

Fade and Bloom

It was first the flowers. Then the leaves. Slowly the sky too. The red roses, yellow wildflowers, and the vast, grassy fields, all slowly faded into a pale grayness. People first blamed the climate, then the soil. But in the end we all knew it was the “Correction”. The failed Geo-Engineering idea. The idea to control every single living thing, other than humans. The idea that was supposed to maintain balance instead caused the planet to turn colorless.

By the time Mara Riche became 15, the world had become a whole palette of gray. The world had stopped blooming. Even after 40 years, scientists are still trying to explain it. Blaming it as a natural change.

No one believed it.

At least not Mara.

Mara’s grandma would always mention how the world was filled with colors before she was born. Her grandma would explain how everything was so vivid that looking at it now hurts the eyes. Mara imagined the world being loud with color. She never understood how something that was described to be so alive could just disappear.

No one ever goes to the ‘Perimeter Areas’. These are areas that had miles of dead soil. It is said that the Correction affected the most there. It became the areas that are most dangerous. The air past the Perimeters is so bad that it is said that it feels thin and cannot support life.

But it all changed when Mara was in her Geometry class and saw a glimmer outside her window. She slowly leaned her chair back and saw a tiny light green pigmented speck. It was small but gave Mara a tiny bit of hope. But it wasn’t near the school. It was a few feet farther. In the closest perimeter area. She needed someone else to see just to make sure she wasn’t hallucinating.

“Leah.” Mara said as she tapped her friend’s shoulder. “Do you see that? The green dot over there”

Leah leaned her chair too staring out the window. She looked at Mara. “Mara, there is nothing there,” Leah whispered.

“Look again,” Mara insisted.

“Mara, there is nothing,” Leah said as turned back to the front, losing interest.

Mara didn’t understand. She began to tell herself it was a trick but the image was engraved in her mind. So she decided to look for it after school.

Instead of taking the usual turn to her home, Mara went towards the Perimeter Area. Guards were out for lunch. The area being said to be too dangerous, nobody was around. But Mara had to find out if that was real or was it just a false hope. She took a deep breath and started walking further in passing the gate making sure no one would be able to hear her. She knew that she could get caught, or die. But she also had the faint hope that she might find something that could save the world. She took another breath and felt the air. It felt normal. More fresher than usual. She walked a few feet scanning the area until she saw it.

There it was.

The bright green speck she saw earlier. She bolted. She stopped at its tracks and dropped to her knees. Observing the first ever colored plant Mara has ever seen. The first plant that was probably seen in over 40 years. She wondered why Leah could not see it. Then she remembered. Leah always believed that the world was gray and plain and it's never going to change. Unlike Mara. Mara looked at the plant. And as she stared at it longer she realized that it wasn't only a plant but also a flower. It wasn't dull, it had 5 washed out blue petals. It felt like it was alive and it was fighting the dead world around it.

Mara looked at it and started smiling. Then laughing. As she laughed the flower slowly looked like it was glowing. It was almost reacting to her. Mara thought about the Correction. How the whole thing was to make everything perfect and the same. Until it stopped.

"You didn't lose color," She said to the plant. "We did." The words hung there. Nothing happened. Just a pause.

Then there was a tiny crack noise. Mara turned around. And right next to her was another flower. Mara leaned forward. It was light gray.

"I won't try to fix you," she whispered. And then the tip turned pink. A soft smile came across her face.

The Earth hadn't stopped blooming exactly. It just stopped responding to the world that no longer had feelings. And now for the first time in many years, something was coming back.