

Beneath the Willow Tree

by Aurelia Larkspur

The willow tree stood at the edge of the garden, its branches swaying gently in the summer breeze. Elena pressed her hand against its rough bark, letting her fingers trace the lines of age and time. She had been coming here every evening since spring, when the garden still carried the weight of winter's hush. Now, flowers bloomed timidly in the soil, as though testing the warmth of the sun.

It had been her grandmother's garden once, though it was hard to tell. The roses had grown wild, tangling themselves in forgotten trellises. The ivy crept along the stone walls, reclaiming what had been left behind. Yet, here under the willow, the world felt whole—unchanged.

Elena knelt, pulling a few weeds from the earth and brushing dirt from her palms. The garden had become her refuge, a place where her thoughts could settle like the petals scattered in the grass. She wasn't sure what she was waiting for, only that the waiting itself had become a kind of comfort.

Her fingers found the small wooden box tucked beneath the roots of the tree, just as she had left it weeks before. She hesitated before lifting the lid. Inside, folded letters rested among dried petals, their edges softened by time.

One letter caught her eye—the last her grandmother had written. Elena unfolded the paper, her eyes scanning the familiar handwriting.

“This garden has always been a place of beginnings. When you feel lost, come here. The earth knows how to heal what is broken.”

The words lingered, echoing softly in her mind. Elena leaned back against the trunk of the willow, the breeze carrying whispers of her grandmother’s voice. She didn’t cry, not today. Instead, she let the sunlight filter through the leaves, warming her skin.

The garden would bloom again. She knew that now.