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The Willow and the Vine

Unknown writer

Once upon a time, a humble old willow tree with gnarled, twisted branches grew beside a tall and stately bamboo. People passing by always stopped to admire the graceful bamboo. No one ever noticed the willow.

One bright morning, after a soft rain, a timid little plant with a delicate stem sprang up between the two trees. She looked hopefully at the bamboo's straight, strong trunk.

But the bamboo tossed her plummy leaves and said, "Don't look to me for help. I won't have you clinging to my trunk."

"Please let me hold on just until I grow a little stronger," begged the little plant.

The bamboo drew away. "Keep back. I will not have you wrapping around my beautiful branches."

Then the kind old willow whispered through her leaves. "Don't be discouraged, little one. The sun is shining, and the gentle rain will come again to refresh you. Come to me, if you like, and grip my bark with your little green fingers. Don't be afraid. You'll be safe in the shade of my branches. Come."

The little plant still gazed longingly at the handsome bamboo. But at last she crept across the grass to the old willow and began to twine around her branches. Up and up the slender vine climbed, all the way to the very top. There she put out so many lovely green shoots that passersby stopped to enjoy her. And when the first days of autumn came, large buds appeared on the vine.

The bamboo looked at the swelling buds and sniffed. "What are those ugly knobs? She may have brought a sickness that will spread to all the trees in the country."

The willow didn't answer the bamboo. In her gentle way, she only whispered to the vine, "Don't feel hurt. I know what those buds mean."



That night a soft rain fell, and in the morning the sun rose into a clear sky. The buds burst open into beautiful, sweet-scented blossoms. From top to bottom, the old willow tree was wrapped in glorious colour.

The owner of the land called his friends to see the wonder. They stared at the rich blossoms in amazement. Then the master called his workers and told them to clear a space around the willow.

"Cut down the bamboo," he said, "so that we can see the beauty of the vine."

"But it's a very fine bamboo, master," said the head servant.

"Yes, it is," the master agreed. "But there are many other bamboo trees just as fine. No one has ever seen a vine with such a wealth of blossoms."

So the workers cut down the proud bamboo and left the willow and her flowering vine to be admired by many, many people.

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