



The Forest That Remembered

At the edge of a small village called Greenfield stood a vast forest known as Whispering Woods.

It was not an ordinary forest.

Its trees were so tall that their branches seemed to touch the clouds. Sunlight slipped through the leaves in golden patches, and a narrow stream wound its way between smooth stones. Parrots nested in the branches, rabbits hid beneath bushes, deer drank from the stream, and thousands of tiny insects lived among the grass.

The villagers depended on the forest.

They collected fallen branches for firewood, gathered fruits and herbs, and took their animals to the edge of the forest to graze. The trees gave them shade during the hottest days of summer, while the stream supplied water to their fields.

But most of the villagers had forgotten how important the forest was.

Only eleven-year-old Tara still noticed everything.

Every morning before school, Tara walked along the forest path. She knew where the squirrels stored their nuts. She knew which tree had a nest of baby parrots. She even knew the exact place where a family of rabbits lived beneath a thorny bush.

Her grandfather had taught her to respect nature.

"Never think that the forest belongs to us," he always told her. "We are only visitors in a home that belongs to thousands of living things."

Tara never forgot those words.

One summer, something terrible happened.

The rain did not come.

At first, nobody was worried.

"Summer is always hot," the villagers said.

But one week passed.

Then another.

Then another.

The sky remained bright blue, without a single cloud.

The stream became smaller every day.



The pond near the village began to crack around its edges.

Farmers stared sadly at their fields as their crops began to dry.

The animals suffered too.

Birds flew farther every morning looking for water. Deer wandered toward the village. Rabbits disappeared into the deepest parts of the forest.

Tara noticed that the trees were changing.

Their leaves were turning brown.

Some branches had already fallen.

One morning, Tara stood beneath her favourite mango tree and touched its rough trunk.

"Are you thirsty too?" she whispered.

The tree gave no answer.

But Tara felt something was terribly wrong.

Then she overheard a group of villagers talking near the village square.

"We should cut down part of the forest," one man said. "The land can be used for new houses."

"And we can sell the timber," another replied.

Tara's eyes widened.

"But if you cut the trees, there will be even less water!"

The men looked at her.

"We have to think about the village," one of them said.

"But the forest IS part of the village!" Tara replied.

Nobody answered.

That evening, Tara went to her grandfather.

"They want to cut the forest."

Her grandfather sighed.

"I know."



"Why won't they understand?"

He looked toward the distant trees.

"Sometimes people only realize the value of something after they have lost it."

Tara shook her head.

"Then we can't let them lose it."

The next morning, Tara decided to investigate.

She followed the stream deeper into the forest than she had ever gone before.

The further she walked, the quieter everything became.

She passed enormous trees, vines hanging from branches, strange flowers and moss-covered rocks.

Eventually, she reached the oldest part of Whispering Woods.

There stood a gigantic banyan tree.

Its trunk was wider than Tara's house, and its roots spread across the ground like giant ropes.

Her grandfather had told her that the tree was hundreds of years old.

Tara sat beneath it.

"I don't know what to do," she whispered.

A leaf fell onto her shoulder.

Then another.

Tara looked up.

There was no wind.

Suddenly, the branches began to move.

Not violently.

Gently.

Almost as if the tree were breathing.

Then Tara heard something.

A whisper.



"Remember."

Tara stood up.

"Who said that?"

The forest became silent.

Then the voice came again.

"Remember what we have given you."

Tara closed her eyes.

She remembered her grandfather teaching her beneath the trees.

She remembered eating mangoes during summer.

She remembered drinking cool water from the stream.

She remembered birds waking her every morning.

She remembered the forest protecting the village when heavy rain once caused a flood.

She remembered how the trees stopped the soil from washing away.

And suddenly, Tara understood.

The forest wasn't simply a collection of trees.

It was a living system.

The trees helped hold the soil together.

Their roots helped water enter the ground.

Their leaves released moisture into the air.

The plants provided food and shelter for animals.

The animals spread seeds.

The insects helped flowers reproduce.

Everything was connected.

If the villagers destroyed the forest, they wouldn't simply lose trees.

They would damage an entire world.



Tara opened her eyes.

"I remember," she said.

The leaves rustled softly.

She ran back to the village.

The next morning, Tara gathered the children.

"I need your help."

They listened as she explained what she had learned.

"We can't wait for adults to fix everything," she said. "We can start ourselves."

The children began cleaning the forest.

They collected plastic bottles, wrappers and other rubbish.

They placed bowls of water beneath shady trees for birds and small animals.

They planted young trees near the pond.

They created small signs asking people not to throw rubbish into the stream.

At first, the villagers laughed.

"What can children possibly do?" someone asked.

But the children continued.

Every day.

Without giving up.

Then something surprising happened.

Tara's grandfather joined them.

After him came a few farmers.

Then some mothers.

Then shopkeepers.

Soon, almost the entire village was helping.

The villagers stopped throwing waste into the stream.



They repaired the old pond.
They planted trees around the fields.
They agreed not to cut healthy trees unless absolutely necessary.
They even created a protected area where animals could live safely.
But the drought continued.
For weeks, they waited.
Then one afternoon, Tara noticed something.
A tiny green shoot had appeared beside the pond.
"Look!" she shouted.
Everyone gathered around.
It was the first sign that the land was recovering.
That evening, the sky changed.
The bright blue disappeared behind enormous grey clouds.
A cool breeze swept through the village.
The birds became strangely excited.
Tara looked up.
A single drop of rain landed on her forehead.
Then another.
Then hundreds.
Within minutes, rain was pouring from the sky.
The villagers cheered.
Children danced through the rain.
Farmers stood in their fields, laughing with relief.
The pond filled.
The stream began flowing again.



And deep inside Whispering Woods, the trees drank.

Their leaves became greener.

Birds returned to their nests.

Rabbits came out of their hiding places.

The forest slowly came alive again.

That night, Tara returned to the ancient banyan tree.

She placed her hand against its trunk.

"We did it."

The leaves rustled above her.

Then she heard the whisper again.

"Not you."

Tara smiled.

"All of us?"

The branches swayed.

"All of us."

Years passed.

The village changed.

There were more trees than before.

The pond became home to frogs and fish.

Birds returned in enormous numbers.

The farmers discovered that healthy soil produced better crops.

The villagers even began taking visitors into the forest to teach them about nature.

Tara grew older and eventually became a teacher.

Whenever her students asked why she cared so much about the environment, she told them about Whispering Woods.



One day, a little girl asked her,

"Miss Tara, did the tree really talk to you?"

Tara smiled.

"Maybe."

"Did you really hear it?"

Tara looked out of the classroom window.

Beyond the school stood the green forest.

She remembered the whisper.

She remembered the drought.

She remembered how close the village had come to destroying the very thing that protected it.

"I think nature is always talking," she said. "We are just usually too busy to listen."

The girl looked toward the trees.

The leaves were moving in the wind.

And for just a moment, she thought she heard a whisper.

"Remember."

From that day forward, every child in the village learned one important lesson:

Nature is not something we own.

It is something we share.

And if we protect it today, it will protect us tomorrow.

The forest had remembered the villagers.

And finally, the villagers had remembered the forest.



Afflatus Creations Peer-reviewed Multidisciplinary Journal

National Poetry & Short Story Writing Competition (Entry)

Young Voices

ISSN: 3049-4338 (Online)

Vol. 1, No. 1, September 2026
