

# The Last Elm

*To bow before a humble tree  
takes but a moment of our time,  
while that which we may receive  
fills all the spaces of eternity.*

On reaching the mural, I gasped. It was a picture of a huge tree, but the image was holographic. Although the size made the tree appear to stand alone, it actually stood in a small copse, surrounded by other trees of different species.

“It's an English elm,” I murmured in surprised.

I stood back to regard and admire this solitary elm, stunned by the size, impact, and sheer overwhelming reality of the mural. As I stared, a slight breeze seemed to ruffle its leaves, and the tangible humus smell of a thriving ecosystem became apparent. Intrigued, I walked to one side, wondering if I might find an opening into some magical wood, but, no, the dimensional image faded, and the tree appeared flat. However, once I faced it again, it breathed with life and vitality. Almost as though following an invitation, I reached out tentatively to touch a limb of the great elm.

My arm became an outreaching branch, one of many branches spreading out around me. I was a mammoth specimen of English elm, my branches reaching over forty metres up and out toward the sky. I was Elm, yet my awareness of Self was undiminished. I stood alone in a small copse of trees, and I was aware of an aloneness that was almost alien to my human Self. I was the last English elm on Planet Earth! I felt a surge of horror, yet Elm contained the knowing with equanimity. Elm felt no emotion, no fear of death or dying, no alienation, nothing other than a sense of profound aloneness. Through Elm, I discovered the difference between separation and aloneness. Alone I stood, more alone than any member of any species should ever have to be, yet Elm's knowing of Oneness was as powerful as life itself. Not even the vaguest hint of separation flickered in the consciousness of Elm, just aloneness with Oneness.

Elm consciousness reached out across planet Earth and beyond, connecting with the countless stars in unnumbered galaxies. Yet, as Elm, I was grounded, a conduit for cosmic energies and influences beyond

knowledge or understanding. My Elm role was unique, for, as with all tree species, I expressed a different vibration of the One, the Godhead of All Trees. As Elm, life was a weaving, creative rhythm of consciousness, while each human was a mode of consciousness struggling to express its individuality through a physical framework, yet hampered by its separation from the One. Every species of tree, plant, and creature existed as a blend of consciousness, unborn and undying. Each tree form was a physical touchstone with the physical Earth, each species a form of splendid physical evolution as it followed the design its tree spirit expressed in each species.

With human eyes, we see a physical tree, yet this physical tree is only a biological reflection of a spiritual energy that expresses itself through each species of tree. Just as it is I who express through my toes, my fingers, and each hair on my body a unique creation that is the physical me, so, using the body of Earth, other Beings express their uniqueness through the different location of trees. Through this Elm Being, I connected with spirit and intelligence of all Elm. My awareness focused on the Being, yet there was no hint of form. All that I could perceive was a Being of Light and, within this ethereal “substance”, the movement of energy. And beyond this, I connected with this Being in a way that defies description. I was Self - I was Elm.

As Elm, my Self-awareness reached out to a small group of humans who had come trudging into the clearing beneath my branches.

Unknown to them, our consciousness mixed and merged, for I was the focus of their attention. Like most people, they did not realise that their thoughts create a focus, and that no matter what the subject, they connect in consciousness with what they are thinking about. And they were thinking about Elm.

“So what are we gonna do about it, Gus?”

The person who posed this question was a young man named Billy, barely out of his teens, but the anger and violence that flared in bright red flashes around him was the result of many confrontations against injustice.

For many lifetimes, he had fought against injustice, as fatally attracted to it as a moth to the flame. Of the half-dozen people, two others, Tom and Hans, felt the same attraction. Any issue that was termed unfair was their unwitting fodder.

Elm had no intellect, no mode of reasoning, no inkling of separation, no emotions, no sense of injustice - simply a connection with All that Is - a

connection based not on knowledge, but on Beingness. Within Elm lay an untapped reservoir of vast wisdom, yet this wisdom had never been translated into human terms. Elm's knowing was the pure essence of spirit, undiluted and pristine. Elm felt the discord of the mixed group of people. Not discord as bad or good, for Elm was without judgement - just discord.

Gus was an older man in the group, wiser and more moderate. His consciousness reflected the pale orange/yellow of deep anxiety, but his anger was finished, long ago burned away. He was accompanied by his two daughters, Faye and Jeanne, both with loving dispositions.

“What do you suggest, Billy?” Gus asked, his sweeping glance including Tom and Hans.

Billy, Tom, and Hans exchanged meaningful looks, and in their consciousness, I, Elm, read their resolution. They meant to harm another human. Their intent radiated as a dull, sickly red mist, roiling around them in folds of negativity.

“I reckon we ought to bash the bastard.” Billy spoke quietly but vehemently, while Tom and Hans nodded.

“No!” rose a shout of protest from Faye. “Violence isn't the answer. Isn't violence the very thing that we most detest?”

As Self/Elm, I marvelled at human deceit. This group of people was almost devoid of any comprehension of their intent, yet it radiated forth, shouting its message to all of Nature. In consciousness, every tree in the copse, every bird and animal, every insect could, each in its way, read the intent of this group of humans. Nor did there arise any animalism reaction or condemnation from Nature to this intent; there was simply a knowing in consciousness. Humanity, however, lost in the smother of intellect, blinded by personal fears and the isolation of each person's separate reality, knew nothing of this.

“Listen, Faye, and you, Jeanne. You don't have to be involved in this - you don't need to know the details - but I, for one, cannot stand passively by and let that bastard cut the tree down. For Christ's sake,” - Billy's voice rose to an angry shout - “this is the last elm that anyone knows of.” His voice barely under control, he continued. “Just because the tree is on Joel Carter's land, that's not a licence to cut it down. My God, the last elm! I .. I'll shoot him first.” He glared his defiance at the group.

“That's quite enough of the sort of talk, Billy,” Gus warned. “Your anger

is going to get you into trouble one of these days. Faye's right. Using violence defeats our purpose, and it generates even more violence. It just goes on and on. I'm sure we can get Joel to see reason if we approach him again."

"Oh yeah!" Billy snarled. "And what good has it done the last three times? Three times, I'm telling you! Ever since he was offered a fortune for the timber of the last elm, money is all he cares about. I'll shoot the bastard!"

Aggression, anger, helplessness, shame, sorrow, loss, frustration - all these emotions and more swirled in a miasma around the group of people and Elm. Elm knew none of these emotions, for it was just discord that impinged into the consciousness of Elm. In Elm, this discord was subtly transmuted, vibrating higher and finer into the aura of harmony that was the natural expression of Nature. I knew that with the destruction of each tree this natural transmutation of negative energies would become ever more restricted, until eventually humanity would be forced to confront its own most base and negative reality. I shivered at the prospect, leaves trembling along my branches and twigs.

Jeanne looked up, staring at the tree in concern. "The elm can hear us," she said softly, shyly. "It feels our concern. Maybe it knows it's the last elm left. What a terrible weight to bear,"

"Don't be soft, girl," Billy said angrily. "Trees don't know anything. They're just dumb, inanimate things waiting to be cut down and used."

"Why do you care, Billy?" Faye asked perceptively. "You don't have any real feelings for the trees, that's obvious. Are you in this just for the fight? Someone to get angry with? Is that what it all means to you?" "That's enough." Gus intervened before Billy could reply. "Squabbling among ourselves isn't going to help. Let's be getting home. I suggest we all think very carefully about this and plan a moderate, sensible approach to stop Joel Carter from cutting the tree down."

The group walked quickly away, yet their distance meant nothing to Elm. For as long as their focus was on Elm, their consciousness continued to radiate their intent as clearly as if they sat in my branches.

Nights and days passed, unmeasured and unheeded. Time was meaningless; only the seasonal rhythms remotely resembled the passage of time to Elm. However, only a few days after the group had departed, a single, deeply troubled human approached. I knew that Joel Carter heralded

the demise of Elm - the last English elm - but Elm was not disturbed. Only the discord of the moment had any import, the discord that preceded action. Neither was physical action of any real importance; the only active representation of reality was the movement in consciousness.

Everything about Joel was broadcast in his troubled consciousness, and I read his story with the ease of reading a book. He had been offered the staggering sum of a million pounds for Elm by an unscrupulous businessman who planned to make a personal fortune from the last elm.

Despite what Billy believed, Joel was very much a man with a conscience, and right now he was deeply troubled. He badly needed the money, yet everything in him abhorred selling the tree. His wife had left him four years ago, leaving him for another man, and Joel had custody of their only daughter, Nadine. Nadine had recently developed a serious tumour of the brain, and only immediate surgery in America offered her even a slim chance to live. During the time it had taken for the surgeons to determine the best procedure and schedule an operation date, Joel had been contemplating cutting down Elm. The thought appalled and repelled him, yet he was terrified that without the money and operation, Nadine would soon be dead. Very few people knew of the inner struggle Joel faced every day. Only the business deal had leaked out, and he was now the local Mr. Bad Guy. For himself, Joel did not care. He was a taciturn, withdrawn man, not good at communicating and easily misunderstood. All the love he had was directed at his beloved Nadine. To lose her would be the end of his own life.

With trembling hands, he pulled a small can of deadly tree-kill poison from his pack, and digging down to some of the larger roots, he drilled a hole into them and poured in the poison. He cried softly all the while. His crazy logic tried to protect him by reasoning that if the tree were dead, it would not matter if it were cut down. This was self-deception to a high degree, but because the guilt and pain were more than he could endure, as crazy as the reasoning was, the plan might work. Soon, his mind could mercifully blot out the truth, burying it deep in the pool of his subconscious.

Elm felt the poison as a rapidly developing surge of discord - a discord so that as Elm died, every tree on the planet felt the withdrawal in consciousness of the last elm on Earth. Again, there were no feelings of retribution, no desire for revenge, no judgement, not even a fleeting feeling

of regret. Elm was a conscious expression of life. Life continued to express that consciousness, even if the physical form could no longer continue to express it.

Although I was aware it took days for the leaves to wither, yellow, and fall, the sap to thicken and stop flowing, in consciousness Elm withdrew very rapidly. For many years a killer disease had decimated the elms of Earth, and as the last one left, Elm was ready for the next step in the movement of Elm consciousness.

But for the people involved, the tragedy had only begun. Although Joel had been faced with an agonising choice, Nadine died during the operation. When, a few days later, a single bullet murderously blew the back of Joel's head into a bloody pulp, this act only foreshadowed the suicide he had already planned. Billy, so obviously guilty by having broadcast his intent to all who would listen to him, was sent to prison for life, yet he was innocent. Nobody ever suspected the more subdued, controlled violence of Hans, nor did they have any clue about why Hans hanged himself three months later. All the repercussions of violence played themselves out, gradually draining this small pocket of anger from the global pool of consciousness. And all so totally futile. Elm knew nothing of this. Although I followed the tragic repercussions, to Elm it was all meaningless. Elm related to life in terms of consciousness; discord and harmony each carried countless nuances of endless dimensional levels as Elm merged with the vast oceanic consciousness of One.

[...]

I was aware that over a century had passed since the last elm had died, yet, wonder of wonders, a strong healthy elm flourished and grew no more than a mile from where Elm had died.

Once again I faced the paradox of time and Oneness.

[...]

How had Elm survived on Earth? I viewed the answer from Elm consciousness, for a single, unrealised connection had remained. When the group of people walked away from Elm, unsure of how they would save the magnificent tree, Faye had lingered for a few moments. She had scooped up a handful of the biomass beneath Elm and had noticed a single flat, winged seed. Slipping the seed into her pocket, she had hurried to catch up with the others.

Many years had passed, and Faye's old coat had been discarded to hang on a peg in the closet. Years later, now married and on a visit home for a respite from her young children, Faye had found the coat, and the associated memories of the last elm had brought tears to her eyes. Idly, her fingers went through the pockets of the old coat, where they touched upon the seed of Elm. For a second she felt a breathless excitement as she held the seed before her; then the excitement died. Seldom did the seed of an English elm grow, for it was mostly barren. The tree was generally propagated by suckers, and of course, they were all long gone. But as Faye held the seed, a feeling entered her heart that this special seed contained life - an undeniable intuition that regenerated her excitement.

Watched by her father, Gus, Faye carefully set the tree seed at the bottom of his garden, not far from where Elm had once grown. Gus was convinced that it was all a waste of time, for what with barren seed and the passing years, what chance the elm? However, he promised to water the seed and to care for it, for, deep down, he wanted to believe in miracles.

A month before the poison had been fed into its roots, Elm had dropped its seed. In only a very few, a tiny reservoir of energy held Elm consciousness, and since Elm had died, all but one of these flickering sparks had expired. In the miracle of Nature, a tiny seed held all the consciousness of the eventual massive tree it might one day become, for Nature deals not in the size of form but in the essence of life.

It was this single living seed that Faye had reverently kissed and planted in her father's garden.

When, after three anxious months, Elm's strong green shoot emerged from the soil, Gus unashamedly knelt down next to it and bawled like a child, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"It's a miracle," he whispered. "It's a bloody miracle."

Elm became known as Faye's elm, and no tree ever received more love or protection than Faye's elm.

Faye and her family moved back into the village of her childhood, and she spent many hours each week simply sitting in silence with her tree. She learned a truth that she spoke about to conservation groups and wrote about for all who were interested. She learned by direct knowing - by realising that she could merge the focus that was her conscious Self with the consciousness of Elm. In this way she had access to the wisdom and

intelligence of the Beingness of Elm. The truth that she encountered was based in the continuity of All life.

Faye learned that if we are to save the trees of Earth, all people involved must become aware of their inner feelings. Are they Faye's or Billy's? If a group of people fight to save some trees and their fighting is based in fear - a fear for the survival of the planet and their children - then whether the trees are saved or not is irrelevant. No matter how noble the motive, fear is not the basis of unity. Fear-based actions threaten the extinction of many species of trees, yet if the defence of tree is also based in fear, in consciousness nothing creative happens. Fear is a force of restriction, of separation. If a thousand fearful people plant a thousand trees a day, then fear plants the trees, and fear will just as surely remove them. In a year or a hundred years, a fear-based action will reap the harvest of separation and more fear.

If, however, a person plants a single tree each month, or each week or each year, and planting that tree is a pure expression of that person's love, with no motive other than the joy of sharing life with that tree, then in consciousness this act will affect the universe - and Beyond. Love connects and creates. Saving trees is not a numbers game, because numbers become meaningless in the reality of One. Oneness means that the One is not the sum total of its parts; it means that the One has never been divided. In truth, a forest is not just a large number of separate trees creating an ecological diversity; it is also the consciousness of One seeking to express Oneness through the diversity of species. Saving trees on our physical Earth depends entirely on the relationship we create with them and the development of that relationship. If we grow in consciousness as the trees grow in stature, then we have the potential to affect the substance and structure of all life on Earth.

All this and more, Faye learned from the reservoir of Elm wisdom with which she was bonded. In her loving relationship with Elm, she, too, became a pivot for change in the development of human consciousness.