

The Thread No One Saw

Beneath the forest, where the sun never reached, lived a white thread.

It was so thin that a crumb of earth seemed like a rock to it. It had no leaves, no flowers, no gleaming shell. It only knew how to grow slowly among the roots.

Its name was Fil.

Above, the forest was full of things that could be seen.

The oak tree raised a hundred branches.

“I hold up the sky,” it said.

The stream leaped among the stones.

“I bring the water,” it sang.

The bees flitted from flower to flower.

“We awaken the fruits,” they buzzed.

Fil listened to them from underground.

“And what do I do?” he wondered.

Sometimes he found a root.

“Good morning,” Fil said.

“Good morning,” the root replied.

And Fil continued on his way.

One morning, a maple seed arrived in the forest. The wind had turned it over for three days and three nights until it settled in a patch of dark earth.

The seed opened. A small root emerged, and then a stem with two leaves.

“My name is Ala,” said the sprout.

“I am Fil.”

“Are you a root?”

“No.”

“Are you a worm?”

“Neither.”

“Then what are you?”

Fil couldn’t explain.

“I am this,” he said simply.

Ala pushed the root in a little deeper, and they touched.

During the spring, they grew together. Ala sought the light. Fil sought other roots.

He found the rosemary root, thin and fragrant. He found the pine root, strong as a rope. He found the oak root, wide and full of folds.

Fil touched them all.

“Good morning,” he said.

“Good morning,” they replied.

When summer arrived, the stream grew smaller.

First it stopped leaping. Then it stopped singing. Finally, only a few round puddles remained among the stones.

The oak tree folded its leaves a little. The rosemary kept its scent hidden. The bees flew closer to the ground.

Ala was thirsty.

Her root was still too short to reach the deep water. Both tender leaves lost their color.

“Fil,” she whispered, “I think I’m fading.”

Fil ran to the oak tree’s root.

“Ala is thirsty.”

The oak tree stirred its old roots.

“I am too.”

Fil went to the pine tree.

“Ala is thirsty.”

“We all are,” the pine tree replied.

Fil reached the rosemary, the clumps of grass, and the small mushrooms that lived under the dry leaves.

Everywhere he felt the same response.

“We don’t have much to spare.”

Fil returned to Ala. Along the way, he thought about the drops hidden within each root. No tree had enough to give away a puddle. No bush could offer a stream.

But Fil had touched every root.

He stretched one end toward the oak and the other toward the pine. He made a soft knot with the rosemary. He opened tiny paths to the mushrooms, the grass, and the ferns.

“One drop,” he asked. “Just one.”

The oak released a drop.

The pine released another.

The rosemary didn’t have a whole drop and gave half.

The ferns sent three very small ones. The mushrooms added the freshness they kept under their caps.

Fil carried them along his slender body.

The earth weighed him down. The stones blocked his path. More than once he thought he would break.

But the drops kept coming.

One after another.

All the way to Ala.

The sprout drank them little by little. The next day, one of the leaves rose again. Two days later, the other did too.

“How did you do it?” Ala asked.

Fil looked at the paths he had opened beneath the forest.

“I had no water,” he said.

And he said nothing more.

Many moons passed before it rained again.

When the water pattered on the leaves, the oak tree opened its branches. The stream resumed its song. The bees flew so fast they looked like tiny sparks.

Ala grew. Each year it cast more shade on the earth. Beneath it, the fungi retained moisture better, and Fil could move forward without drying out.

One night, a yellow leaf fell from the oak tree. She lay on the ground and asked:

“Who holds up the forest when no one is watching?”

The oak tree fell silent.

The stream wound between two stones.

The bees were already asleep.

Underground, Fil touched a root. The root touched another. And a gentle coolness swept through the forest from end to end.