

THE TREE

BY LINDA MARASCO

IT WAS AT SUPPER THAT FATHER told us about the tree. "Saturday," he said in his authoritative voice, "we move the tree." Everyone stopped and turned to Father. "The tree with the scar," he said. "The one in the back. We'll move it to the front." Everyone was still looking at Father. He broke a piece of bread and dipped it in the moat of gravy around his potatoes.

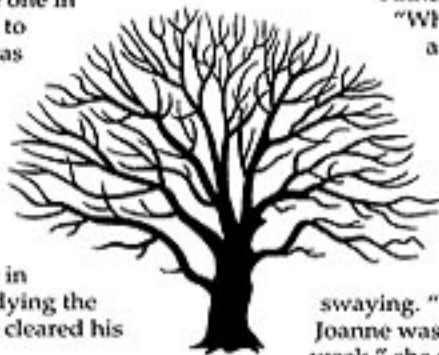
Joe was the first to speak. He picked up his glass and twisted it in his hands, intently studying the liquid as it swirled. He cleared his throat.

"Eddie and I thought we might take the car over to the station Saturday and put it on the lift. I want to check the left rear tire, and that's the only day we can have the rack."

He looked up from his glass. Father nodded.

Mickey dropped his fork. "I won't be around either," he said. "Mark and I are going out to Freeport."

No one spoke.



"It's the first day off I've had in two weeks," he went on. "It's only fair that . . ." Then he stopped. Everyone was looking at Father.

"All right," he said. "Saturday is my day off, too, but all right." He looked at Diane and me. Diane stared back.

"I'm going to the movies with Fran," she began defensively. "I asked on Tuesday." She took her plate into the kitchen.

Father looked at me. "What about you?" he asked.

I looked down at my potatoes.

"Joanne and I were going to play tennis."

Diane entered the room, her dark ponytail swaying. "I thought you said Joanne was upstate for the week," she said.

I turned around and shot her a look.

"Oh, *that* Joanne!" she said, almost dropping the teapot.

"All right," said Father. "I'll do it myself."

Mickey squirmed in his chair. Nobody went on eating except my father. Mother was the first to break the quiet after she poured herself a cup of tea.

"When I think of that tree . . ." she said as she raised and lowered the tea bag in the cup. "How old is it, Andy? Must be seventeen, eighteen years old. I remember you bought four trees when Joe was about two. Now that I think about it, it was kind of silly—planting them in the sand. There wasn't dirt there then. It's amazing that they grew."

She put down the tea bag and began to stir without looking at the cup. "But they *did* grow," she sighed. She reached for the sugar bowl and unconsciously put a teaspoonful of sugar into the cup.

"And I remember when a car hit the tree. The tree was completely uprooted, and there was a big gash running up the trunk. But the tree was replanted and it grew."

She put another teaspoonful of sugar into the cup. Then she put down her spoon and looked up. "Did I put any sugar in my tea?" she asked.

Father had finished eating. He carefully wiped his mouth and put down his napkin. "Saturday," he said. "Saturday I'll move the tree." The matter was settled.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL SATURDAY that I remembered about the tree. I was lying on my bed reading when I heard

the sound of metal hitting the soil. I went to the back window and looked out at the bent figure of my father digging up the tree. Joe came and stood beside me.

"Some people sure are stubborn," he said.

"Yeah," I answered.

I went back to my bed and plunked myself down to finish my reading. All I could concentrate on was the sound of my father shoveling. I rolled off my bed and went downstairs.

Diane was sitting on the back steps with her head in her hands. Her ponytail was drooping.

"Weren't you going to the movies?" I asked.

"What happened to Joanne?" she answered.

We watched the boys as they came out of the house and went into the garage. Both came out with shovels.

Father neither looked up nor said a word. Diane and I brought the wheelbarrow over as the boys began to shovel.

"Stupid tree," Joe muttered.

Father smiled. The tree would live, I thought.

- 1** What is the main idea of this story?
- A. In this family, the needs of each individual come first.
 - B. In this family, conflicts are resolved through compromise.
 - C. The problems of this family are best solved at supper time.
 - D. The children in this family pull together when they feel they should.

- 1** The correct answer is D (The children in this family pull together when they feel they should).

Type of Passage: Literary Text

Benchmark: LA.A.2.4.1 The student determines the main idea and identifies relevant details, methods of development, and their effectiveness in a variety of types of written material.

The correct answer is D. The author shows the children helping the father even though each of them has given a reason for not being able to help.