



Let's get real. On the one hand, I am almost 83 and in the early stages of crumbling. But, in my arms is Damien, an almost 3 month old boy in the early stages of who knows what. Do I want to enthusiastically go forward with him into life? Of course I do. But I won't, will I? That is the unspoken grandparent's lament, behind the peaceful smile looking down on a sleeping face.

Damien will help me remember some of the really important things in life that I have forgotten. Someone recently suggested that these included; clean pajamas, wet hair, a quiet moment and a “creative” prayer, *Good Night Moon* for the 5000th reading, looking at a sleeping innocent face and then looking out at the moon I have known all my life.

But what could I give Damien? Oh, I have looked ahead a little bit. I have planted enough fir trees to be remembered by him for many a Christmas. There has to be more than that. Listening to his peaceful slumber sounds I can only imagine what the world will be like when he holds his own child. It's exciting to try to look ahead, it is also frightening. The world my grandfather experienced bore very little resemblance to the one in which I have lived. How can I contribute to an environment about which I really know nothing.

Well, there might be a way. In her fascinating novel *The History of Love*, Nicole Krause (1974 –) makes a good case for the view that in one way or another, often unknowingly, we enrich or diminish that history which runs through each of our lives and every family and society which surrounds us.

Recently I was standing in an orchard of trees I had pruned 30 years ago. I could see the good and the bad that has come from actions which seemed pretty casual and insignificant to me at the time. Now, when I am faced with issues concerning those very close to me as well as those I will never actually meet, I think of what impact my decisions and actions will have on the life Damien will live half a century from now.

It probably sounds a bit weird, but I've come to the point of believing that anything I can do to increase the importance of love in my world will improve the environment in which Damien and his children will live. And, if I can't help that process along very much — there are always the Christmas trees.

BROTHER TOBY

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