The Tortoise and Her Garden

by C. F. Krysiak



There once was a woman who tended a garden with great care. She watered it daily, pulled weeds, and shielded it from harsh winds. In the garden lived a tortoise—slow-moving, often weary, and in need of warmth and shelter. The woman loved the tortoise. She built him shaded paths and made sure the sun didn't scorch his shell. She even adjusted the garden's layout so he could move more easily through it.

But over time, the garden began to lose its color. The flowers drooped. The woman realized she had stopped planting what she loved—roses, lavender, wild thyme—because she was always thinking about what the tortoise needed. She no longer sat in the sun herself, because she was afraid it might be too bright for him. She tiptoed through her own garden, careful not to disturb his rest.

One day, she sat down beside the tortoise and said, "I've made this garden a haven for you, but I miss the parts of it that were mine. I miss the joy of planting what sings to my soul. I miss walking freely without fear of stepping wrong. I want to keep caring for you—but I need space to bloom too."

The tortoise blinked slowly. He hadn't realized how much she had sacrificed. He looked around the garden—suddenly noticing the faded petals, the empty patches where her favorite flowers used to grow. He didn't speak, but he lingered beside her longer than usual. The woman didn't expect an apology or a sudden change. She simply sat there, letting the silence stretch between them like a path not yet walked. Somewhere in that quiet, a seed was planted—not in the soil, but in the space between them. Time and care would determine whether it would grow—and what might bloom.

© 2025, Carolyn Frances Krysiak