

Where am I?

When am I?

Who am I?

I was an olive tree.

I am an olive tree.

At least, that is what I remember being.

I stand under a building now. A tall one. 12 floors maybe. Concrete surrounds me on all sides, gray and flat and sad and loud even when it is silent. Sometimes I wake up and I don't understand where I am. I search for the hills, the wind, the other olive trees who spoke in creaks and shadows and shared the sun with me. I look for my family who once ruled the land alongside me. I look for their leaves. Their patience. Their answers. Where are they?

They are gone.

How are they gone?

I don't know how I traveled so far without moving. I can't move. I am an olive tree.

My family will come to rescue me. I'm waiting for them.

One. Two. Three. I'm still waiting for them.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Where are they?

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. They're not coming.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. They are olive trees.

Once, I was part of something. Humans call it a family. Roots touching roots underground, exchanging stories older than names. We grew crooked together. We bent with the seasons. We knew when rain was coming before the sky did.

Now my roots hit cement and stop. They knock, confused, like fists on a locked door. They're imprisoned. Alone. Always alone.

People pass me every day. Fast. Distracted. Their eyes slide over me as if I were a pole or a mistake left behind. Sometimes they ignore me. I am an olive tree. They rather look at something small: a mini sun they have created. It feeds them words and sounds and colors and shapes and a perfect heaven that once lied in me. In my kingdom.

No one asks how long I've been here. No one wonders what I've seen. They step around me, above me, beside me. Some are born. Some grow old. Some disappear. I remain. I do not move. I cannot move. I am an olive tree.

Is this what madness feels like? Watching everything change while you are forced to stay the same? I grow and grow and yet, I am so small. So weak. I am an olive tree.

Children notice me. They always do. Their hands grab my branches without asking. They climb me like I am a ladder, like I am not alive. They scrape my bark with their shoes. They laugh. I let them. I don't know why. Maybe I am grateful to be touched, even violently. Maybe pain is proof that I still exist. I am an olive tree?

When they leave, I am alone again. More alone than before. Their touch burns on my bark. I hate it. I love it. I miss it. I need it.

At night, I listen to the apartment above me breathe. Pipes. Footsteps. Arguments. Cries. Silence. I don't fully understand human words, but I understand weight. I understand feelings. I understand restlessness. I understand the sound of someone who does not belong where they are. Do I belong here?

I am older than all of them. Older than the walls. Older than the wires buried under the ground. Under me. I remember the open lands. I think. It was vast and green and full of living. The sky was wider. Time has moved slowly enough to taste. Or maybe it was just a dream. Maybe I have created it all. Maybe heaven is just in the mini sun. Maybe the humans are right. Was I an olive tree?

People think age makes you wise. It doesn't. It makes you question everything.

I have watched humans come and go my entire life. I have watched them love fiercely and leave suddenly. They carve their initials into surfaces, into me, desperate to be remembered. I never needed to carve my name. I assumed I would outlive memory itself.

Now I am not so sure.

Am I an olive tree?

Do humans feel this too?

This strange distance from where they have started? Where they think they have started? Where they remember their perfect life? This quiet panic of waking up one day surrounded by things they do not recognize, playing roles they have never chosen? Putting a mask on to look pretty while our whole world is tilting?

I see it in their faces when they walk past me without seeing me. When they are looking at the mini sun. They are rooted in places they don't understand either. Maybe that's why they avoid my gaze. Maybe I remind them of what stays when everything else runs.

Sometimes I imagine my family still out there, swaying together, whispering with the wind. Sometimes I imagine my madness traveling through the ground, reaching them, warning them of what waits between the walls.

If you ever stop and look at me, really look, you might hear it too.

The sound of roots remembering a world that no longer makes sense.

I am a tree.

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