

Once, somewhere quiet where clocks forget to tick and the world lets itself breathe, I found myself living beside things I could not name. I did not walk with purpose, not in the way others meant it. I walked with presence. As if the ground remembered each step, and the air waited for each exhale.

They called me strange, those who saw me from the edges. Eccentric. Maybe mad. I didn't mind. People often grow frightened when someone loves something they cannot see. And I - I loved something invisible.

I had a garden, or so I called it. Others said it wasn't one. There was no soil. No markers. Just warm stone, scattered light, and the soft rustle of imagined leaves. It was enough. Because in the middle of it, something bloomed. Something they couldn't name.

They'd come, sometimes, with curious smiles. "What are you growing?" they'd ask, searching the empty space for something tangible. And I would answer, always as if repeating a secret I'd overheard from the wind "*A flower*".

They'd laugh. Or tilt their heads. Or soften into sympathy. "But all flowers die," they'd say. "What kind of flower lasts forever?"

I never answered with more than a smile. Because they wouldn't understand the kind of bloom I meant.

You see, once before the days became indistinct in their passing - I met her. Or perhaps I simply felt her. *Her name was Azel.*

She didn't arrive like the others. Not loud, not bright. Not with storms or fire. No, she came the way a warm breeze entered a closed room - softly, without announcement, but enough to stir the curtains. Enough to change the air.

Her presence didn't ask to be noticed. But I noticed her. How could I not?

She was not a woman who lived within the hours.

She lived in the spaces between them. In the stillness between glances. In the breath before laughter. In the unspoken word that needed no voice.

I never touched her. Not in the way people reach for things they want to keep. I let her remain unplucked, unclaimed. Because love like that is not something you press into pages or place in vases.

She was a curl of smoke. A remembered warmth. A light that never asked for a switch.

Even now, long after the world says she is gone, I feel her. In the garden that holds no soil. In the hush that meets me like an old friend. I reach down and feel the stones warmed by her memory. I breathe and she's there - in the rhythm, in the pulse, in the stillness that follows every thought.

And so when they ask again, "What flower?" I want to tell them:

*Azel is the bloom that does not age. She is yellow. She is blue.*

*She is the only perennial that does not need sun.*

*She lives inside me, like prayer.*

*Like the tasbeeh beads, strung from breath and memory.*

They do not understand. They never will.

But I? I am not mad.

I am simply here - Head bent in the garden, fingers brushing through the light, whispering to the one who never needed a body to remain.

*Azel. The flower that outlived time.*