

The World In A Pebble

Lyra lived in a village where beauty overflowed, though she rarely noticed it. The hills rolled gently beyond the fields, kissed by the light of dawn. A river wove its silver thread through the valley, and birds sang harmonies that danced with the breeze. But Lyra, her gaze fixed on the ground, saw only the soil she tilled, the paths she trudged, the weeds she pulled. The wonders around her were a constant she had grown blind to.

Each day was much the same. At dawn, Lyra would rise and step into her well-worn boots. Her hands, rough from years of labor, would grip the handle of her hoe as she worked the fields from morning until dusk. She heard the birdsong, but it felt like background noise. She saw the colors of the sunrise, but they passed over her like fleeting shadows. Life was functional, rhythmic, and ordinary.

One morning, as Lyra walked to the fields, her foot struck a small, smooth stone. It was round and glimmered faintly in the sunlight. She bent down to pick it up, turning it over in her hands. Something about its weight, its coolness, gave her pause. For the first time in years, she looked beyond her tasks and into the rising sun. Its light spilled golden across the fields, shimmering on the river, dappling the trees. She felt, for a fleeting moment, as if the world were holding its breath.

“What is this?” she murmured, clutching the stone. It was as if she had never seen the fields before, though she had walked them every day of her life. The breeze seemed to whisper through the grass, carrying a song she couldn’t quite hear. Her chest tightened, and she felt the urge to laugh or weep, though she could not say why.

As the day wore on, Lyra found her gaze drifting. She noticed the intricate veins of leaves, the startling blue of the sky. Even the hum of insects seemed alive with meaning. She could not explain it, but the world felt different — or perhaps it was she who had changed.

Her work slowed that day. Lyra lingered by the rows of crops, marveling at the way the sunlight played on their leaves. She touched the earth with reverence, feeling its warmth and texture in a way she never had before. A sense of connection, deeper than thought, began to grow within her. The stone remained in her pocket, its cool presence a gentle reminder of something she couldn’t yet name.

That night, unable to sleep, she walked to the river. The moon hung low, casting a silver path across the water. Lyra sat on the bank and dipped her fingers into the cool current. The sound of the river, once a background murmur, now felt alive and vibrant, like a voice that had waited for her to listen.

“Why did I never see this before?” she whispered to the night.

The river’s murmuring seemed to answer: “You were asleep.”

Tears welled in her eyes. “But why now? What woke me?”

The river’s voice was silent, but Lyra thought of the stone she had found. She pulled it from her pocket and held it to the moonlight. It was ordinary, unremarkable in every way. And

yet, it had stopped her, made her see. Perhaps it was not the stone at all but the way her heart had opened in that moment.

From that day forward, Lyra walked the world as if it were new. She marveled at the sunlight filtering through the trees, the curve of the hills against the sky. Even the soil she tilled seemed rich and alive beneath her hands. She spoke less, but her eyes shone with wonder, and her laughter rang like a bell.

Her neighbors noticed the change. They asked her what had happened, but Lyra only smiled. How could she explain the unexplainable? How could she tell them that the world had always been this beautiful, but she had only just learned to see?

Lyra began to share small gifts with her neighbors: a handful of wildflowers she'd gathered, a smooth pebble from the river, or a story about the shapes she saw in the clouds. At first, they thought her odd, but over time, her joy became infectious. Children would follow her to the river, skipping stones and laughing in delight. Even the elders of the village began to pause in their routines, noticing the glow of the sunsets and the music of the breeze.

Lyra lived the rest of her days in quiet joy. And though she never spoke of it, she carried the small stone in her pocket, a reminder of the moment she awoke to the endless wonder that had been around her all along. In time, the village itself seemed to change, its people awakening, one by one, to the marvels they had always known but never truly seen.

— *William Zeitler*
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