

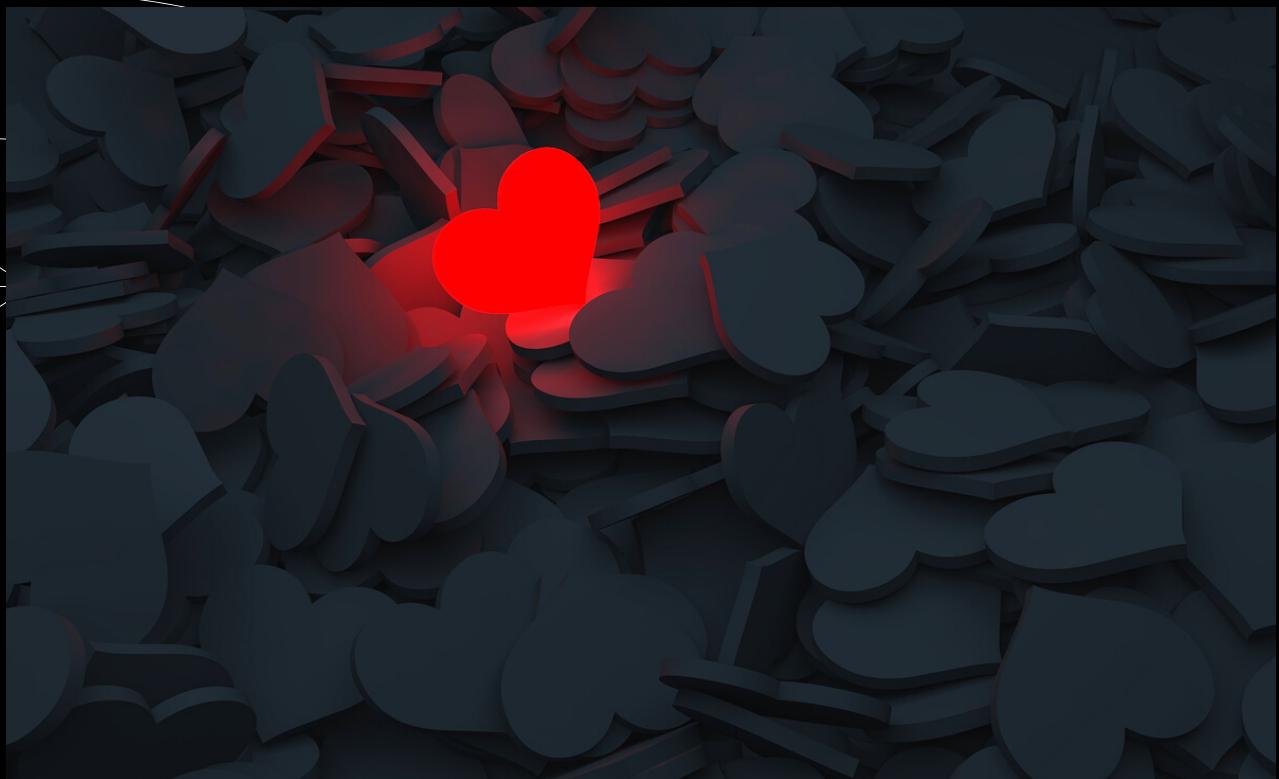
# LOVE

## the beautiful, the real and the twisted





# Table of Contents



INTRODUCTION PAGE 3 | THE REAL PAGE  
4 | THE TWISTED PAGE 6 | THE BEAUTIFUL  
PAGE 10 | REFERENCES PAGE 13

# Introduction

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## WHAT IS 'LOVE'? (BABY DON'T HURT ME)

This question has lingered in the minds of billions of people from all across the world, in all of the time known to human conscience. It even inspired an iconic 90's song written by Haddaway. Yet despite the enormous amount of time in pondering, experiencing, and researching there is still no definitive answer.

It's commonly agreed that love is a "subjective reality (Hinkle, 2019)", which doesn't hold definitions, nor can it be confined to a box, nor are there any rules to define what it is. So because there is no definitive data on such a phenomenon, I view ***love as a concept***.

In ***LOVE: the beautiful, the real and the twisted***, the concept of love is explored, all the way from the ideals to the problematic. A deep dive into the three categories of love will be showcased in a range of games, environments and interactions that convey a metaphor that harmonises with the concepts of micro-games, bonsai and hint fiction.

### **MICRO-GAMES**

Micro(mini)-games, by definition, are games that are small and simple, which are also commonly found within a larger game. They contain simple goals and

instructions, minimal controls, reduced aesthetics, and sometimes, timers.

### **BONSAI**

Originating from the practice of Penjing in China, ***bonsai*** is the art of growing miniature trees in pots. This consists of the process of miniaturisation, cultivation, and training (pruning, trimming, wiring, and aging).

### **HINT FICTION**

An extremely short story that consists of 25 words or less, this genre which isn't simply defined by its length, reveals a snippet of a larger, more complicated narrative that leaves the reader to fill the gap.

These three concepts are blended with the overarching theme of love in the following three projects. I chose love as it applies to all forms of human life and has taken a big chunk of my life ever since I learned of love as early as the age of four. It's an incredibly complex, subjective concept that allows expansive exploration of human emotions, thoughts and behaviours around people, places and material things.

# The Real

MICRO GAMES

## WHAT IS LOVE REALLY?

To answer this question, I looked to The School Of Life and their ideas on 'Romantic Realism.' That love is not just about the things that feel perfect, but something rather deeper: understanding the sorrows that come with love (especially in long-term relationships) acceptance that "certain griefs are highly normal," and that life is simply running its course.

## FROM EXPERIENCE

personally can't speak for the majority of the world when I describe love, but personally, it's about making an effort. It's about showing up, time and time again. Choosing to see your children's kindergarten play on a weeknight, calling a friend in need, visiting your grandmother on a Sunday. It's the acts of service, loyalty, commitment.

"You can actually do a lot of things so long as you put your heart into it, believe me on that."

And it doesn't just apply to others, this applies to love for oneself too. Allowing yourself time to unwind, to exercise and move one's body.

## A CLICKER GAME?

In ways to imitate the notion of love making an effort time and time again, I opted to create a micro-game in the form of a 'clicker' game: where a player has to click to earn rewards or win. 'Love Given' copies the idea that each click is like every single action of effort, of service to love, which rewards the player with a 'Love Received' score, which increases as the player actively participates in the game.

The meter signifies not just an essential game mechanic to define a 'win' state but to show that you can lose at love if you choose to omit yourself from being an active party.



# SCRATCH

# The Code

## WHAT IS SCRATCH?

Scratch is a free programming language and online community where you can create your own interactive stories, games, and animations.

## CLICKING TO WINNING

The idea of making the player click as fast as they can to win imitates the notion of love requiring continuous effort.

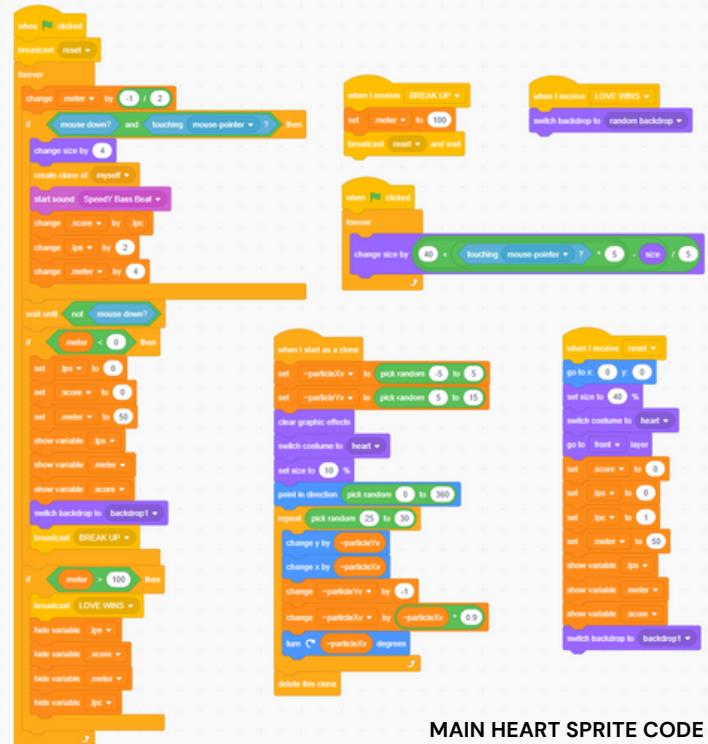
If you let the game linger after winning without clicking, it resets. Therefore pushing the idea of effort as important to keep going.

Like in life, the game has the option to end the game, held within the 'break' sprite. This simply removes your progress and resets the game.

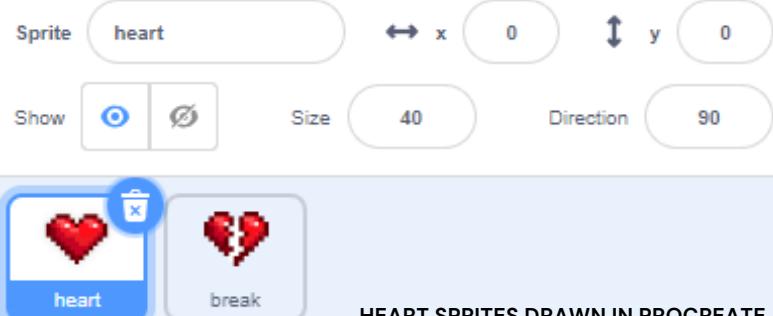
The mechanics hold meaning too, as the more clicks (effort) the player gives, the more love is given. The more love is given, the more love is returned. The more often this love is given, the better the outcome.

BIG W for continually making the effort.

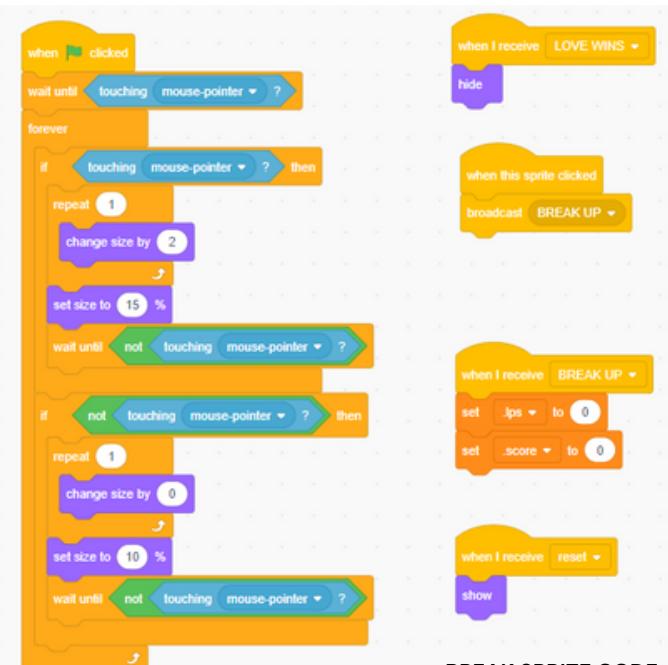
Insightful quotes are added to the end screen to show players that there is so much to learn from love when you put the effort in.



MAIN HEART SPRITE CODE



HEART SPRITES DRAWN IN PROCREATE



BREAK SPRITE CODE

# The Twisted

HINT FICTION

"BUT YOU LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL."

COLD HANDS ARE FORCED PAST THE STRAP OF MY SHORTS  
"BUT YOU LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL."

NETFLIX ASKS: ARE YOU STILL WATCHING?

BUT I SAID, "NO."

Much too often sexual assault breaks the lives of too many people. In a 2016 survey, roughly three million Australians report being sexually assaulted. Three million too many. This issue is personally very hard to talk about. It's a hard subject as it has affected the lives of people I love and more. Even myself.

I chose to write a hint fiction piece for this project which portrays the event of the assault as it happens.

Far too often in sexual assault cases, the crime is highlighted over the victim's recovery and I feel that removing what follows and what happened prior represents that.

I want to share a terrifying experience of sexual assault. How it can happen in intimate rooms and situations, under the trust of a partner. I wanted to share a moment of my life where I felt I couldn't move, and how this partner, in their true nature, is a monster for stripping me of my right to consent and

my humanity, along with my movements and urgency. I was frozen whilst they had their way with me.

The euphemism of 'Netflix and Chill' has connotations of an intimate experience, supposedly an enjoyable and consensual one with a person you trust. This was used to push the idea that even in moments of trust and intimacy, crimes of sexual assault still happen.

From personal experience, I'd say that assault from a person whom you trust hurts more, for everything about that person changes in mere minutes.

I removed the humanity from the perpetrator. This symbolised a trauma response: the refusal and denial that this monster COULD NEVER be the very person I trusted.

But it was. And the result meant I would never see the person the same way ever again.

## DOKI DOKI LITERATURE CLUB



A visual dating simulator with a satirical twist. It addresses the issue of mental illness, as well as a commentary on video games, anime and those who consume them. It deconstructs the stereotypes of the dating simulator genre, highlighting the issues that the consumer is blind to in harem-simulated games, and raises questions on this specific medium.

I want to apply the mechanics of these visual dating simulators with a twist, as I believe that the irony in using such a stereotypically romantic medium can raise awareness of the important issue of sexual assault (which is commonly found in romantic relationships).

The premise of deconstructing the harmful stereotypes in DDLC through the psychological horror genre inspires the approach of this project; **The Twisted**.

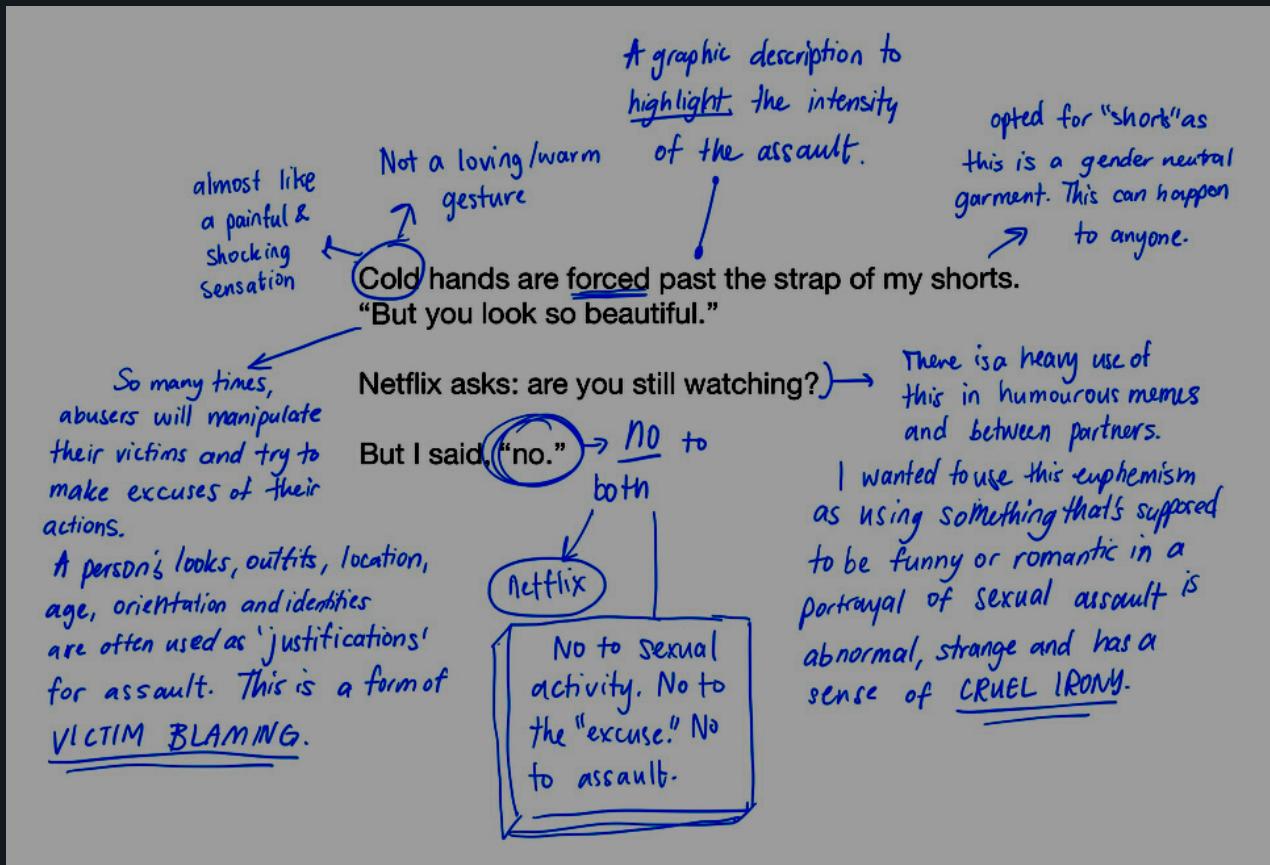


## NETFLIX (AND CHILL)

Utilising the colour palette of the Netflix branding to communicate an eerie aesthetic, as well as subtly referencing the streaming service.

The colour red often represents "STOP." This is seen all across the dark scene to push the concept of the denial of consent.

## NETFLIX AND CHILL



This piece was made in hint fiction (25 words exactly), made short to portray a larger, more complex story, as sexual assault is always going to be messy and complicated. Where there is an assault case, so much of the content covering this case on the media shows the moment of the assault. It's surprising that viewers of such medium are morbidly curious to discover more about the details of the assault, yet much of what happens to the victims and survivors and their recovery journeys are disregarded. Most victims are even blamed for the assault.

I want to raise awareness of how harmful this behaviour is not only to society as a whole but to the victims and survivors and their loved ones too. Victim-blaming marginalises the victims and survivors and makes it harder to come forward and report abuse. If the survivor knows that you or society blames them for the abuse, they are not safe or comfortable coming forward and seeking help. Abuse, assault and other forms of violence are always the perpetrators' fault. A victim does not bring it on themselves.

Abusers must be held accountable for their crimes and more efforts to empathise with the victims must be made.



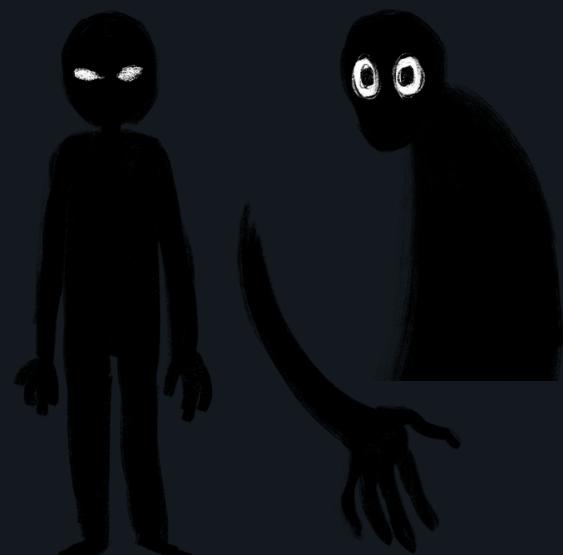
START SCREEN (HINT FICTION PIECE)

END SCREEN (ANIMATED)



this was made with love hearts in their eyes to portray the twisted and cruel irony of how abusers will manipulate the abuse and mask it as an act of "love"

this also reflects society's views of toxic behaviours as "passionate" and "desirable"



SPRITES ANIMATED SEPARATELY ON UNITY,  
DRAWN ON PROCREATE  
arm was separated to manipulate movements better

"no."

code for the button to change scene

THE ACTIVE BUTTON AT THE BEGINNING



is shown through the game as it highlights the blatant ignorance of the lack of consent

```

1  using System.Collections;
2  using System.Collections.Generic;
3  using UnityEngine;
4  using UnityEngine.SceneManagement;
5
6  public class loadEnvironment4 : MonoBehaviour
7  {
8      [SerializeField]
9      private float delayBeforeLoading = 10f;
10     [SerializeField]
11     private string sceneNameToLoad;
12     private float timeElapsed;
13
14     private void Update()
15     {
16         timeElapsed += Time.deltaTime;
17         if (timeElapsed > delayBeforeLoading)
18         {
19             SceneManager.LoadScene(sceneNameToLoad);
20         }
21     }
22 }
```

```

1  using System.Collections;
2  using System.Collections.Generic;
3  using UnityEngine;
4  using UnityEngine.SceneManagement;
5
6  public class loadEnvironment : MonoBehaviour
7  {
8      public void StartScene()
9      {
10          SceneManager.LoadScene(1);
11      }
12 }
```

CHANGE SCENE CODES

## CAN'T LEAVE THE GAME?

This was a deliberate game mechanic, as it represents the difficulty of leaving the situation, as well as representing the difficult journey to recovery

# The Beautiful

## WHAT MAKES LOVE BEAUTIFUL?

Humans, since before the formation of societies, have long been loving and loved. I'd argue that it's what keeps the world going. It's an enigmatic emotion that empowers us to accomplish impossible tasks, exceed all the boundaries and gives the potential for changing the lives of others.

When hearts are open to love, it creates a sense of connection, belonging and kindness, a sense of responsibility and compassion.

Love allows us to better understand and accept one another. Even ourselves.

Imagine just how much more beautiful it would be to feel the same emotion for yourself. To give yourself the same sense of connection, belonging and compassion, to be kind to yourself.

Planting and nurturing this emotion within yourself will grow to help you accomplish the impossible, to change the lives of others, to truly love another being.

## THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL

To quote the famous song by Whitney Houston: it's true that "learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

It's definitely easier said than done, but it's true. One of the greatest things in life is to love who you are. This doesn't mean refusing to take responsibilities for your mistakes, but instead, giving yourself forgiveness. It also doesn't mean that you're narcissistic. It's believing in yourself and trusting your intentions. The relationship you have with yourself will be the longest one in your life. Might as well learn to love it!

## 'BONSAI' AND EXPERIENCES

The art of the bonsai lies in its techniques of pruning (cutting off chunks), trimming (cutting off ends), aging (exposure of hidden elements) and wiring (modification and directing growth).

The process of growing a bonsai to its most beautiful form resembles the same process of learning how to love yourself. These processes are long and painful, sometimes gruesome, but are all important for growth.

- PRUNING: cutting off unhealthy relationships and habits
- TRIMMING: cutting off on unhealthy diets and everyday negativity
- AGING: allow yourself to be open to others
- WIRING: paving the path to creating the life you long for

There are plenty of factors that can affect the growth of a bonsai tree, including its soil and water intake as well as its pot and general plant care. I see these as metaphors for allowing yourself to consume healthy things (food, media, attitudes, etc.) and surrounding yourself in a healthy environment best for growth. Because if you deny yourself of these, much like the tree, you will wilt away. Not just physically, but your identity and emotional health will fall too.



# The Beautiful (Process)

## 'BONSAI', 'WABI-SABI' AND 'MA'

I hadn't realised how much of this project's values and aesthetics align with those of *wabi-sabi* and *ma*; as they both

1. Allow the user to make and manipulate space by filling it with meaningful interactions and
2. The imperfections in creating the random strokes come with a natural beauty that cannot be replicated.



I chose to create this project to communicate the messages of self-love, bonsai and prompts mentioned above as the act of participating and creative freedom in how the user can shape their "bonsai" replicates the metaphor of loving yourself. The act of painting across the screen represents the user's freedom to shape their goals and future, whilst also accepting that there will be imperfections in these paths. The road to achieving your goals will be difficult and imperfect but beauty can be found in these as you continue to nurture and take care of yourself (like a bonsai).

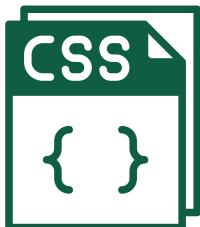
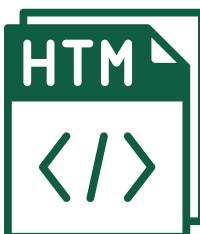
The journey to self-love is like growing a bonsai. Plenty of factors will cause this bonsai to grow in wildly different directions with grace, despite being wired by the user. This is visually replicated as the strokes erupt into smaller random strokes sprouting branches to lush foliage. It communicates the idea that we should accept things and all its complexities that may not align with our values, and should we stray from our paths, forgiveness and acceptance and understanding of those actions will result in something as beautiful as the growth of a tree; something called self-love.



# The Foundations

{.js}

JavaScript



## HOW WAS IT MADE?

An interactive website using the *canvas* element in Javascript.

Website completed with:

- Javascript
- CSS
- HTML

FULL CODE can be accessed here:

<https://github.com/mariakatrina/GrowABonsai>



I owe a great amount of gratitude to Franks Laboratory and his tutorial here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v4\\_DwOK8pw&ab\\_channel=Frankslaboratory](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v4_DwOK8pw&ab_channel=Frankslaboratory)

"FROM LITTLE SEEDS GROW  
STRONG TREES"



this quote was added to drive the message home:  
like bonsai, with love and care, we too can grow into strong trees

LOVE: the beautiful, the real and the twisted

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love: it's real, it's beautiful

but it can also be twisted.