

I Am the Tree that Wears Ribbons

A winter's day. Stumbling footsteps approached on the frosted path. Fingers grasping a bare branch and tying something. A slip of satin, as if to decorate me, like a Christmas tree. I shuddered beneath my bark at the unrequested touch.

A woman, grey faced, crimped mouthed, whispered, 'Please help my daughter. She's so ill.' She lingered, footsteps side-to-side agitating the paving. Her breath entwined my limbs with puffs of warm air.

I couldn't tell her, that although I stand beside the churchyard, I don't have that kind of power. I considered tossing the token off. But didn't. I rather liked the flash of pink rippling in the breeze.

After the first ribbon, other people came; told me their hearts desires. They tied tokens on me with reverence and whispered wishes.

Snowdrops pushing through thawing earth announce Spring. My ancient limbs no longer bud and blossom with the vigour of youth. But now I have ribbons which change from day to day. In rain they shine and in moonlight are edged with silver. When they're dry they flutter, like verdant leaves. Spring gales tug at their bindings and they respond with gasps of excitement. The first ribbon's bright pinkness is fading but it blows with the others, equal to their vibrancy.

She returned today, that first woman, bringing her daughter. Pale, but faces upturned to the sunlight. They spoke in chorus; "Thank you, Thank you."

The daughter reached up and bowed a red ribbon on a branch. No wish, just gratitude.