THE MEADOWLARK SINGS

a short story
by
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Rising over the grassy meadow, the ball of light slowly emerges. Awaking to this new beginning are melodic sounds from the bird with a golden voice. Its song springs forth with such clarity and beauty that even the sun emits a warm smile. The vast array of Mother Nature's hair decor glistens in this early awakening of life. Dew sparkles like diamonds adding their own brilliance to this scene. All seems right with the world.

Beyond the meadow, however, a different world unfolds. Tucked in amongst the trees is a small farm house and barn. Exteriors of these buildings show years of attempts to rectify the past but their outer garments have lost the battle to the elements. Obviously, repairs had long since ceased. Rusty equipment stands beside the old barn like a monument to those years when hard labor reined supreme.

The golden voiced bird, a meadowlark, flies to the small frame house. Here it perches on a sill and peeks into the kitchen window, perhaps to look at its own reflected beauty. Inside the structure various movements are concentrated around an oval shaped form. These motions alert the meadowlark which then flies to a nearby perch on the rickety old porch. Here it continues to emit its morning greetings. Inside the house are two other voices, each lacking in the clarity and beauty compared to that from the small bird. The voices crackle with age just like the structure which encases them.

"Good morning, Old Man," emits one of the broken voices.

"Good morning, Old Woman," comes forth the response.

"Listen to the meadowlark sing to us this morning," said Old Woman.

"Yes," responds Old Man. "It brings back memories of times when we were young. We heard its songs while running through the fields chasing butterflies and laughing at our own frolics," continued Old Man as he bit into a freshly baked muffin clutched within his weathered hand.

"Oh, yes, I remember those times too," said Old Woman as tears welled up within her red streaked eyes set within her creviced face. "Now our movements are slow and our bodies can no longer carry us through the fields. We can no longer chase butterflies. Although memories are good, they are becoming tiresome," she continued while lighting a well- worn candle that sat in the middle of their table. Although the room was illuminated, maybe a continuing touch of the romantic lingered within the lives of these two elderly people. "At least the meadowlark has not forgotten us," speaks Old Woman. "The meadowlark understands. The meadowlark sings".

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The two old ones sat looking out at the beautiful bird and relishing its song. They seemed to cling to its every note as if it might be the last one. Then the bird left its perch and flew back towards the meadow. After all, it was time to search out a tasty morsel for its own breakfast. The two faces inside the structure now became very somber.

Then Old Man reached over to grasp the hand of Old Woman. She raised her bowed head to look into his face which glowed from his warm smile. She responded with the same expression. "Now you look beautiful," said Old Man.

"Now you look young," responded Old Woman. Their house had become old. Their memories had become old. Their love, however, remained ageless.

"Why don't you put on one of your pretty flocks and we'll take our stroll into Mother Nature's paradise," said Old Man. Old Woman rose from the table and walked through the house which now glistened from the morning sun. Even her steps moved her small broken body gracefully to the bedroom. Old Man watched her as she walked away. He smiled at her sudden youthful gait.

When Old Woman again emerged, she wore a lovely new dress which she had saved for such a special occasion. Her straggly gray hair was now pulled up into a special do. "You look lovely," sang out Old Man.

"Thank you," blushed Old Woman.

Hand in hand they walked towards the meadow. Their slow motion movements appeared graceful and light like had their dances of yesteryear.

When reaching the meadow they stood silent, as if each was remembering how this land which stood before them had once been turned into freshly plowed fields. The crops which they toiled hard to produce remained only in their own minds. Now these fields had returned to the meadow of their youth. Mother Nature's garden stood before them as a testament to her timeless beauty. The golden melodies of the bird greeted them as did the colorful smiling faces that swayed in the breezes. Butterflies danced within the tall grasses.

"This is the way it should be," murmured Old Man.

"I agree," responded Old Woman.

Hand in hand the Old Ones continued their slow-motion gait across the meadow. Hand in hand they smiled as they looked lovingly into each other's eyes. Hand in hand they walked into their paradise.

The meadowlark sings.

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