



No.

The
Tree
Who
Set
Healthy
Boundaries

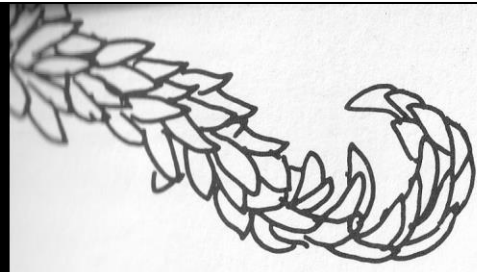
by
Topher
Payne

An Alternate
Ending to
Shel
Silverstein's

The
Giving
Tree



Created for The Atlanta Artist Relief Fund Story Time



“I am too busy to climb trees,”
said the boy.

“I want a house to keep me warm,”
he said.

“I want a wife and I want children,
and so I need a house.

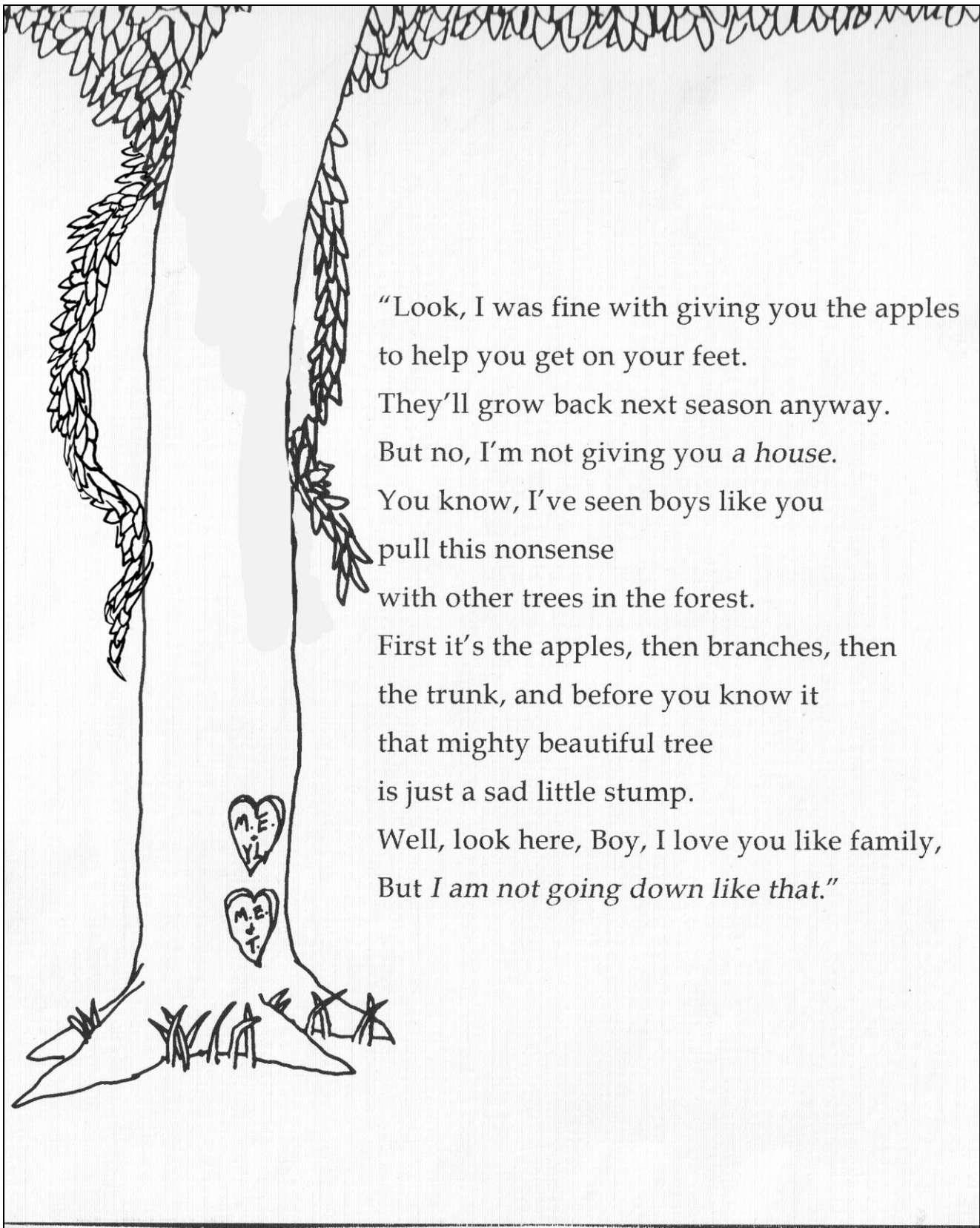
Can you give me a house?”

“I have no house,” said the tree.

“The tree said-

“Okay, hold up. This is already
getting out of hand.”





“Look, I was fine with giving you the apples to help you get on your feet. They’ll grow back next season anyway. But no, I’m not giving you a *house*. You know, I’ve seen boys like you pull this nonsense with other trees in the forest. First it’s the apples, then branches, then the trunk, and before you know it that mighty beautiful tree is just a sad little stump. Well, look here, Boy, I love you like family, But *I am not going down like that.*”

"And while we're on the subject,"
the tree said, grabbing him by
the collar of his shirt.

"I recognize friendships evolve over time,
And we may not see each other as often
because you don't have time
for your tree friends.

But we used to be real tight.

Now it feels like I only see you
When you *need* something.

How do you think that makes me feel?"

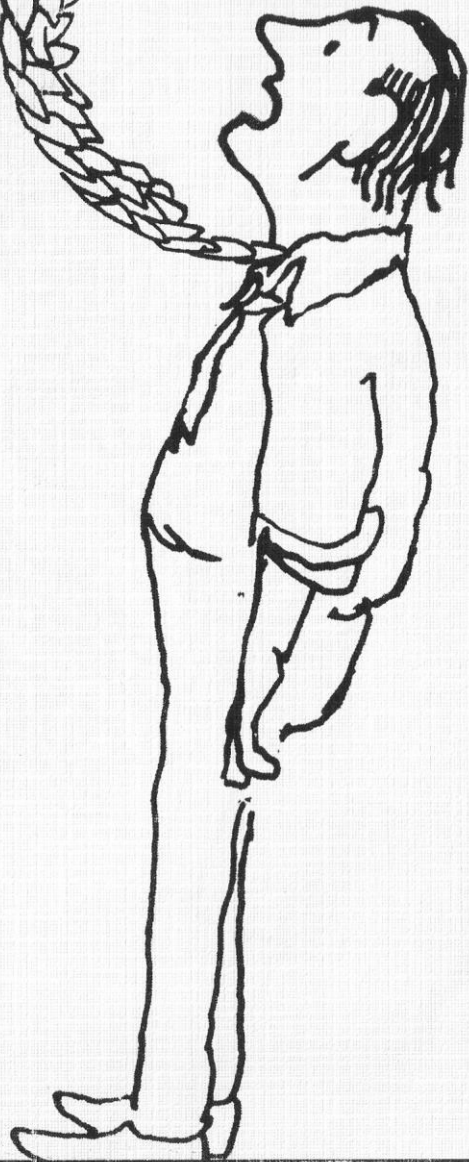
The Boy took a long breath.

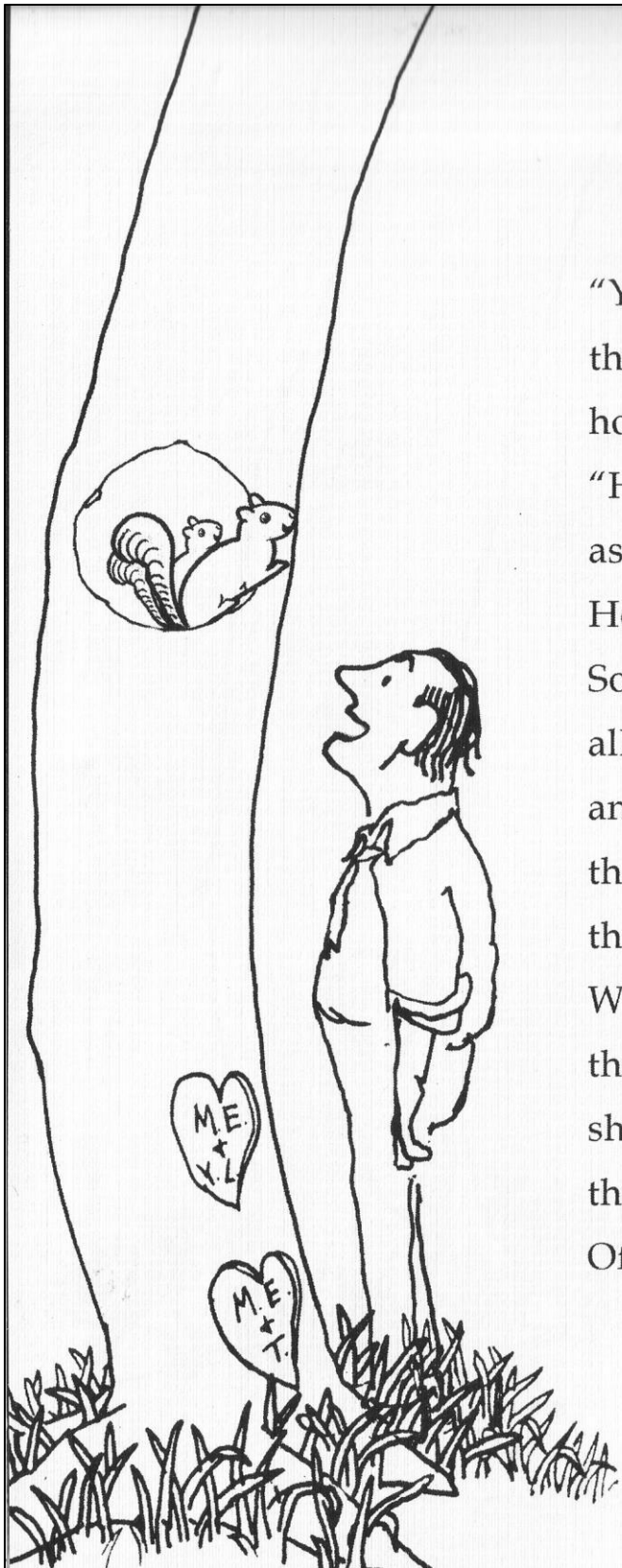
He felt a sour rumble in his stomach.

Because he realized

he hadn't considered his friend's feelings.

"I bet it makes you feel bad," said the Boy.





“Yes, Boy, bad. I can’t even remember the last time you asked me how I’m doing.”

“How are you, tree?” asked the Boy.

He sincerely wanted to know.

So the tree told the boy all the gossip from the forest, and introduced him to the family of red squirrels that had moved into her trunk.

While she was glad for the company the squirrels provided, she was concerned about the long-term health effects Of hosting a burrow.

So the Boy called the local arborist, who explained
that squirrels don't eat wood, they only
Build nests in pre-existing holes,
so the tree was in no danger.

The tree was so relieved.

And so was the Boy.

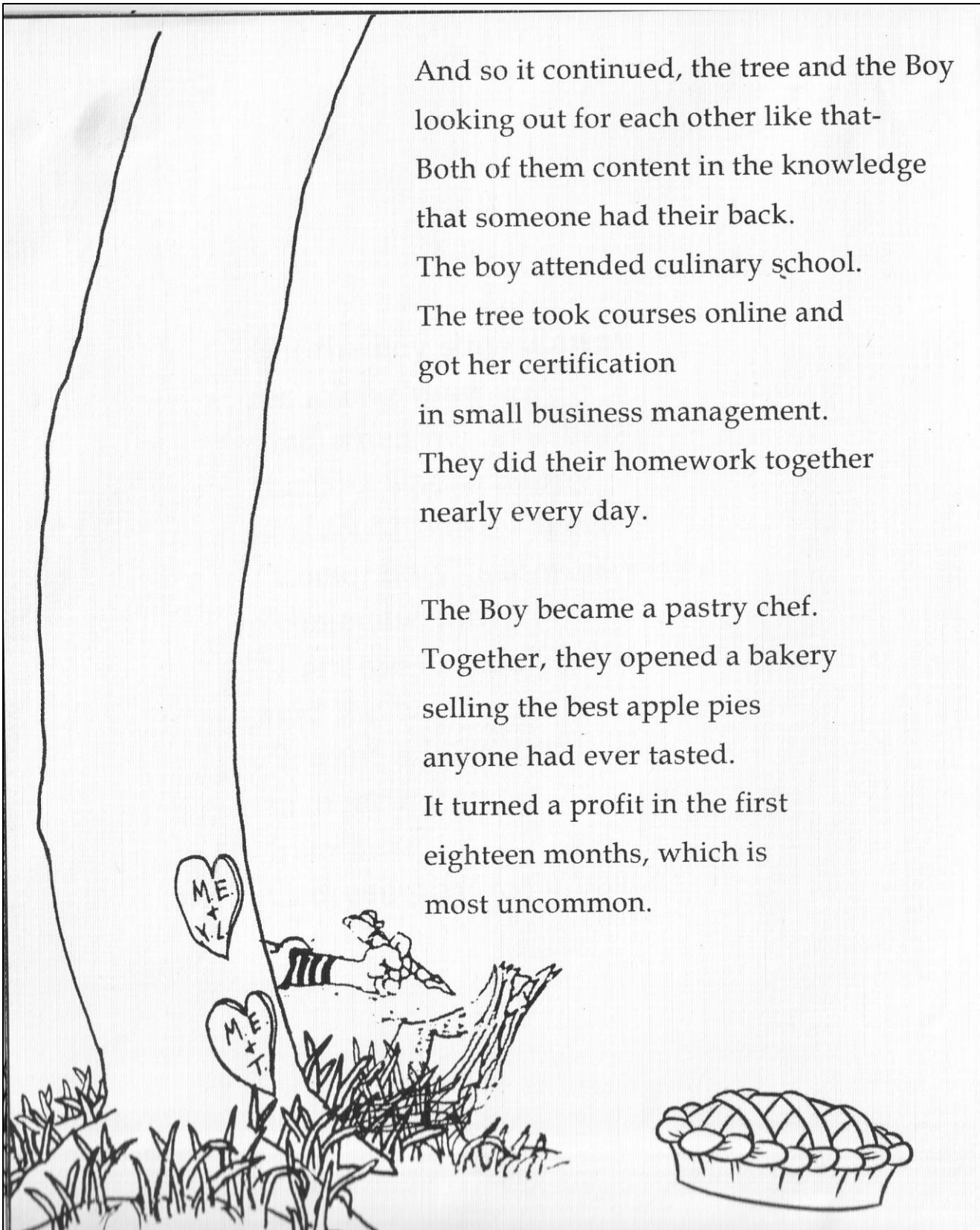
He loved his friend
and was concerned about
her long-term health
because she had taught him
the importance of empathy.



And so it continued, the tree and the Boy
looking out for each other like that-
Both of them content in the knowledge
that someone had their back.

The boy attended culinary school.
The tree took courses online and
got her certification
in small business management.
They did their homework together
nearly every day.

The Boy became a pastry chef.
Together, they opened a bakery
selling the best apple pies
anyone had ever tasted.
It turned a profit in the first
eighteen months, which is
most uncommon.



Eventually...

the Boy had a son of his own.
And much later, the son of the Boy
had his own family too.

Because of their friendship,
the boy was successful and fulfilled,
and the tree grew wider and stronger,
standing tall and beautiful in the forest
for

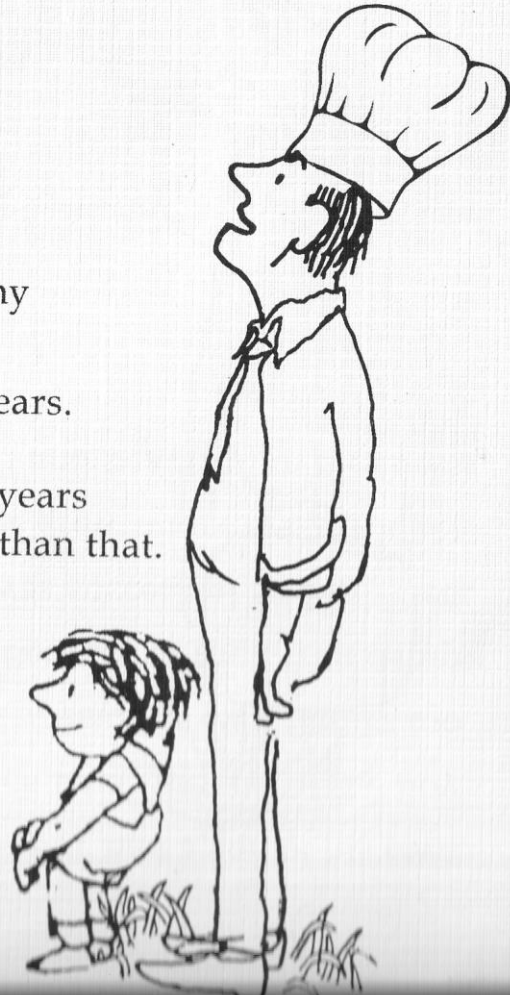
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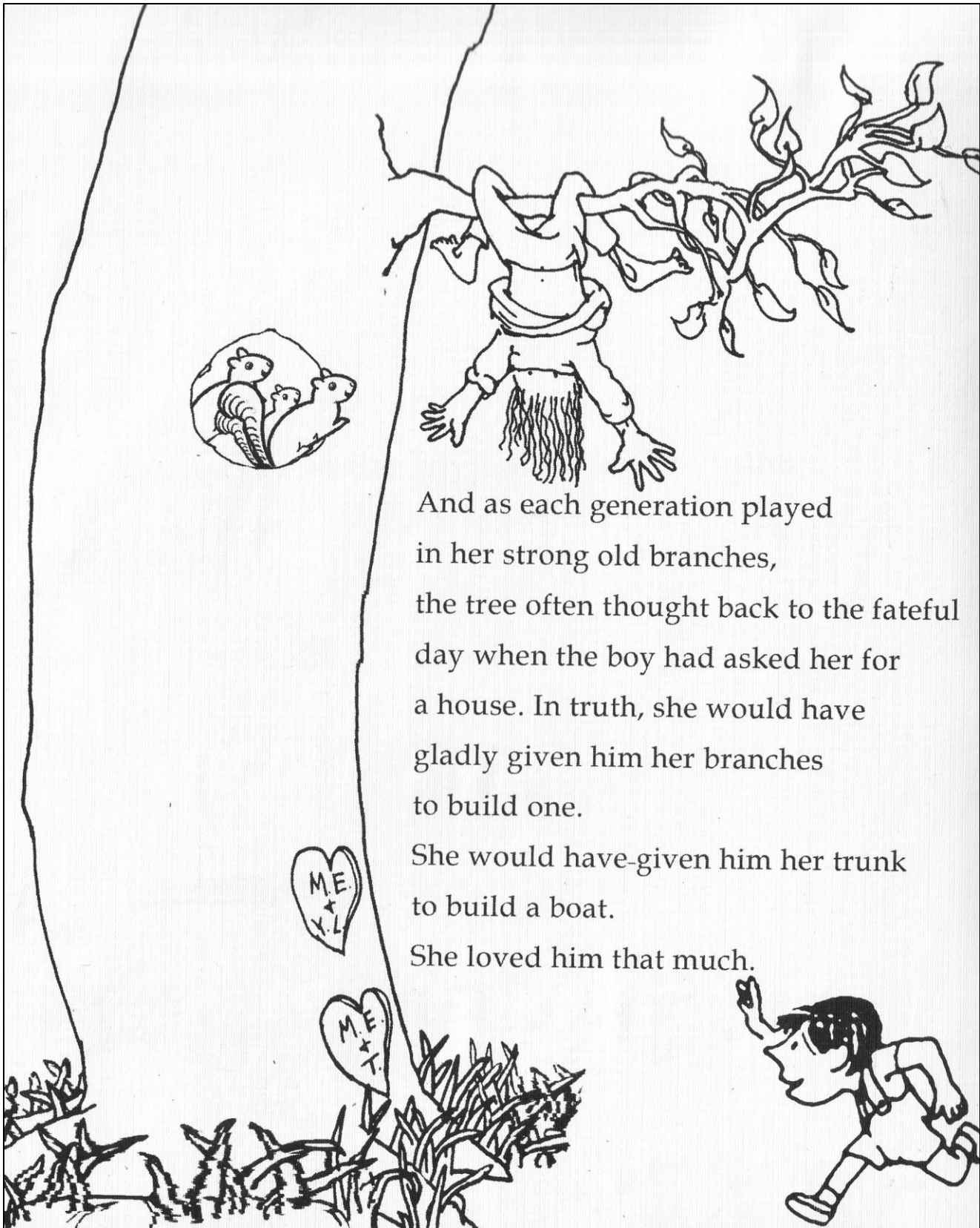
many

many

years.

Plus a few years
even more than that.





And as each generation played
in her strong old branches,
the tree often thought back to the fateful
day when the boy had asked her for
a house. In truth, she would have
gladly given him her branches
to build one.

She would have given him her trunk
to build a boat.

She loved him that much.

But then she would have had
nothing left. Not for herself, nor anyone
else. And there never would have been
a home for the red squirrels.

There'd have been no hide and
seek with the Boy's grandchildren.
No bakery with the best apple pies
anyone ever tasted!

Setting healthy boundaries
is a very important part of giving.
It assures you'll always have
something left to give.

And so the tree was happy.
Everyone was.

The End.

