

Life is such a precious thing. It comes in many forms: that of a newborn baby crying into the night, of a giraffe standing within moments of its release, or the sprout of a green being, one whose heartbeat pulses in time with the Earth.

That was a philosophy instilled in Melody Louis from the tender age of 3 by her caretaker, Alice. When her mother was attending to the house and her father off to work, Alice brought her outside to the garden and taught her the importance of the living things.

“Even this newspaper,” her strong, light brown hands, calloused by years of housework, held up a newspaper dated April 29th, 1904, “has had life breathed into it. It was formed from the mighty tree, which was remade into our daily informative.”

Melody was a bit distracted from her words. As a three year old, she was far more interested in the world around her with life that seemed far more moveable: the ants crawling up and around her legs, the birds calling in the fresh Spring air, not some silly newspaper that was scrawled with symbols she could not even comprehend. Alice, who had plenty of children on her own that grew up just as enraptured with the world around them, only let out an indulgent sigh before flipping open the page and settling into a story of a local farmer who somehow grew pumpkins damn near the size of a toddler.

When Melody was seven, Alice paid more attention to the lesson. In her hand, Alice placed an acorn, and folded her fingers around the hard shell.

“Do you know where trees come from?” Alice asked gently.

Melody raised her head and nodded in such a way it seemed impossible that there could be another answer.

“God!”

Alice laughed.

“Well, that is certainly *one* answer, but,” she pointed to Melody's enclosed fist, “they must first start as a seed.”

“Oh.”

Alice carefully went down to her knees while Melody sat in a huff.

“Nothing to worry about, Miss Melody, dear.”

“What are we doing today?”

Alice raised a brow.

“Are we becoming God?”

A wry smile formed on Alice’s face. Only the mind of a seven year old could prompt such genuine theological curiosity without being sacrilege.

“We are planting a seed,” she pulled a small hand spade from her dress pockets, “You may decide if that makes us God.”

Without hesitation, Melody grabbed the spade and began digging.

“It well and should!”

Alice sat back and fanned herself with her hands. The summer sun, even in New York state, was relentless. It was nothing compared to her home in the south, but years of living up north changed one’s bodily reactions. Melody was already sweating.

“Why do you say such a thing, Miss Melody?”

“Because!” she slammed the spade into the ground. Flecks of dirt flew onto her dress, and Alice already knew the nightmare that would come with scrubbing the stains out, “We’re doing all the hard work! We’re putting it in the ground and making sure it grows up all good and right!”

“Mm, are we doing that, or is the acorn?” Alice laid down on the grass, content to let the sun warm her inside and out, “What do you make of the wild trees? They must make sure they grow ‘good and right’ all on their own. Does that then make the acorn its own God?”

The furious digging paused. Alice raised her head just enough to peek at Melody, who wiped sweat from her brow and replaced it with a dark streak of dirt. Her thick brown eyebrows slowly came together, like pinches of raw dough, then stuck as though frozen.

“Are we our own God?”

“How follows your logic?”

The little girl’s head bobbed between her caretaker and the acorn in her hand. Her hair, wavy and slightly frizzled from the day’s earlier rain, swept across her cheeks from the rapid movement of childlike wonder.

“We grow all on our own. Well, Mommy makes the food and makes sure it’s all healthy and such and that helps me to grow, but then I just grow and grow and grow all on my own. No one puts a crank in my legs and tells them that I need to be this high at this time.”

Alice closed her eyes.

“How can you be sure?”

In her mind’s eye, with the assistance of her ears which were very much in good shape, thank you very much, she could tell Melody was pulling down her long socks to see if there was, in fact, a hole caused by a hand crank.