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Cold

Shannon L. Williams

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system, all weapons for the lawn battlefield. He told me when to fertilize and weed 'n' feed. He finished the yard work boot camp with a reminder to trim the lower branches of the Tree. I took this charge with determined gusto and felt my own ego building over the next couple months as I battled yard work on the front lines and saw imminent success. The yard was looking pretty good, except for a few small weeds.

So I went on a tour of duty to Home Depot, confident that I could find the right solution to the weed problem. I consulted the pros, read the labels (Operations Manual-OM), and decided on Weed B Gone in a spray bottle. The application was a cinch and the weeds would meet their doom, said the OM. But they had no intention of complying with such orders. The day after application, my grass was brown and the weeds were still a vibrant green, alive and waving at me. Concerned that I had consequently killed the grass, I rushed to Home Depot a second time and, again, consulted the OM. This time the procedures involved an application of summer fertilizer which would green-up the grass in no time. I handled this application with mild agitation as I poured around the healthy weeds, still sneering at me. Never had I known an enemy with such confidence and audacity.

After spending \$30.00 to see a few weeds flourish, and assuming the worst was over, my good intentions were again plagued with problems. The third day, I noticed that some of the leaves on the Tree were turning pretty colors of orange and brown-on only one side of the Tree! Over the next couple days, leaves dropped profusely from that side, and I raked desperately. I had at least enough knowledge of plant cycles to determine that in the month of June, leaves were not supposed to fall. I knew that I was, again, being tormented by the Weed B Gone demon.



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I questioned whether my husband was going to believe this story. He would return to no Tree and I had only the prolific weeds to attest to the tragedy, but I wasn't about to radio in this information to him. My neighbor, in sympathy, helped me rake, laugh, and cry over the possible fate of the Tree.

In the meantime, while I was killing the Tree, my husband was growing an army. As a liaison to the Iraqi military, he assisted in the recruitment, organization, and assignment of their soldiers into necessary divisions. Officer Jason helped establish the roots of the Iraqi army from its beginnings, more than doubling their troops from about 60,000 to over 140,000 which earned him a bronze star. He handled the daunting task with order and good judgment.

I, back on the home front however, was not about to give up. The battle was at hand. I grabbed my favorite weapon (checkbook), jumped into my tank (Suburban), and drove back to the base (Home Depot), but not without first consulting the General (a local tree farm manager). He suggested I use a product called Super Thrive, a highly concentrated vitamin-hormone supplement. A mere \$25.00 later, I soaked the roots of the Tree very carefully with a dilution of half an ounce of Super Thrive in five gallons of water over the course of eight applications in 30 minutes. I nurtured and prayed and, a week later, repeated this same process.

Finally, the demon was exorcised and the Tree showed signs of new life. I touched the baby green leaves that sprouted from the leafless side of the tree, and a sense of motherly protection overwhelmed me. I knew then, that the Tree and I would survive anything, including separation from our caretaker. Besides, after all we'd been through, the weeds didn't look so bad. At least they complemented the green leaves on the Tree.

Vagabond

Kathy Davidson

Solitary little stick
blown far from home
bone dry and flaking from exposure.
Thickly layered chunks of bark
peeling and lifting away
like plaster from an old wall.
A short crusty appendage
points upward:
a Hitch-Hiker's thumb.