

The parable of the Hazelnut Gardener of Merrickville

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November 6, 2023

In the verdant embrace of the Rideau, where the waters whisper ancient secrets, there nestled a village celebrated for its tranquility and flourishing hazelnut groves. Here lived Ava, a gardener whose touch was as tender with the earth as her heart was with God's creatures.

Ava nurtured a food forest, a vibrant tapestry of hazelnut trees interlaced with an abundance of edible plants. This forest was her sanctuary, a sacred space where the divine seemed to gently tread among the whispering leaves. She toiled not for wealth, but as a servant to the Divine, believing every sprout and seed to be a blessing from God's boundless generosity.

When a fierce storm threatened the village, its residents trembled for their homes and harvest. Yet within the heart of the forest, Ava stood calm, whispering to the trees and the wind, "Thy will be done." Through the storm's fury, she witnessed the divine rhythm of life—the bending of trees that did not break, the yielding to the grand orchestration of the Creator's will.

As the storm abated, the villagers were astonished to find Ava's grove untouched. In awe, they sought her wisdom. She shared with them softly, "In this forest, we com-

mand not; we are in communion. We honor the free will of all God's creations, and in return, we are embraced and protected."

With the passing of seasons, Ava's insight became a beacon to many. To those burdened with resentment, she would say, "Forgiveness is the scent the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it. Embrace forgiveness, for we are all part of God's grand design."

To the ones fearful of opening their hearts, she'd counsel, "Love is the fruit that is always in season and within reach of every hand. Love freely, as God loves us."

Confronted with deceit, Ava chose either silence or truth, never force, for she believed truth to be like a lion; once set free, it would defend itself.

Ava knew herself to be a vessel for divine revelation, worthy of God's whispers. She would remind others, "Test the spirits to discern whether they come from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Time marked Ava as the oaks are marked by the years, strong and rooted in her faith. When her time approached to meet the Creator, she walked into the embrace of her forest with a heart full of love, ready to be one with the soil from which she came, trusting that she had been a faithful caretaker in the eyes of God.

The village mourned, yet they found comfort, for the forest stood as a testament to Ava's life and beliefs. It was said that the hazelnut trees bore fruit of unprecedented sweetness, a silent ode to Ava's spirit, forever tending to the grove from beyond, in the company of the Divine.

And so, the parable of the Hazelnut Gardener of Merrickville became a cherished story of faith, love, and the eternal bond with the divine, teaching that in surrendering to the will of the Creator, one finds the truest peace and fulfillment.

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