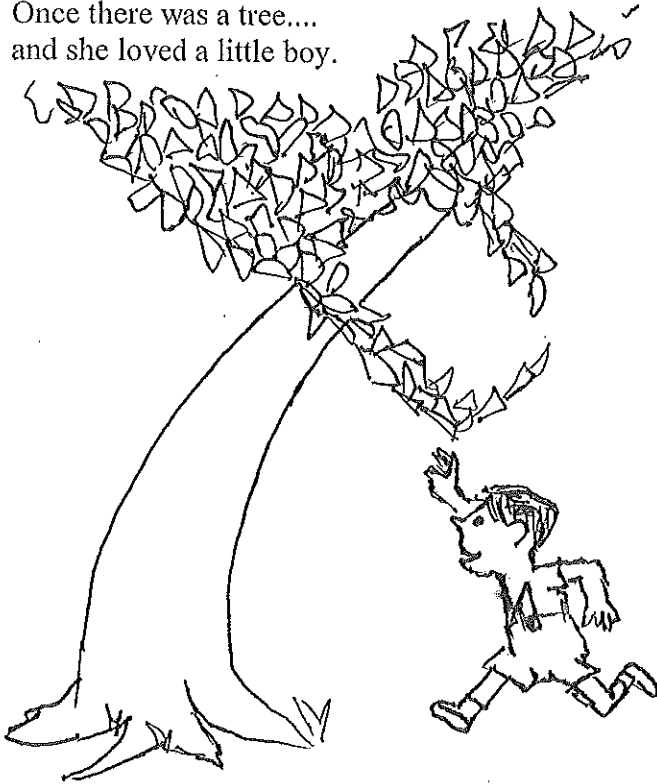


The
Helping
Tree

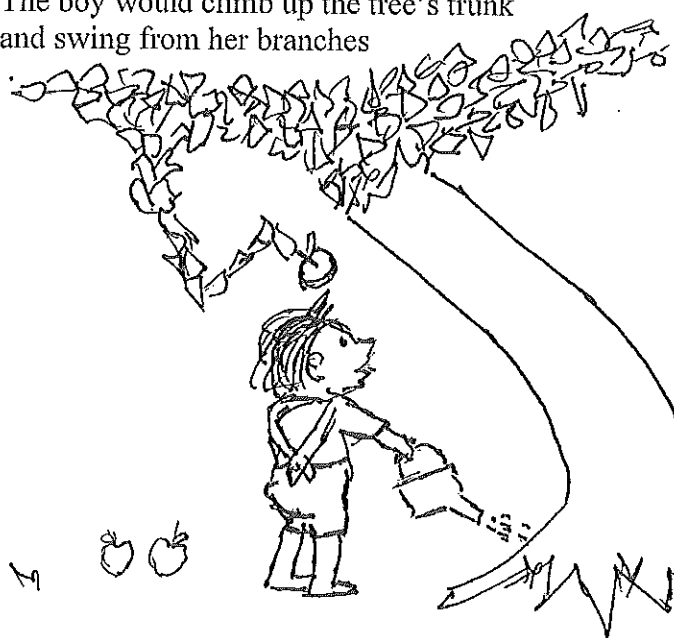
by
Jamie
Bergstrom

Once there was a tree....
and she loved a little boy.

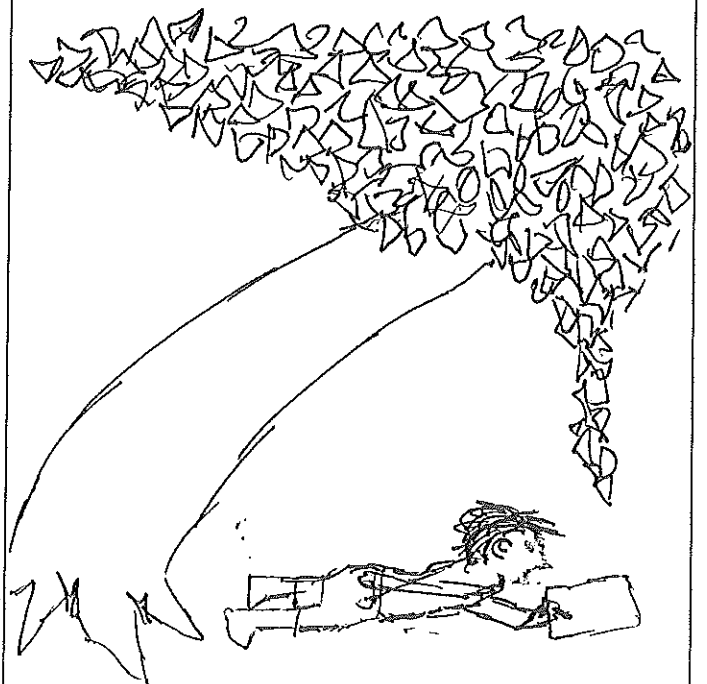


And everyday the boy would come with his friends
and they would gather her twigs
and make them into swords
and play warrior.

The boy would climb up the tree's trunk
and swing from her branches



and the tree would make dinner for the two to share.
And the boy loved the tree....
very much.



And after dinner the tree and the boy would do
homework together.
And the tree was happy to help

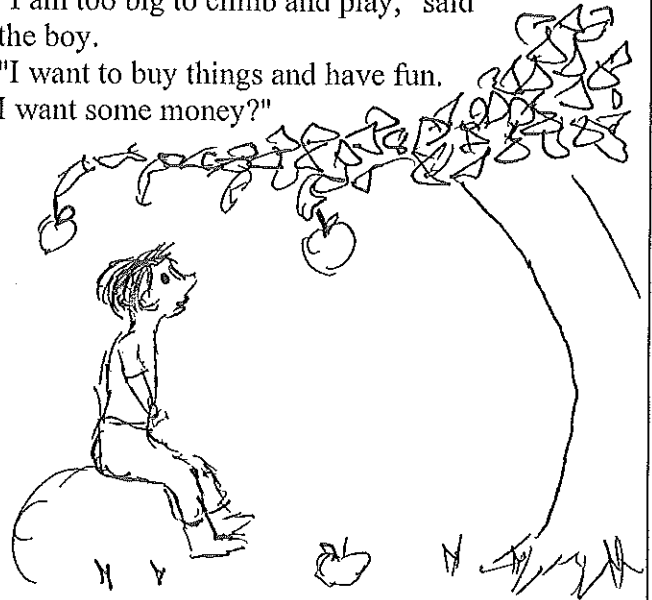
And the boy grew older.
And the tree was often alone.



Then one day the boy came to the tree and the tree said, "Come, Boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy."

"I am too big to climb and play," said the boy.

"I want to buy things and have fun.
I want some money?"



"I'm sorry," said the tree, "but money does not grow on trees.

I have only leaves and apples.

You will have to earn your money."

"Can you help me?" asked the boy.

"I would love to" she said.

So the boy and the tree brainstormed some ideas.

"I know, a lemonade stand!" exclaimed the boy.

"But I can not afford the lemons," he said.



"Take some of my apples, and trade them for three lemons each in the city" said the tree

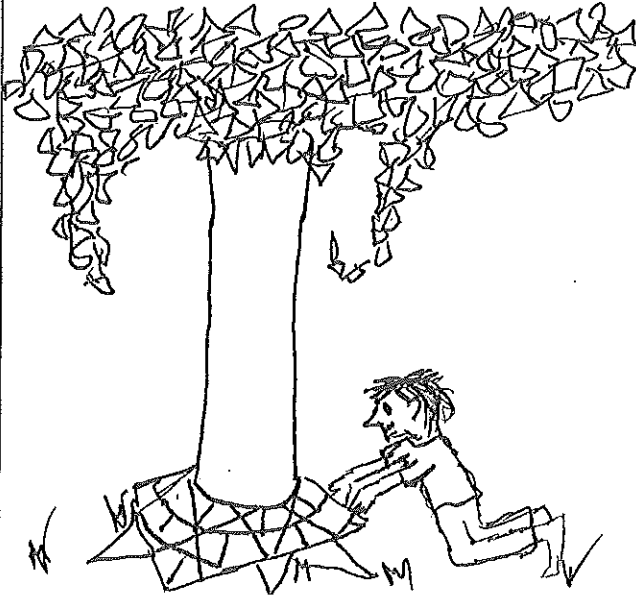
"Then you will have money and you be happy with your accomplishment."



And so the boy climbed up the tree and gathered some apples and carried them away.

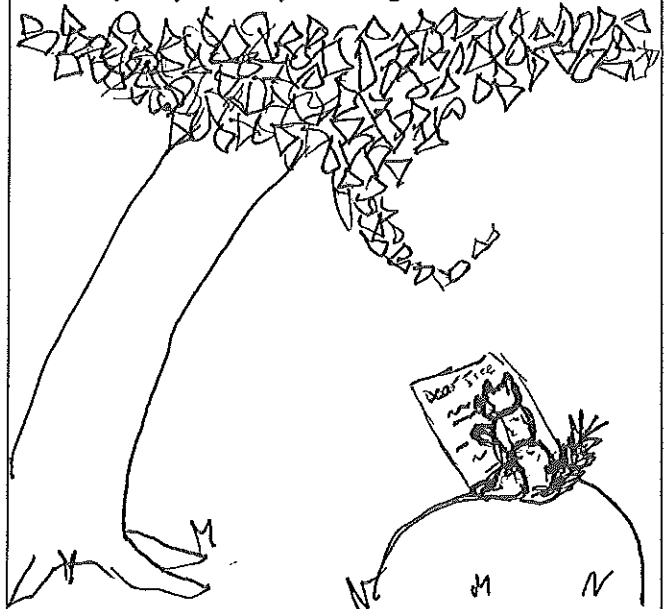
And the tree was happy to help.

The boy came back, but only briefly.



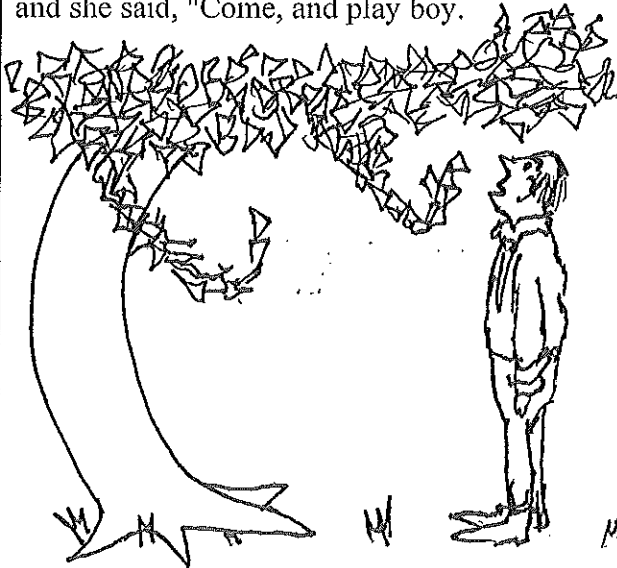
He used his profits to buy the tree the blanket she needed for the coming winter. She was grateful and the boy thanked the tree for her support.

The boy stayed away for longer.



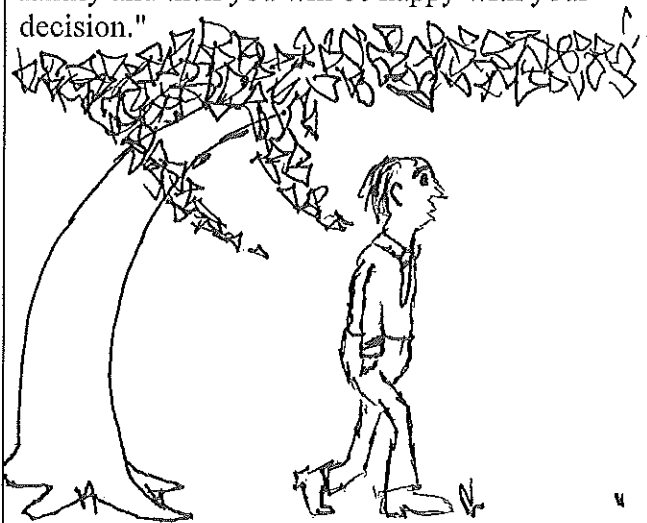
He sent the tree messages about his success in the lemonade industry. The tree missed the boy, but she was happy and proud of him.

And then one day the boy came back and the tree shook with joy and she said, "Come, and play boy."



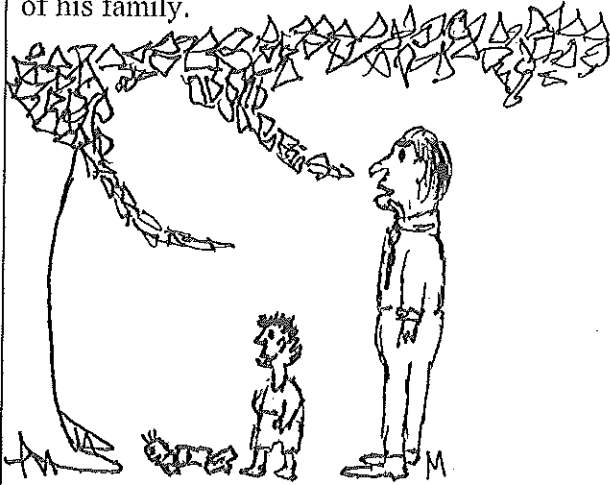
"I am far too busy to play," said the boy.
"I need advice," said the boy.
"My wife and I want to start a family but I do not know where to move.
We need a new house."

"The forest is my house," said the tree.
"I live where I feel comfortable.
Find an area where you want to raise your family and then you will be happy with your decision."



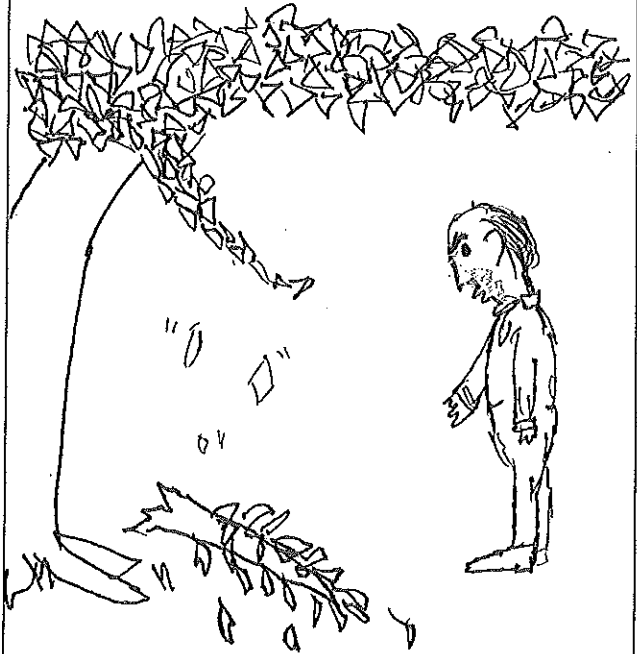
And so the boy left the tree to discuss moving with his wife. And the tree was happy to help.

The boy was very busy and stayed away for a long time.
He continued to send messages with pictures of his family.



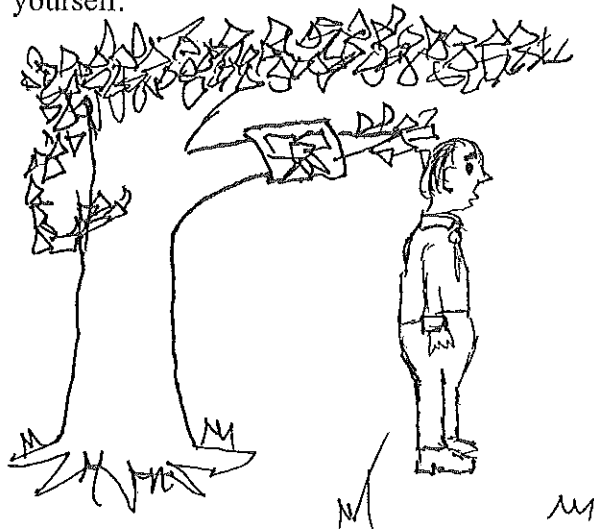
When he came back he brought his family to meet the tree.
The tree was so happy she could hardly speak.
"Come and play," she whispered.

"I am too old to play," said the boy,
"but the kids can."
The children climbed up the tree and swung from her branches, but one of her branches broke.



The boy realized the tree was too old to play,
so he bandaged her up and made her dinner
just like she used to do for him.

The family said goodbye to the tree and the tree reminded the boy to be the best parent he could.
The tree told the boy, "when you learn how to make others happy you will be happy with yourself."



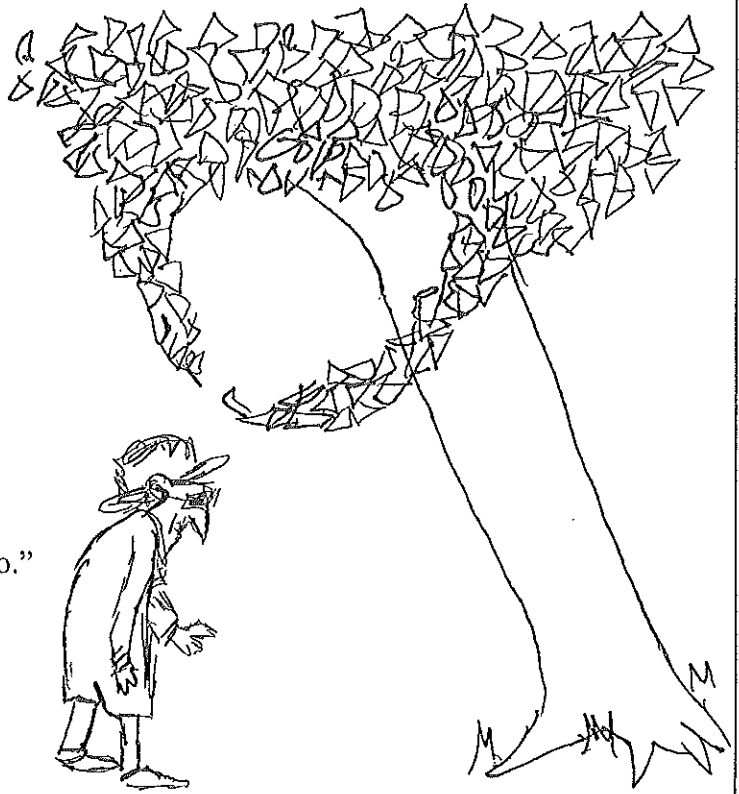
The boy thanked the tree for her wisdom
And the tree was happy to help.

And after a long time
the boy came back again.
"I am sorry, Boy,"
said the tree,
"that I have not responded to your letter"
My branches are too weak to write."

"It is okay," said the boy,
"I am too old to read."

"I am sorry I did not send apples
to the kids this year," said the tree,
"They did not grow."
"Do not worry," said the boy,
"The children moved away along time ago."

"I wish I could give you something...
but I have nothing left.
I am just an old tree."



"It is okay," said the boy,
"I have something to give you instead."

The boy placed a large stick
behind the tree to prop her up.
"Now you can be happy and rest for
years to come," said the boy.

The tree thanked the boy very much.
And the boy was happy to help.