

I was walking all by myself in that dark and dense forest. Suddenly I turned around and saw something move from the corner of my eye. There was only a tree there, but, as I stared, I could see a shape emerge from it. It was impossible to notice that a creature had been there, yet I could see it unwrap itself from the trunk. I felt the air become lighter and the smell of damp earth filled my nose, just like after a rain. The creature came and stood before me, looking as though her skin was covered in moss.

With a shaky breath, I asked, 'Who are you?'

'The Protector of the Forest,' she replied, though I barely saw her lips move.

'I haven't heard of you before.'

'No matter, I have something for you,' she said, holding out a closed fist.

I stretched out my hand and watched as she placed a seed there.

'Grow this and return when you have a plant.'

I remembered the legend then. For decades, people passing through this forest have reiterated stories of meeting a creature who gave them seeds. The whole experience felt magical, and many thought that the seeds would bear magic too. The strange thing, though, was that no one ever seemed to grow a plant from them. Several people and years later, they began to guess that maybe the seeds needed the earth of the forest. So, tries to sprout them stopped, and most people kept them as good luck charms, if not throwing them away. I stared down at the seed, recalling all I knew, and finally looked up at her.

'Thank you,' I said, as I turned to leave. She didn't talk much, and I didn't want to bother her any longer.

Months later, I found myself standing in the same clearing again, waiting. After a while, when I noticed the air beginning to change, I spoke up.

'I grew the plant. It's almost as tall as me now,' I said.

I heard a voice behind me whisper, 'And how did you manage to do so?'

'Well, I knew of the stories from before. So, as I was leaving last time, I took some soil back with me.'

'Ah, you're quite clever. Do you think it worked because of that?'

'Well, no. You see, my mother threw it away before I told her what it was for, but I still planted it in my backyard. After some weeks, I saw it began to peek out the soil. So, I made sure to do everything I could to keep it growing. I did well, didn't I?'

'Wonderfully,' was all she replied.

As I left this time, I heard the other creatures asking her how I was able to grow it.

'I did always say that it wasn't about where it's grown, but with whom.'

