

The sycamore tree was where Alfie hid his dreams.

Almost every day throughout the winter, he made the journey to the churchyard at the end of his street. A giant sycamore stood in the centre of the immaculate grounds. Standing on tiptoes, Alfie's fingers searched for the hole he had discovered in the trunk. Once he had found it, he placed scraps of paper covered with his scribbled desires deep into the benign giant's heart.

Then, driven away by the cold, he would return home.

During the parched summer that followed, the trees in the churchyard drooped. Their leaves crisped and turned yellow. Only the sycamore thrived; its verdant leaves were open hands, ready to bear any burden. Such was the intensity of their lustre, looking at the tree in full sunlight became an impossibility.

The volunteers who tended the churchyard scratched their chins, pondering the miraculous health of the sycamore tree. Alfie kept his counsel. There was a weight on his shoulders - the weight of a duty that needed to be done.

Once the intense heat had abated, the boy returned to the churchyard. He carried no new dreams with him - he had asked enough of the sycamore. Reaching up, his arms embraced the tree and he whispered his thanks. Duty done, Alfie stepped back from the vast trunk and let the night carry him away.

The tree stood proud, forever protecting the boy's wishes within its steadfast heart.