Trees have always been special to me. Some I have witnessed with my own eyes, while others I have seen only in my mind. Some were planted with a purpose, some by chance, and some by circumstance. Some were imagined a thousand years ago, and some are being imagined now.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to see countless numbers trees in many different lands.
Those that remain in my memory are not from lush forests, or from sparse clusters,
or even those which seem to line so many of our modern boulevards, acting as guides.
For me, the trees which are the most memorable, are the solitary ones,
Standing alone, their roots spread wide, drinking deep of the energy from the land beneath.

In the Canary Islands, in a site memorializing the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there was a whitish evergreen tree.
In Rapa Nui (Easter Island), there was a chinaberry tree standing alone, watching over a Moai statue.
Another tree on the lakeside of Gatun in Canal Grande,
And one planted on the median of a main street in Xian.

There was a tree in the station square of Santa Maria Novella in Firenze,
And another at a cemetery spreading over a valley in Hawaii, its leaves rustling as the wind blew fiercely.
A tree near a blue tent in a vast UN camp in Eritrea, providing its shade to a refugee woman and her sleepy goat, the colors of the tree mixing with the red and green of her gown.

Perhaps the most memorable tree for me was a single tree bending in the Tanzanian wind.
It emerged as I traveled down a dusty road, over a carpet of dried-up grasses.
The tree seemed to blend into the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.
From a distance, it seemed to be alone,
But as I got closer, I saw a shirtless young man leaning on its willowy stem,
Seeming to have merged with the tree in an effort to avoid the blistering sun,
His brown skin melted into its bark, and the curve of his back was reflected in its bowing branches.
The tree and the young man were as one.
The only other sign of life was a solitary cloud, which cut high across the sky.