

but if I tried, I could do more than I thought. So, in an intimate way, it told me more about myself and what I could do to overcome the scarring. The truth is, the Tree Image was my looking glass, and I was Alice, so to speak. I was lifted out of my usual MS state into a different dimension.

The severity of the disease varies. When the myelin sheath is attacked, some people experience symptoms which cause a mild alteration of sensation while others are visited by paralysis of the limbs and interference with speech, walking and other basic functions depending upon where the sclerosed patches are formed in the central nervous system. This "crippler of young adults" is classified medically as "definite, probable, or possible; benign, progressive, chronic relapsing, exacerbating and remitting, or plateau (stable)." It reads like the description of an ogre. Its onset is often insidious. The Tree told me all that, in a silent language, so that I could understand more about it in my mind. I was flabbergasted.

All the literature agrees that MS is a neurological disability that attacks women and men in their most productive years, between the ages of fifteen and fifty-five. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society reports that MS affects 300,000 to 350,000 Americans between the ages of twenty and forty. They say that it often occurs at the time when life looks exceptionally good for a person; when the individual is optimistic about a future full of activity, movement, and high expectation. It seems ironic that the motor and sensory functions of the nervous system would be those most affected at a time of potentially high activity. It is as though you suddenly find that the soles of your running shoes have become like suction cups, and there is nothing you can do about it. The Tree told me that I could do something about it.