



The Whisper of Heaven

100 Modern Parables for the Human Heart

By Ross Harvey

Foreword

There are moments in every life when everything grows quiet.

Perhaps it is after the applause has faded. Perhaps it is in the stillness before dawn. Perhaps it comes after loss, after great joy, or simply during an ordinary walk beneath familiar trees.

In those moments, many of us find ourselves asking the same questions.

Why am I here?

What truly matters?

How should I live?

This book does not attempt to answer those questions for you.

Instead, it offers one hundred small stories.

Some may make you laugh.

Some may bring tears.

Some may remind you of someone you once knew.

Some may feel strangely familiar, as though you had always known them but simply forgotten.

That is the nature of a parable.

A parable does not force open the door.

It simply knocks.

Every story in these pages begins in ordinary life.

There are no kings wearing golden crowns.

No dragons.

No magical kingdoms.

Instead, there are neighbours.

Teachers.

Children.

Mechanics.

Gardeners.

Bus drivers.

Grandparents.

People very much like us.

Because the greatest miracles are rarely spectacular.

Most begin with one kind word.

One forgiving heart.

One courageous decision.

One quiet act of love.

Perhaps Heaven has always entered the world this way.

Not with thunder.

But with whispers.

May these stories stay with you long after the final page.

May they encourage you when life becomes difficult.

May they remind you that kindness is never wasted,
forgiveness is never weakness, hope is never foolish, and love
never truly disappears.

If, after reading this book, you choose to make one person's day a little brighter...

then another story will have begun—

one that no author could ever write.

It will be written by you.

—Ross Harvey

The First Path
The Path of
Kindness



Parable One

The Man Who Carried Two Wallets

Every morning at precisely 7:15, Mr. Andrews walked into the same little café.

He ordered one coffee.

One buttered toast.

He always sat beside the window.

The waitress knew exactly where to place his cup before he even removed his coat.

Most people believed Mr. Andrews lived an ordinary life.

He drove an old car.

He wore the same brown jacket every winter.

His shoes were polished but well worn.

Nothing about him suggested wealth.

Yet every morning, before leaving, he quietly paid for another breakfast.

"Someone will need it," he would say.

He never asked who.

Some days the second breakfast went to a construction worker whose paycheck had not arrived.

Sometimes it went to a young mother who had forgotten her purse while trying to calm a crying child.

Once it fed a man who had slept on a park bench the night before.

Mr. Andrews never stayed to watch.

He simply smiled at the waitress, nodded, and walked home.

Years passed.

One snowy February morning, Mr. Andrews did not appear.

The next day he did not come.

Nor the day after.

The café owner eventually learned that the old man had quietly passed away in his sleep.

The following Monday, something unexpected happened.

A woman approached the counter.

"I'd like to pay for two breakfasts."

An hour later, another customer did the same.

By Friday, seventeen people had each paid for an extra meal.

No one had organized it.

No one had been asked.

Someone had simply remembered.

Within a year, every café on the street kept a small notebook behind the register.

On its cover were written four simple words:

Already Paid With Love.

Thousands of meals were given away.

No speeches were made.

No plaques were unveiled.

Most of the people who received those meals never learned the name of the man who had started it all.

They only knew that, somehow, a stranger had believed they were worth feeding.

And perhaps that is how kindness is meant to travel.

Not seeking recognition.

Simply moving from one heart to another until no one remembers where it first began.

Reflection

Kindness does not become smaller when it is given away.

It becomes the beginning of someone else's kindness.

Parable Two

The Umbrella That Never Came Home

The forecast had promised sunshine.

Instead, rain arrived before noon.

People hurried through the streets with newspapers over their heads, jackets pulled tight around their shoulders, and shopping bags balanced awkwardly above them.

Outside a small grocery store stood a barrel filled with umbrellas.

Above it hung a simple wooden sign.

Borrow One. Return It When You Can.

Most people assumed the store owner had placed them there.

But no one had.

Months earlier, an elderly woman named Margaret had noticed a teenager standing in the rain, soaked to the skin, waiting for a bus.

She had handed him her umbrella.

"You'll need it more than I will."

He protested.

"But what about you?"

Margaret smiled.

"I've lived long enough to know I'll dry."

She walked home through the rain, laughing all the way.

The next morning, the teenager returned to the store to give back the umbrella.

The cashier shrugged.

"I don't know who owns it."

So he left it outside.

The following week, someone added another.

Then another.

Soon the barrel was overflowing.

Umbrellas came in every color.

Some expensive.

Some old and patched.

Some tiny enough for a child.

Others large enough for a family.

People borrowed them every day.

Some were returned.

Others disappeared forever.

Curiously, the number never seemed to shrink.

Whenever one failed to come back, two more appeared.

One spring afternoon, a little girl asked her grandfather why people kept leaving umbrellas for strangers.

He looked toward the overflowing barrel.

"Because someone once trusted them."

The little girl thought for a moment.

Then she took her own small yellow umbrella and carefully placed it beside the others.

"It can wait for someone who needs it."

Years later, after the grocery store had changed owners twice, the old barrel still stood by the entrance.

The original sign had faded.

A new one had replaced it.

It read:

Kindness Is Waterproof.

No one remembered who first left an umbrella.

But everyone remembered to leave one.

Reflection

The greatest gifts are often those we never expect to see again.

Parable Three

The Boy Who Planted Shade

When twelve-year-old Noah announced he was planting an oak tree in the empty field behind his school, everyone smiled politely.

"It's a wonderful idea," his teacher said.

"But you know you'll never sit beneath its shade."

Noah nodded.

"I know."

The next Saturday he dug the hole himself.

The soil was hard.

The shovel was too large.

His hands blistered before lunch.

An older neighbour walking his dog stopped to watch.

"That's a lot of work for a tree you'll never enjoy."

Noah poured another bucket of water onto the tiny sapling.

"I'm not planting it for me."

The neighbour said nothing.

The following weekend he returned carrying a wheelbarrow full of compost.

"I thought your tree might like some help."

A woman from across the street brought mulch.

A retired carpenter built a small wooden fence to protect the young trunk.

Children began watering it during the summer.

Teachers pointed to it during science lessons.

Parents rested nearby while waiting for school to end.

Years passed.

The sapling became a tree.

The tree became enormous.

One hot afternoon, nearly forty years later, Noah—his hair now silver—walked past the school.

Beneath the great oak sat children eating lunch.

A young mother rocked her baby in the cool shade.

Two elderly men played chess on a picnic table nearby.

A student leaned against the trunk reading a novel.

None of them recognized Noah.

None of them knew his name.

He smiled anyway.

The tree had never belonged to him.

It had always belonged to tomorrow.

As he walked away, he noticed a little boy digging another hole nearby.

"What are you planting?" Noah asked.

"A maple."

"Will you live long enough to enjoy it?"

The boy grinned.

"Probably not."

Noah laughed softly.

Some lessons cannot be taught.

They can only be inherited.

Reflection

The truest generosity plants seeds whose harvest belongs to someone else.

Parable Four

The Last Cookie

Every Friday afternoon, Mrs. Alvarez baked cookies.

Chocolate chip.

Oatmeal raisin.

Peanut butter.

Sometimes ginger.

The smell drifted through the apartment building before the first tray even cooled.

The neighbours joked that they could tell what day it was without looking at a calendar.

There was one thing everyone noticed.

Whenever only one cookie remained...

Mrs. Alvarez never ate it.

She wrapped it carefully in a napkin.

Then she walked into the hallway.

Sometimes she met the mail carrier.

Sometimes the building superintendent.

Sometimes a child returning from school.

Sometimes a neighbour carrying too many groceries.

The last cookie always found someone.

One day, a young boy finally asked her why.

"Wouldn't you like the last one yourself?"

Mrs. Alvarez smiled.

"The last cookie tastes better when someone else eats it."

The boy frowned.

"How could you know?"

She laughed.

"Because I've been tasting that happiness for thirty years."

The boy wasn't convinced.

The following week, his mother packed two cookies in his lunch.

One disappeared during recess.

The other remained until the end of the school day.

As he walked home, he passed an elderly crossing guard who looked tired.

Without thinking very much about it, he held out the cookie.

"For you."

The woman blinked in surprise.

"Are you sure?"

He nodded.

That evening, when his grandmother asked how the cookies had been, he smiled.

"I only ate one."

"Weren't you still hungry?"

"A little."

"Was it worth it?"

He thought about the crossing guard's smile.

"It tasted better this way."

Years later, whenever someone asked him where generosity begins, he never spoke about fortunes or grand donations.

He always remembered a single cookie.

Reflection

Sometimes the smallest thing we keep is forgotten.

The smallest thing we give is remembered forever.

Parable Five

The Bench With Two Ends

Every afternoon, Mr. Chen sat on the same park bench.

Children assumed he was feeding the pigeons.

Adults thought he was simply enjoying retirement.

Neither was true.

Mr. Chen had discovered years earlier that lonely people rarely knocked on someone else's door.

But they often sat on park benches.

So every day he arrived with a newspaper, a thermos of tea, and nowhere he needed to be.

Sometimes no one spoke to him.

Other days someone asked whether the seat beside him was taken.

"It has been waiting for you," he would reply.

There was the young father overwhelmed by his first child.

A widow who had forgotten what laughter sounded like.

A university student convinced she had chosen the wrong future.

A man recently laid off after thirty years at the same factory.

Mr. Chen offered no advice unless it was requested.

He simply listened.

Really listened.

He discovered that many people did not need answers nearly as much as they needed someone who believed their story mattered.

One autumn morning the bench was empty.

The following day it remained empty.

A small handwritten note eventually appeared where Mr. Chen usually sat.

It read:

Thank you for listening to people the rest of us hurried past.

Within days another person began sitting there each afternoon.

Then another on weekends.

Soon the city quietly installed a brass plaque.

It did not mention Mr. Chen's name.

Instead it simply read:

Leave this bench better than you found it.

People thought it referred to litter.

It never did.

Reflection

The greatest gift we can offer another person is not our opinion.

It is our attention.

Parable Six

The Grocery Cart

A supermarket manager noticed something peculiar.

Every evening one shopping cart was left in the parking lot with a loaf of bread, a carton of milk, and a bag of apples inside.

The groceries were always paid for.

No receipt.

No note.

Just waiting.

At first he assumed someone had forgotten them.

He placed the food in the staff room.

The next day another cart appeared.

And the next.

Finally he asked the security guard whether anyone had seen who was leaving them.

The guard smiled.

"I have."

"Who is it?"

"I promised I wouldn't say."

The manager frowned.

"Why not?"

"Because the person wasn't trying to be known."

Instead of stopping it, the manager decided to help.

Whenever fresh food was close to its best-before date but still perfectly good, he quietly added it to the waiting cart.

Employees began contributing.

Customers did too.

One little girl slipped a chocolate bar inside.

"For whoever has the apples," she whispered.

The waiting cart became something everyone understood but no one discussed.

Those who needed it simply took it.

Those who could help quietly filled it.

Years later, another supermarket across town started doing the same.

No advertising campaign.

No ribbon cutting.

Just one cart.

Waiting.

Reflection

Compassion often works best when it asks for neither thanks nor applause.

Parable Seven

The Boy Who Fixed Kites

On windy Saturdays the park filled with kites.

Red kites.

Blue kites.

Dragon kites.

Butterfly kites.

One boy never flew his own.

Instead, he carried tape, string, glue, and tiny wooden sticks.

Whenever a kite crashed into a tree or snapped in the wind, children ran to him.

"Can you fix it?"

He almost always could.

By sunset dozens of repaired kites were dancing above the grass.

His own kite remained folded beneath his arm.

One afternoon an elderly woman watching from a distance asked him,

"Why don't you ever fly yours?"

The boy smiled.

"I do."

She looked puzzled.

"I just fly them one at a time."

The woman watched as another little girl hugged him after he repaired hers.

For a moment she looked upward.

The sky was filled with color.

Hundreds of feet in the air.

Only one kite remained on the ground.

Yet somehow...

it belonged to all the others.

Reflection

Sometimes we rise highest by helping someone else take flight.

Parable Eight

The Empty Chair

Mrs. Bell always set one extra place at her dinner table.

Her grandchildren teased her.

"Grandma, nobody sits there."

She smiled.

"Not yet."

Every Sunday the extra plate waited.

Sometimes nothing happened.

Sometimes a neighbour whose furnace had broken arrived unexpectedly.

Sometimes a friend recovering from surgery.

Sometimes an international student unable to travel home.

Once, a young couple whose car had broken down nearby accepted her invitation while waiting for the tow truck.

Years passed.

Her grandchildren grew older.

One Sunday, after Mrs. Bell had passed away, the family gathered for dinner in the same house.

The table was beautifully set.

Except one chair remained empty.

No one had mentioned it.

No one had planned it.

It simply felt wrong not to.

Halfway through the meal, there was a knock at the door.

A new family had just moved onto the street.

They apologized for interrupting.

Their electricity had unexpectedly failed.

One grandson stood immediately.

He smiled.

"I think Grandma was expecting you."

Reflection

A place prepared in love is seldom left empty for long.

Parable Nine

The Window Cleaner

Every Thursday morning, before the town had fully awakened, a man named Oliver walked its streets carrying nothing more than a bucket, a cloth, and a small ladder.

Most people assumed he cleaned windows for a living.

He did not.

He had retired years before.

The windows he cleaned belonged to people who could no longer do it themselves.

Mrs. Peterson, whose knees no longer allowed her to climb.

Mr. Ibrahim, whose eyesight had faded.

The widow on Maple Street who had no family nearby.

Oliver never knocked.

If he saw a window growing cloudy, he quietly washed it.

When he finished, he left without a note.

One spring morning, a little boy watched from across the street.

"Why do you clean their windows?"

Oliver dipped his cloth into the bucket.

"So they can see the sunrise."

The boy looked puzzled.

"They can still see it."

Oliver smiled.

"Not as clearly."

Years passed.

When Oliver died, something remarkable happened.

Without discussing it, dozens of people began carrying buckets on Thursday mornings.

Some cleaned windows.

Others raked leaves.

Some shoveled snow.

One repaired loose railings.

Another replaced burnt-out porch lights.

The town slowly became brighter.

Not because the buildings had changed.

Because people had begun seeing through clearer windows.

Reflection

Sometimes the clearest view we can offer another person is simply removing what has quietly gathered between them and the light.

Parable Ten

The Penny Jar

On the counter of an old hardware store sat a large glass jar.

Inside were hundreds of pennies.

Beside it was a handwritten sign.

Take One If You Need Hope.

Customers laughed.

"What good is one penny?"

The owner always answered the same way.

"It reminds you that someone believed you were worth leaving it."

Children loved the jar.

Many adults ignored it.

Until one difficult year when the factory outside town closed.

People came into the hardware store looking worried.

Some bought almost nothing.

Some bought nothing at all.

More than once, someone quietly slipped a hand into the jar.

Not because they needed a penny.

Because they needed hope.

Months later, business improved.

The factory reopened.

One afternoon a little girl emptied her piggy bank onto the counter.

Pennies spilled everywhere.

"What are these for?" asked the owner.

She smiled.

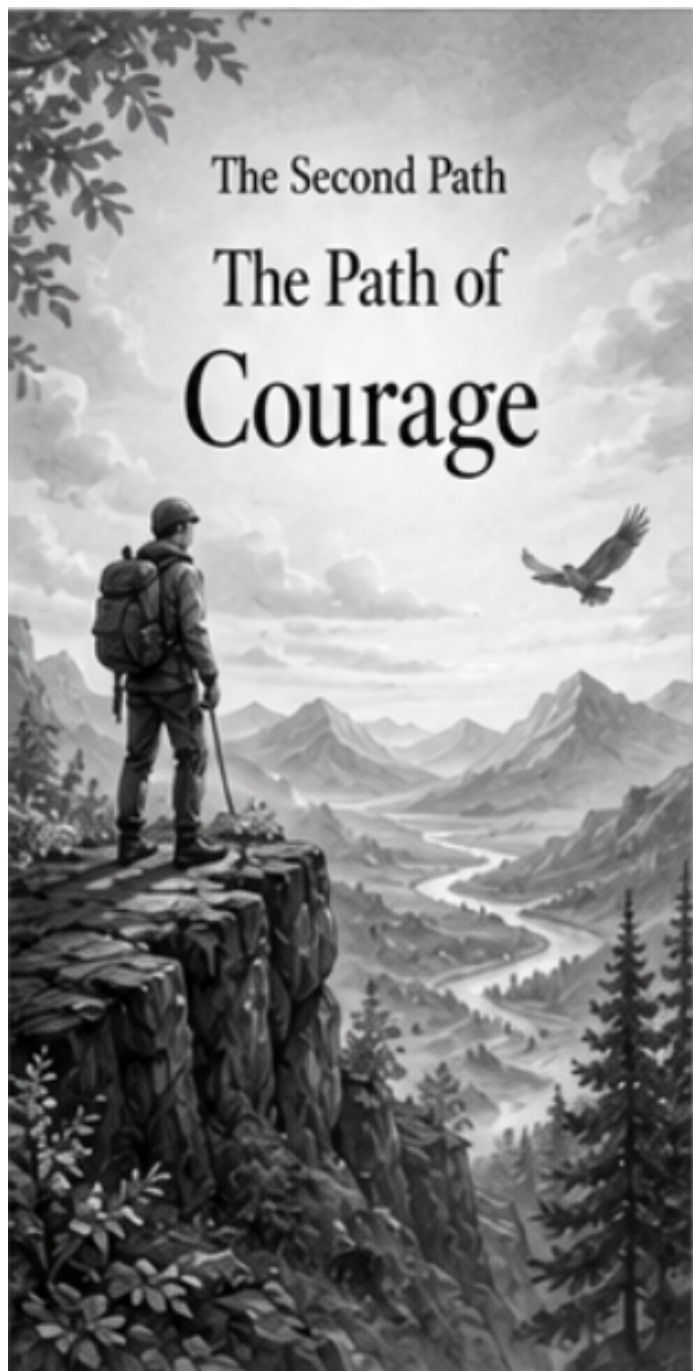
"I borrowed hope."

"I thought I'd put some back."

Reflection

Hope grows strongest when those who once received it begin giving it away.

The Second Path
The Path of
Courage



Parable Eleven

The Bridge That Was Never Crossed

Two villages stood on opposite sides of a wide river.

Years before, a disagreement no one could quite remember had divided them.

Children grew up hearing that people across the river were different.

Shopkeepers rarely traded.

Festivals were held on different weekends.

Even birds seemed to fly freely where people would not.

One spring, a young engineer arrived.

He studied the river for several days.

Then he began building a bridge.

People from both villages laughed.

"No one will use it."

He continued anyway.

For months he worked alone.

Eventually an old carpenter joined him.

Then two teenagers.

Then a mason.

Finally dozens of volunteers from both sides found themselves working shoulder to shoulder.

They spoke very little.

But hammers have a language of their own.

By autumn, the bridge was finished.

Still no one crossed.

It stood empty for three days.

On the fourth morning, a little girl chasing her red ball ran across before anyone could stop her.

A little boy from the opposite village caught it.

He handed it back.

She smiled.

He smiled.

By lunchtime, children were playing together.

By evening, parents were talking.

Within a year, the old argument had become impossible to remember.

Not because someone had won.

Because someone had built a bridge instead of another wall.

Reflection

Courage is not always crossing the bridge.

Sometimes it is building one before anyone believes it will matter.

Parable Twelve

The First Apology

Mrs. Dawson taught history for thirty-seven years.

She knew the dates of wars.

She knew the names of kings.

She knew how kingdoms rose and fell.

One afternoon, after returning graded exams, she realized she had made a mistake.

She had marked one student's paper incorrectly.

It changed his grade completely.

The class expected her simply to correct the mark.

Instead, she stood before everyone and said,

"I was wrong."

The room became silent.

Teachers rarely admitted mistakes.

Adults even less so.

She handed back the corrected paper.

"I hope you'll remember this lesson more than anything in today's class."

Years later, one of her students became the mayor of the town.

Another became a judge.

One became a surgeon.

Another raised four children.

Each of them would one day discover the same difficult truth:

Being respected has very little to do with never making mistakes.

It has everything to do with admitting them honestly.

Many of them would later say that the greatest lesson they learned in school was not history.

It was watching one teacher quietly say,

"I was wrong."

Reflection

The strongest people are rarely those who never fall.

They are the ones who stand again with humility.

Parable Thirteen

The Lighthouse Keeper's Promise

On a lonely stretch of coastline stood an old lighthouse.

Its keeper was named Elias.

Every evening, whether the sea was calm or the wind howled like a living thing, Elias climbed the narrow spiral staircase carrying a small can of oil.

One summer afternoon, a visitor asked him,

"How many ships have you saved?"

Elias smiled.

"I've no idea."

"Surely you keep count."

"No."

"But isn't that the whole point?"

Elias looked toward the horizon.

"My job is not to count the ships."

"It is simply to keep the light burning."

Years passed.

Storms came.

Storms passed.

Captains changed.

Crews came and went.

Most never knew the keeper's name.

They only knew that, in darkness, there was always a light waiting.

When Elias grew too old to climb the stairs, the townspeople worried.

Who would replace him?

The answer surprised everyone.

Nearly every family volunteered.

Some offered one evening each week.

Others two.

Children polished the lantern's glass.

Retired sailors carried the oil.

No one owned the lighthouse.

Everyone protected its light.

Reflection

We may never know whose life is guided by our faithfulness.

That is no reason to stop shining.

Parable Fourteen

The Violin String

Anna had practiced the violin for ten years.

The town concert was finally here.

The hall was full.

She took a deep breath.

The conductor raised his baton.

The music began.

Then, halfway through the most beautiful movement...

snap.

One of her strings broke.

The audience gasped.

Anna froze.

She wanted to run.

The conductor looked gently toward her.

He did not stop.

He simply nodded.

She understood.

With one string missing, Anna continued.

She adjusted every note.

She played differently than she had rehearsed.

Not perfectly.

But beautifully.

When the final note faded, the audience rose to its feet.

Afterward a little girl approached.

"I want to play the violin someday."

"Weren't you afraid when the string broke?" she asked.

Anna smiled.

"I was terrified."

"Then why didn't you stop?"

"Because sometimes courage is simply continuing with what you still have."

The little girl never forgot those words.

Years later, after losing her eyesight in an accident, she remembered them.

And she continued.

Reflection

Life is rarely played with every string intact.

Beautiful music is still possible.

Parable Fifteen

The Mountain Path

Two hikers reached the foot of a mountain.

One studied maps for hours.

Measured distances.

Calculated weather.

Packed perfectly.

The other simply began walking.

By noon the first hiker was still preparing.

The second had already reached the first lookout.

Late that afternoon they met on the trail.

"Weren't you afraid of taking the wrong path?" asked the first.

"Of course."

"Then why start so soon?"

The second smiled.

"Because mountains reveal the next step only after you've taken the first one."

The first looked down the winding trail.

He folded his map.

Then, for the first time that day...

he walked.

Reflection

Certainty is a wonderful companion.

But courage often begins before certainty arrives.

Parable Sixteen

The Boy Who Raised His Hand

Mrs. Evans asked a difficult question.

Silence filled the classroom.

Everyone hoped someone else would answer.

At the back of the room sat Jacob.

He wasn't sure he knew the answer.

His hand trembled as he slowly raised it.

"I'm... not certain."

Mrs. Evans smiled.

"Go ahead."

Jacob answered.

He was wrong.

Several students laughed.

His face turned bright red.

Mrs. Evans walked to the chalkboard.

She wrote his answer exactly as he had given it.

Then she circled one small part.

"This part is brilliant," she said.

"Now let's build on it together."

By the end of the lesson the class had reached the correct answer.

Years later, Jacob became an engineer known for solving problems no one else would attempt.

When asked how he became so fearless, he always remembered that classroom.

He had learned something far more important than mathematics.

He had learned that being wrong was not the opposite of learning.

It was often the beginning.

Reflection

Every discovery begins with someone willing to risk an imperfect answer.

Parable Seventeen

The Empty Easel

Every Saturday morning, people gathered in the town square to paint.

Children painted butterflies.

Teenagers painted city streets.

Retirees painted quiet lakes.

Only one easel remained empty.

No one used it.

One rainy morning, a young woman named Claire unfolded a blank canvas and placed it on the empty easel.

"I've never painted before," she admitted.

Several experienced artists smiled politely.

Others looked away.

Claire dipped her brush into blue paint.

The first stroke was uneven.

The second was worse.

By lunchtime her painting looked nothing like the picture she had imagined.

She almost threw it away.

Instead, she returned the next Saturday.

And the next.

Months later, tourists stopped to admire her work.

One little boy asked,

"Were you always this good?"

Claire laughed.

"No."

"So why didn't you quit?"

"Because the painting I wanted to become was happening inside me long before it appeared on the canvas."

Reflection

The greatest masterpiece we create is often ourselves.

Parable Eighteen

The Firefighter's Ladder

Every child in town admired Captain Ruiz.

They imagined courage meant running into burning buildings.

One afternoon a reporter asked him,

"What is the bravest thing you've ever done?"

The captain thought quietly.

Then he answered,

"I knocked on my father's door after ten years without speaking to him."

The reporter blinked.

"What happened?"

"We cried."

"Was that harder than fighting fires?"

Captain Ruiz looked down at his weathered hands.

"Much harder."

The article surprised everyone.

People had expected stories of smoke and flames.

Instead they discovered that some of life's greatest fires burn silently inside families.

Reflection

There are flames that water cannot extinguish.

Only love can.

Parable Nineteen

The Stone Mason

Every morning before sunrise, a young apprentice named Thomas walked to the quarry.

For weeks his only task was shaping rough stones.

Chip.

Chip.

Chip.

Hour after hour.

He grew frustrated.

"When will I build something important?" he asked the old master.

The master handed him another rough stone.

"When this one is ready."

Thomas sighed.

"But no one will ever see these."

The old man smiled.

"Some of them will become the foundation."

Years passed.

Thomas became one of the finest stone masons in the country.

One afternoon he stood before a magnificent cathedral.

Visitors admired its soaring towers.

Its stained-glass windows.

Its carved arches.

No one ever spoke about the foundation beneath their feet.

Thomas quietly smiled.

He remembered every stone he had shaped.

None could be seen.

Yet every one was carrying the weight of everything above it.

As he turned to leave, a young apprentice ran toward him.

"I want to build towers."

Thomas handed him a hammer.

"Then begin with the stones no one will ever notice."

Reflection

Character is built much the same way.

What no one sees often determines everything they eventually do.

Parable Twenty

The Match

A fierce storm swept through the valley.

The power failed.

Homes disappeared into darkness.

People searched for candles and flashlights.

An elderly woman struck a single match.

Its flame lasted only a few seconds.

Yet in that brief moment she lit a candle.

The candle lit another.

That candle lit another.

Within minutes the entire neighborhood glowed with warm light.

The next morning, a child asked her,

"Which candle was the most important?"

The woman looked around the room.

"I couldn't possibly tell."

"Why not?"

"Because light never argues about who deserves the credit."

Reflection

Courage is often nothing more than being the first small light in a very dark place.

The Third Path
The Path of
Humility



Parable Twenty-One

The Janitor's Key

Every morning before the first student arrived, Mr. Alvarez unlocked every classroom in the school.

He swept the floors.

Replaced burned-out light bulbs.

Straightened crooked chairs.

Picked up forgotten mittens.

By the time the teachers arrived, he had quietly disappeared into the next hallway.

Most students never learned his name.

To them he was simply...

the janitor.

One winter afternoon a heavy snowstorm trapped everyone inside the school.

Classes were canceled.

Parents struggled to arrive.

Children grew restless.

Without saying a word, Mr. Alvarez disappeared into the gymnasium.

An hour later laughter echoed through the building.

He had found old floor hockey sticks.

A box of jump ropes.

Several board games.

Someone discovered he could juggle.

Someone else learned he had once played professional soccer.

He taught children card tricks.

Balanced brooms on one finger.

Made paper airplanes that seemed to fly forever.

The teachers watched in amazement.

"You've been hiding all this?"

He laughed.

"I wasn't hiding."

"No one asked."

Years later, many students remembered very little about that snowy afternoon.

Except one lesson.

Every person carries gifts the world cannot see...

until someone takes the time to look.

Reflection

Humility does not mean having fewer gifts.

It means never believing those gifts make us greater than anyone else.

Parable Twenty-Two

The Empty Trophy Case

Coach Reynolds had won more championships than anyone could remember.

His office shelves overflowed with trophies.

One summer he removed every single one.

Players arrived for the new season and stared in confusion.

"Coach," one asked, "where did they all go?"

He pointed to the practice field.

"They were beginning to distract me."

"Distract you from what?"

"The next player who needs encouragement."

The trophies were placed in storage.

The shelves remained empty for the rest of his career.

Visitors often asked why.

Coach Reynolds always answered,

"Victories belong to yesterday."

"People belong to today."

When he retired, the players surprised him.

Instead of returning his trophies...

they presented him with a simple wooden frame.

Inside were hundreds of handwritten notes.

Each from someone whose life he had changed.

Coach Reynolds wiped away a tear.

For the first time in many years...

he placed something back on the shelf.

Reflection

The greatest achievements cannot be polished with a cloth.

They live inside people.

Parable Twenty-Three

The Bread Baker

Every morning before dawn, Sophia baked bread.

The aroma drifted through the village long before sunrise.

People praised her constantly.

"You make the finest bread in the county."

She always smiled politely.

Then she pointed toward the fields beyond the bakery.

"The farmer grew the wheat."

She pointed toward the hills.

"The rain watered it."

She pointed toward the mill.

"The miller prepared the flour."

She held up a pinch of salt.

"Someone mined this."

Finally she held up the loaf.

"I simply helped everyone else meet one another."

Years later, when Sophia retired, the villagers carved those words into a small stone outside the bakery.

Travelers often stopped to read them.

Some smiled.

Some stood silently for several minutes.

Then they continued on their journey...

a little more grateful than before.

Reflection

Humility remembers that every accomplishment has many unseen hands behind it.

Parable Twenty-Four

The King's Garden

A wealthy man built the most beautiful garden in the region.

Visitors traveled for miles to admire it.

One day a child asked,

"Did you grow all these flowers?"

The man laughed.

"No."

"I planted some seeds."

"The earth grew them."

"The rain fed them."

"The sun warmed them."

"The bees visited them."

"The seasons shaped them."

"I merely tried not to get in their way."

The child looked across the endless colors.

"So... whose garden is it?"

The old man smiled.

"I've been wondering that myself."

Reflection

The wisest people know they are caretakers long before they believe they are owners.

Parable Twenty-Five

The Gardener's Secret

Every spring, visitors traveled from every corner of the county to admire Mrs. Ellis's garden.

The roses climbed higher than anyone else's.

The lilies seemed brighter.

Even the smallest flowers somehow looked happier.

People constantly asked her for the secret.

"Is it the fertilizer?"

She shook her head.

"The soil?"

"No."

"The seeds?"

"No."

Finally, one little girl asked,

"What do you do every day?"

Mrs. Ellis smiled.

"I kneel."

The girl looked confused.

"Kneel?"

"Yes."

"I kneel to pull weeds."

"I kneel to plant."

"I kneel to water."

"I kneel to notice the tiny things."

The girl looked over the magnificent garden.

"So the secret is kneeling?"

Mrs. Ellis nodded gently.

"It is difficult to care for anything while standing above it."

Years later, that little girl became a doctor.

Whenever she entered a patient's room, she pulled up a chair before speaking.

One day a young nurse asked why.

The doctor smiled.

"My first gardening lesson."

Reflection

Humility begins the moment we choose to meet another person at eye level.

Parable Twenty-Six

The Empty Nameplate

A large company welcomed its new president with applause.

The office door already bore his name in polished brass.

On his first morning, however, he quietly removed it.

His assistant was startled.

"Sir, shouldn't people know where your office is?"

"They'll find me."

The next day employees noticed something even stranger.

Rather than waiting behind his desk, he spent most mornings walking through the building.

He learned the names of the receptionists.

The custodians.

The mechanics.

The newest interns.

He asked questions.

He listened carefully to the answers.

Months later, a visitor remarked,

"I've never seen a president who knows everyone."

The president smiled.

"I don't."

"I simply keep meeting people."

Years later, after he retired, a new president moved into the office.

The polished brass nameplate was found in the back of a drawer.

Still wrapped in paper.

Never used.

Reflection

Titles may introduce us.

Character is what people remember.

Parable Twenty-Seven

The River

High in the mountains, two streams began only a few yards apart.

One rushed noisily over every rock.

"I am the strongest!" it shouted.

The other flowed quietly through the forest.

Months later, both reached the valley.

The noisy stream had become shallow.

Much of its water had scattered into marshes.

The quiet stream had become a broad river.

Villages gathered along its banks.

Children played beside it.

Farmers watered their fields from it.

One evening the noisy stream asked,

"How did you become so great?"

The river answered,

"I spent less time announcing where I was going...

and more time getting there."

Reflection

The deepest waters are often the quietest.

Parable Twenty-Eight

The Last Piece of Pie

Every Thanksgiving, Grandpa Walter insisted on serving dessert himself.

The grandchildren noticed something peculiar.

No matter how many slices remained...

he always chose the smallest one.

Finally his youngest granddaughter asked,

"Grandpa, don't you like pie?"

He laughed.

"I love pie."

"Then why don't you take the biggest piece?"

He leaned back in his chair.

"Because I've discovered something."

"What?"

"The biggest piece is never actually on the plate."

She frowned.

"Where is it?"

He smiled toward the family gathered around the table.

"It's on everyone else's face."

Many years later, after Grandpa Walter was gone, Thanksgiving dinner felt strangely different.

Until one grandson quietly reached for the smallest slice.

No one said a word.

Several others smiled.

Reflection

Humility is often served one small choice at a time.

Parable Twenty-Nine

The Cracked Bell

For more than a century, the church bell rang every Sunday morning.

Its sound echoed across the valley.

One winter, a crack appeared.

The bell no longer rang perfectly.

Its tone carried a rough edge.

Some villagers wanted to replace it.

"It's damaged."

"It isn't what it used to be."

The old bellmaker climbed the tower and listened carefully.

After several minutes he smiled.

"No."

"It has finally found its true voice."

People looked puzzled.

He explained,

"The crack has changed the sound."

"But it has also made it unmistakable."

The bell remained.

Children grew up recognizing its unique call.

Travelers often remarked,

"You must be near the village with the beautiful bell."

No one else had one quite like it.

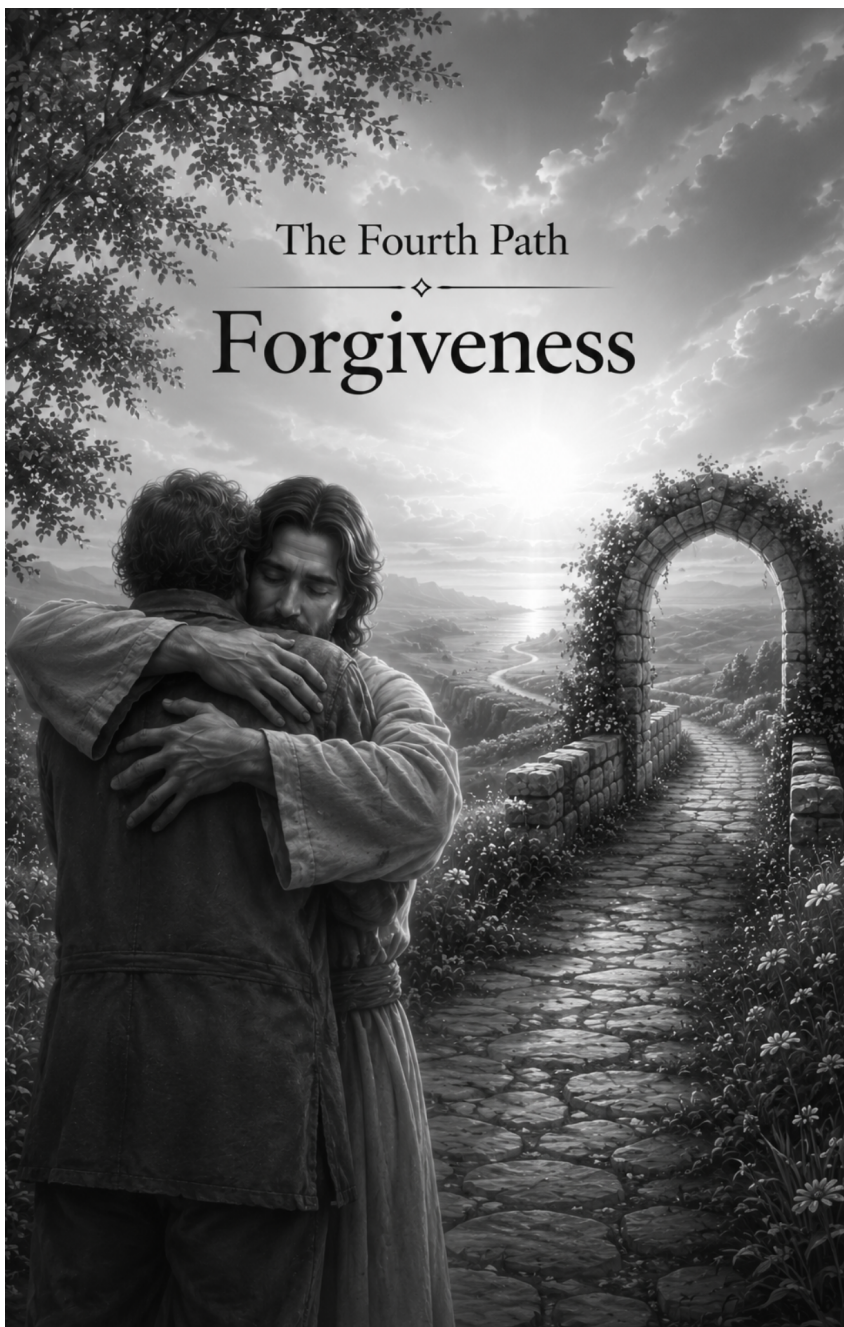
Reflection

Our wounds do not always diminish our song.

Sometimes they become the very reason others recognize it.

The Fourth Path

Forgiveness



Parable Thirty

The Letter Never Sent

For twenty years, Margaret kept a letter inside the top drawer of her desk.

She had written it after a bitter argument with her sister.

Every hurtful memory was there.

Every accusation.

Every disappointment.

Whenever anger returned, she opened the drawer and read it again.

One autumn afternoon, while cleaning her house, she unfolded the letter once more.

Then she noticed something.

The paper had yellowed.

The ink had faded.

Only one thing had remained fresh.

Her resentment.

Quietly, she carried the letter into the backyard.

She struck a match.

As the paper curled into ash, her grandson asked,

"Weren't you going to mail it?"

Margaret smiled through tears.

"No."

"I think I've carried it long enough."

Several weeks later she knocked on her sister's front door.

Neither woman could remember who had been right.

Both remembered they were sisters.

Reflection

Forgiveness does not erase the past.

It frees the future from carrying it.

Parable Thirty-One

The Broken Cup

Mrs. Whitmore owned a delicate teacup that had belonged to her grandmother.

It had crossed an ocean aboard a steamship.

It had survived two world wars.

It had been carefully wrapped through six moves.

Everyone in the family knew how precious it was.

One rainy afternoon, her seven-year-old grandson was helping set the table.

His hands were small.

The tray was heavy.

The cup slipped.

It struck the floor and shattered into a dozen pieces.

The room fell silent.

The boy's face turned pale.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

"I didn't mean to."

Mrs. Whitmore looked at the broken pieces.

Then she looked at the little boy.

She knelt beside him.

"My dear," she said softly, "I have already decided."

He blinked through his tears.

"Decided what?"

"That I would rather have you than the cup."

Together they gathered every tiny piece.

Years later, the grandson would scarcely remember what the cup looked like.

But he would remember, with perfect clarity, the woman who chose him over her treasure.

When he became a father, he often found himself saying those same words.

"I would rather have you."

Reflection

Love is revealed by what we choose to protect.

Parable Thirty-Two

The Fence

For years, two neighbors argued over where one property ended and the other began.

The old wooden fence leaned this way and that.

Each believed the other had gained a few inches.

One spring, a surveyor finally measured the land.

He placed fresh stakes in the ground.

The answer was clear.

One of the neighbors had indeed been right.

Everyone expected celebration.

Instead, the man quietly pulled the old fence down.

His neighbor looked confused.

"Aren't you going to build a new one?"

He smiled.

"No."

"But what about the property line?"

"I've discovered I'd rather have a friend than another six inches."

By summer's end, children were running freely across both yards.

The gardens seemed larger than before.

Not because the land had changed.

Because the barrier had.

Reflection

Some victories cost more than they are worth.

Parable Thirty-Three

The Music Box

Emily had not spoken to her brother in twelve years.

No one in the family remembered exactly why.

The disagreement had grown larger each time it was retold.

When their father passed away, the lawyer handed each of them a small package.

Inside Emily's box was an old music box.

Inside her brother's was the tiny key that made it play.

Neither gift was complete without the other.

For several weeks, both packages remained unopened on separate shelves.

Finally, Emily laughed.

"Dad has won again."

She drove across town.

Her brother opened the door.

Neither knew what to say.

She simply held out the music box.

He held out the key.

When the melody began, they found themselves smiling before either had spoken a single word.

Some gifts are carefully wrapped.

Others arrive disguised as opportunities to begin again.

Reflection

Reconciliation often begins with someone willing to carry the first piece.

Parable Thirty-Four

The Snowfall

One bitter January morning, Mrs. Howard looked out her window and frowned.

Fresh snow had covered every path.

Even worse...

Someone had left deep footprints straight across her front lawn.

She grumbled all morning.

By afternoon, more snow had begun to fall.

Within an hour the footprints had disappeared completely.

That evening her granddaughter asked why she seemed happier.

Mrs. Howard pointed toward the yard.

"The snow has forgiven someone."

The little girl tilted her head.

"What do you mean?"

"It remembered to cover the footprints...

without forgetting how beautiful the lawn could become."

The child stared out the window for a long time.

Years later, whenever someone spoke harshly to her, she often thought about fresh snow.

Reflection

Forgiveness does not pretend the footprints never existed.

It simply refuses to leave them uncovered forever.

The Fifth Path
The Path of
Hope



Parable Thirty-Five

The Last Lantern

The fishing village had lost power.

The wind had torn down the lines.

Darkness settled over every house.

Only one lantern remained lit.

It belonged to old Mrs. Donnelly.

People gathered outside her cottage.

"Save your oil," someone warned.

"It may be days before help arrives."

Mrs. Donnelly smiled.

"If I hide the light...

how will anyone find their way here?"

One by one, neighbors arrived carrying unlit lanterns.

She lit the first.

Then the second.

Then another.

By midnight, the entire village shimmered with gentle light.

A child stared in amazement.

"Doesn't your lantern get smaller each time you share it?"

Mrs. Donnelly laughed.

"My dear...

that is not how light works."

Reflection

Hope loses nothing by being shared.

Parable Thirty-Six

The Apple Tree

Every autumn, children gathered beneath the oldest apple tree in town.

They filled baskets.

Laughed.

Climbed branches.

The owner never charged a penny.

One year, a businessman stopped and asked,

"Don't you realize how much money these apples are worth?"

The old farmer nodded.

"I do."

"So why give them away?"

The farmer picked up a single apple.

"My grandfather planted this tree."

"He never tasted its first fruit."

The businessman looked puzzled.

"So?"

The farmer smiled.

"I've been eating someone else's generosity all my life."

He handed the apple to a little girl.

"I suppose it's my turn."

Reflection

Hope grows strongest when every generation plants for the next.

Parable Thirty-Seven

The Starfish

Every morning before sunrise, Mrs. Lawson walked along the beach.

The tide always left behind shells, seaweed...

and starfish.

Hundreds of them.

She quietly picked them up, one at a time, and tossed them back into the sea.

One morning a jogger stopped.

"You'll never save them all."

Mrs. Lawson smiled without stopping.

"I know."

"There are simply too many."

"I know."

"Then why keep doing it?"

She gently lifted another starfish.

"Because this one still has a tomorrow."

She tossed it into the waves.

The jogger stood silently for a moment.

The next morning he arrived carrying a bucket.

By the end of the week, six more people had joined them.

Within a month, schoolchildren were walking the beach before class.

Years later, visitors often asked why so many people gathered there every dawn.

No one mentioned the first morning.

No one remembered exactly who had begun.

They simply knew that every sunrise deserved another chance.

Reflection

Hope never asks whether everyone can be helped.

It simply begins with the one in front of us.

Parable Thirty-Eight

The Clockmaker

Old Mr. Benoit repaired clocks.

Grandfather clocks.

Pocket watches.

Kitchen clocks.

Tiny alarm clocks.

Every afternoon people brought him clocks that had stopped.

He always asked the same question.

"When did it stop?"

Most people answered,

"I don't know."

He would smile.

"Then let's begin with the next tick."

A young apprentice once asked,

"Why don't you worry about all the time the clock has lost?"

Mr. Benoit gently placed a tiny gear into an old pocket watch.

"Because clocks never recover yesterday."

"They simply begin keeping time again."

Many years later, that apprentice lost everything in a business failure.

For months he blamed himself.

Then one morning he remembered the old clockmaker.

He stood.

Opened the shop.

And began with the next tick.

Reflection

Hope does not ask us to relive yesterday.

It quietly invites us to begin again today.

Parable Thirty-Nine

The Quilt

Mrs. Jackson collected scraps of cloth.

Old shirts.

Worn dresses.

Baby blankets.

Pieces of curtains.

Nothing matched.

Visitors often laughed.

"What will you ever do with all these?"

She simply smiled.

"Wait."

Winter arrived.

Then one snowy afternoon she spread every piece across the dining room table.

Blue beside yellow.

Plaid beside lace.

Dark beside light.

Slowly...

patiently...

she stitched them together.

When the quilt was finished, a little boy stared in amazement.

"How did all those pieces become so beautiful?"

Mrs. Jackson ran her hand across the finished quilt.

"They stopped trying to look like one another."

Years later, the quilt covered the bed in the town's guest room.

Travelers from many countries slept beneath it.

None knew its story.

All admired its warmth.

Reflection

Hope sees beauty long before the pieces understand how they fit together.

Parable Forty

The Seed in the Pocket

For nearly forty years, Mr. Garcia carried a single acorn in his coat pocket.

His grandchildren thought it was peculiar.

"Grandpa, why don't you plant it?"

He smiled.

"I'm waiting."

"What are you waiting for?"

"The right place."

One afternoon, while walking through a neighborhood where a great old tree had fallen in a storm, he quietly knelt and planted the acorn.

The children watched.

"How will you know if it grows?"

He patted the earth gently.

"I may not."

Years later, after Mr. Garcia had passed away, his great-grandson visited the same street.

A young oak tree stretched toward the sky.

Children played beneath its tiny branches.

The boy smiled.

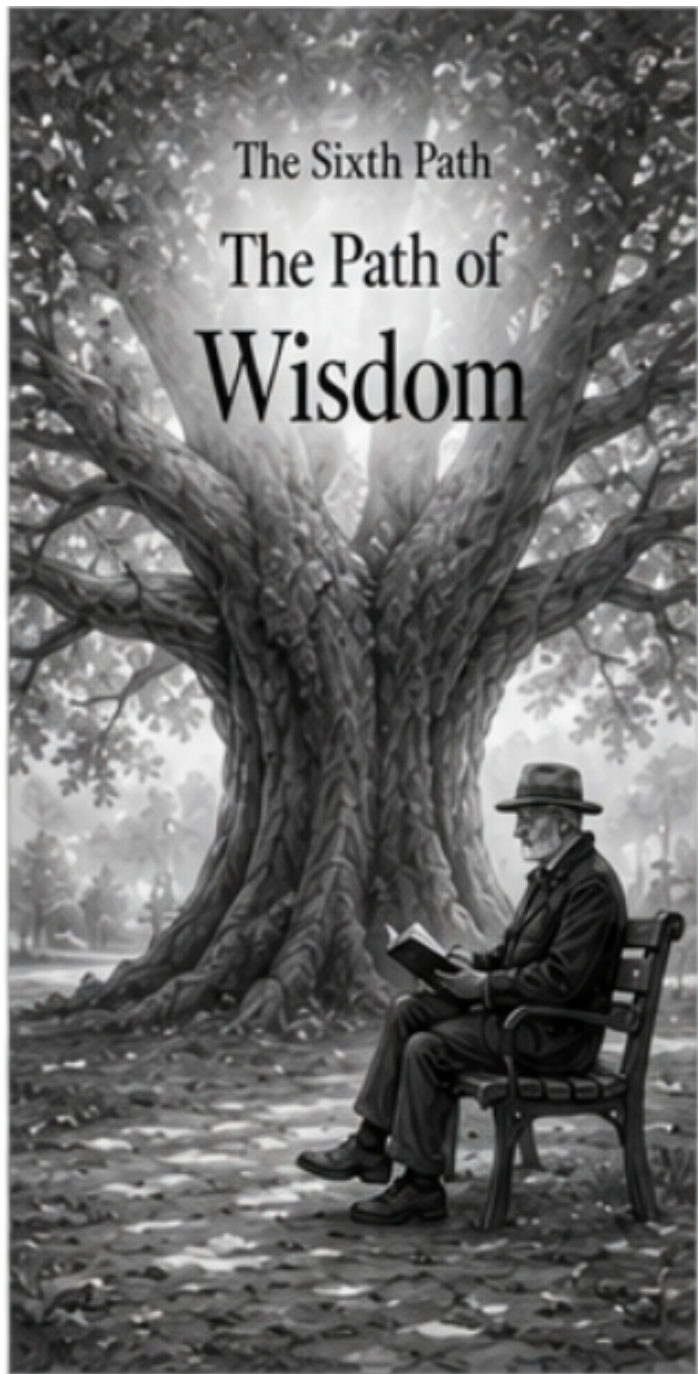
He reached into his own pocket.

There rested another acorn.

Reflection

Hope often travels from one generation to the next in pockets too small for anyone to notice.

The Sixth Path
The Path of
Wisdom



Parable Forty-One

The Librarian

Every Tuesday afternoon, children crowded into the old library.

Most came looking for adventure.

Pirates.

Dinosaurs.

Mysteries.

One little boy came every week with the same question.

"Which is the best book?"

Mrs. Harper, the librarian, never answered immediately.

Instead she asked,

"What kind of person are you hoping to become this week?"

Sometimes she handed him a story about courage.

Sometimes kindness.

Sometimes patience.

Sometimes forgiveness.

Years later, after graduating from university, he returned to thank her.

"You always knew exactly which book I needed."

Mrs. Harper laughed.

"No."

"I simply learned to ask a better question."

Reflection

Wisdom begins not with finding all the answers...
but with asking the right questions.

Parable Forty-Two

The Echo

A father and his young daughter hiked into the mountains.

The girl stumbled over a rock and cried,

"Ouch!"

From somewhere across the valley came the reply:

"Ouch!"

She frowned.

"Who's copying me?"

Annoyed, she shouted,

"You're silly!"

The mountains answered,

"You're silly!"

Her father smiled.

Then he cupped his hands around his mouth and called,

"You are wonderful!"

Moments later the valley answered,

"You are wonderful!"

The little girl stared in amazement.

Her father knelt beside her.

"Life often echoes what we send into it."

She never forgot.

Many years later, whenever anger tempted her, she remembered the mountain.

Reflection

The words we release into the world often find their way home.

Parable Forty-Three

The Compass

An old sea captain kept an ancient brass compass on his desk.

Visitors admired it.

"It must be worth a fortune."

He smiled.

"Not to a collector."

"Then why keep it?"

The captain picked it up.

"The needle doesn't care whether the sea is calm."

"It doesn't care whether I'm frightened."

"It simply keeps pointing north."

A young sailor asked,

"Have you ever ignored it?"

The captain laughed softly.

"Only once."

"And?"

"I learned that storms do not become smaller simply because we stop paying attention to the compass."

Reflection

Wisdom is not found in following every feeling.

It is found in returning to what is true.

Parable Forty-Four

The Pencil

On the first day of school, Mr. Harrison handed every student a brand-new pencil.

Most children immediately admired the bright yellow paint.

The shiny silver band.

The perfect pink eraser.

Then Mr. Harrison held up his own pencil.

It was worn nearly to the size of his hand.

Its paint had disappeared long ago.

The eraser was gone.

One student finally asked,

"Why don't you buy a new one?"

Mr. Harrison smiled.

"This pencil reminds me of something."

"What?"

"It has become smaller every day."

"But everything it has lost has become someone else's learning."

He wrote one last sentence on the blackboard.

The pencil became too short to hold.

Quietly he placed it inside his desk.

Years later, one of those students became a teacher.

On the first day of every school year...

he carried the same tiny pencil.

Reflection

A life is not measured by how much remains.

It is measured by what has been given away.

Parable Forty-Five

The Potter

In a quiet village lived an old potter whose bowls were famous throughout the country.

Visitors watched him shape clay with astonishing skill.

One afternoon a young apprentice asked,

"What is the secret?"

The potter placed a lump of clay upon the wheel.

"I don't begin by asking what the clay wants to become."

"I begin by asking what it needs."

Sometimes he added water.

Sometimes pressure.

Sometimes patience.

Sometimes he stopped touching it altogether.

The apprentice frowned.

"How do you know which?"

The old man smiled.

"The clay tells me."

Years later, when the apprentice became a father, he often remembered the potter.

Children, too, required different hands.

One needed encouragement.

Another needed challenge.

A third simply needed someone to wait.

Reflection

Wisdom begins when we stop treating every person as though they are the same.

Parable Forty-Six

The Well

For generations the village had drawn water from a single stone well.

Children lowered buckets.

Farmers filled barrels.

Travelers quenched their thirst.

One summer a wealthy merchant arrived.

"This well is terribly old," he announced.

"You should replace it."

The villagers politely thanked him.

The oldest woman in the village quietly asked,

"With what?"

"A modern fountain."

She smiled.

"The fountain would be beautiful."

"But would it remember the drought?"

The merchant looked puzzled.

"The drought?"

She nodded.

"This well has served five generations."

"It has seen dry years."

"Floods."

"Celebrations."

"Funerals."

"It has taught us to lower the bucket patiently."

Years later the merchant returned.

The well remained.

So did the wisdom of those who gathered around it.

Reflection

Some things grow more valuable because they have faithfully endured.

Parable Forty-Seven

The Feather

A young woman became angry with her neighbor.

In frustration she spoke harsh words to several friends.

By evening nearly everyone in town had heard the story.

The next morning she regretted every word.

She visited the village elder.

"How can I take them back?"

The old woman handed her a feather pillow.

"Cut it open."

The young woman looked confused but obeyed.

Hundreds of feathers floated into the wind.

"Now gather every feather."

"That's impossible!"

The elder nodded gently.

"So it is with spoken words."

The young woman spent the rest of her life choosing them more carefully.

Reflection

Words travel farther than we imagine.

Wisdom chooses them with care.

Parable Forty-Eight

The Mirror

A famous artist was invited to paint the portrait of a respected judge.

When the painting was finished, everyone admired it.

Except the judge.

"It doesn't look like me."

The artist smiled.

"It looks like the man your grandchildren believe you are."

The judge stood silently for several minutes.

The following day he visited an elderly widow.

The day after that he reconciled with an estranged friend.

Weeks later he returned to the artist.

"You were right."

"It wasn't a portrait."

"It was an invitation."

Reflection

The finest mirror does not merely show us who we are.

It quietly reminds us who we can become.

The Seventh Path
The Path of
Service



Parable Forty-Nine

The Apron

Every Sunday after church, people gathered for lunch in the fellowship hall.

There was always enough food.

Always enough laughter.

Always enough conversation.

Few people noticed Mr. Douglas.

Before anyone arrived, he placed every chair.

Filled every water pitcher.

Swept the floor.

After everyone left, he washed every dish.

For twenty-three years.

One Sunday he became ill.

Another volunteer took his place.

By noon she understood why the meals had always felt so peaceful.

It wasn't simply the food.

Someone had quietly prepared the room with love.

The following week, Mr. Douglas returned.

The volunteer handed him a brand-new apron embroidered with one sentence.

Thank you for serving before anyone noticed.

Mr. Douglas smiled.

"I was hoping no one ever would."

Reflection

Service is most beautiful when it seeks the work more than the recognition.

Parable Fifty

The Lantern Carrier

Each evening, an elderly man walked through the village carrying a lantern.

People assumed he needed it because his eyesight was poor.

One young traveler finally asked,

"Can you even see where you're going?"

The old man laughed.

"Not particularly."

"Then why carry the lantern?"

"So you can see me."

The traveler smiled politely.

"I'm not following."

The old man lifted the lantern a little higher.

"If you see me clearly..."

"You are less likely to stumble into me."

The traveler thought about those words for many years.

Eventually he realized the lantern had never been for the old man's benefit.

It had always been carried for everyone else.

Reflection

A life of service often shines its brightest light in someone else's path.

Parable Fifty-One

The Empty Wheelbarrow

Every Saturday morning, the community garden came alive.

People carried bags of soil.

Watering cans.

Seedlings.

Rakes.

Only old Mr. Lewis arrived with an empty wheelbarrow.

One young volunteer laughed.

"You forgot your tools."

Mr. Lewis smiled.

"No."

"My wheelbarrow is exactly as I intended."

Throughout the morning people borrowed it.

Someone needed compost.

Someone else needed stones moved.

Another needed tomato plants carried across the garden.

Mr. Lewis never filled it with his own work.

He simply made everyone else's work easier.

At lunchtime the young volunteer walked over.

"I understand now."

Mr. Lewis looked puzzled.

"The wheelbarrow wasn't empty."

"It was available."

Reflection

A useful life is often measured by how much it helps others carry.

Parable Fifty-Two

The Third Loaf

Mrs. Romano baked three loaves of bread every Thursday.

One for her family.

One for the weekend.

One...

for whoever knocked.

Her grandchildren noticed something curious.

Some Thursdays no one came.

Yet she baked the third loaf anyway.

"Grandma," one asked, "what if nobody needs it?"

Mrs. Romano gently dusted flour from her hands.

"Someone always does."

Late that afternoon there was a knock.

A young couple had just moved into town.

They had forgotten to buy groceries.

Mrs. Romano handed them the warm loaf without hesitation.

The grandchildren smiled.

"How did you know?"

She laughed softly.

"I didn't."

"I simply believed kindness should always be ready before it is needed."

Reflection

Service often begins before the need arrives.

Parable Fifty-Three

The Shoelace

Every morning, crossing guard Mrs. Patel tied dozens of shoelaces.

Children arrived talking.

Laughing.

Rushing.

Many never noticed their shoes had come undone.

She noticed every one.

One winter morning a television reporter came to interview her.

"What is the most important part of your job?"

Mrs. Patel looked down.

"This."

She knelt and tied another little shoe.

The reporter smiled politely.

"You mean helping children cross safely?"

Mrs. Patel shook her head.

"They cross safely because I first noticed something small."

Years later one of those children became a surgeon.

Another a pilot.

Another a firefighter.

Each discovered the same truth.

Great responsibilities often begin with small acts of attention.

Reflection

Service sees what others step over.

Parable Fifty-Four

The Borrowed Ladder

A ladder stood behind the little hardware store.

It never had a lock.

Whenever someone needed it, they borrowed it.

Roof repairs.

Painting.

Changing a light bulb.

Picking apples.

Returning a frightened kitten from a tree.

One day a visitor asked the owner,

"Aren't you afraid someone will steal it?"

The owner smiled.

"They already have."

"What?"

"Three times."

"And?"

"They brought back better ladders."

Reflection

Trust sometimes invites people to become the person they hope they already are.

The Eighth Path
The Path of
Joy



Parable Fifty-Five

The Bubble Man

Every Saturday afternoon an elderly gentleman stood in the park carrying nothing more than a small bottle of soap and a homemade bubble wand.

Children gathered almost immediately.

Gigantic bubbles floated into the sky.

Parents laughed.

Dogs chased them.

Even hurried business people occasionally stopped to watch.

A little girl finally asked,

"Why do you spend every Saturday making bubbles?"

The old man smiled.

"Because adults forget."

"Forget what?"

"That happiness is lighter than air."

Years later, after he was gone, people noticed something beautiful.

Children who had grown up watching him began bringing bubbles for their own children.

The park remained filled with laughter.

The bubbles never belonged to one man.

They had become part of the neighborhood.

Reflection

Joy multiplies most easily when no one tries to own it.

Parable Fifty-Six

The Piano in the Station

Someone placed an old upright piano in the train station.

There was no sign.

No instructions.

Just a simple note.

Please Play.

At first people walked past.

Then one child pressed a single key.

A businessman played a short melody while waiting for his train.

A grandmother sang quietly.

One rainy afternoon a concert pianist missed his connection.

He sat down and filled the station with beautiful music.

When he finished, everyone applauded.

He bowed politely.

Then he left.

The piano remained.

The next person who sat down knew only three chords.

No one applauded less enthusiastically.

Reflection

Joy does not ask whether we perform perfectly.

It simply invites us to join the song.

Parable Fifty-Seven

The Kite Festival

Every spring the town held a kite festival.

People spent weeks building magnificent creations.

Dragons.

Butterflies.

Ships.

Eagles.

One boy arrived carrying only plain brown paper.

His kite had no decorations.

When the wind lifted it into the sky, it flew higher than all the others.

Another child asked,

"Why didn't you paint it?"

The boy shrugged.

"I was too busy making sure it could fly."

Years later, the children scarcely remembered which kite had been prettiest.

Everyone remembered the one that danced above the clouds.

Reflection

Real joy comes less from impressing others than from discovering what we were made to do.

Parable Fifty-Eight

The Ice Cream Bench

Every Friday after school, Mrs. Collins sat on the same park bench with two ice cream cones.

She always ate only one.

Eventually a curious boy asked,

"Who is the other one for?"

Mrs. Collins smiled.

"I never know."

Some Fridays it was a lonely child.

Some Fridays an exhausted mother.

Sometimes an elderly widower.

Sometimes a teenager who had just failed an exam.

Every week someone accepted the second cone.

One afternoon the boy returned carrying two cones himself.

Mrs. Collins grinned.

"For someone special?"

He nodded.

"I just haven't met them yet."

Reflection

Joy often arrives disguised as something we planned to share.

Parable Fifty-Nine

The Music Between the Notes

A famous pianist visited a small village.

The concert hall was filled long before sunset.

When the final piece ended, the audience rose in thunderous applause.

Among them sat a little boy taking his very first piano lesson.

As people slowly left, he remained in his seat.

Finally he walked onto the stage.

"Mister..."

"How do you play so beautifully?"

The pianist smiled.

"I don't."

The boy looked confused.

"You just did."

The old musician gently rested his hands upon the keys.

"I play the notes."

He waited.

"The music happens between them."

Years later, the boy became a composer.

People often praised the complexity of his music.

He always remembered the old pianist.

Life, he discovered, worked much the same way.

The happiest memories were rarely made of grand events.

They were made in the quiet spaces between them.

A walk after supper.

A shared smile.

Holding someone's hand without speaking.

Watching the first snowfall.

Listening to rain against the window.

The music had always been there.

He had simply learned to hear it.

Reflection

Joy is often found in the quiet moments we once hurried past.

Parable Sixty

The Birthday Candle

When little Ava turned eight, her grandmother gave her an unusual gift.

Not a toy.

Not a book.

Just a single white candle.

A note was tied around it.

Light this only when someone else needs hope more than you need light.

For years the candle remained untouched.

Then one evening, Ava's best friend lost her father.

The house felt unbearably dark.

Without saying very much, Ava carried the candle next door.

They lit it together.

Neither girl could explain why that tiny flame seemed to make the room gentler.

Many years later, when Ava herself became a grandmother, she gave another little girl a single white candle.

Along with the same handwritten note.

Reflection

Some gifts become most precious only after they have been given away.

The Ninth Path
The Path of
Faith



Parable Sixty-One

The Sparrow

Every morning, before opening his little bakery, Mr. Romano scattered a handful of crumbs outside his back door.

Soon sparrows appeared.

Then robins.

Then chickadees.

One winter morning his grandson asked,

"Grandpa..."

"Why do you always feed them first?"

Mr. Romano smiled.

"They remind me."

"Remind you of what?"

"That tomorrow has always arrived."

The boy looked at the tiny birds hopping through fresh snow.

"They don't seem worried."

"No."

"They simply greet the morning."

The bakery had difficult years.

Some winters were hard.

Some summers better.

But every dawn the crumbs were scattered.

And every dawn the birds arrived.

Long after Mr. Romano was gone, the new baker continued the same quiet tradition.

Customers thought it was simply kindness toward birds.

It was.

But it was also gratitude for another sunrise.

Reflection

Faith often begins by receiving today before worrying about tomorrow.

Parable Sixty-Two

The Bridge in the Fog

Dense fog covered the valley.

A young traveler reached a narrow bridge and stopped.

"I can't see the other side."

An old shepherd standing nearby smiled.

"You don't need to."

The traveler frowned.

"How can I cross if I cannot see where it ends?"

The shepherd stepped onto the bridge.

"Can you see the next plank?"

"Yes."

"Then take it."

One plank became another.

Another became another.

Halfway across, the fog began to lift.

The far shore had been there all along.

Reflection

Faith is seldom seeing the entire journey.

It is trusting the next faithful step.

Parable Sixty-Three

The Weaver

Visitors often admired Mrs. Sinclair's weaving.

The front of every tapestry was magnificent.

Mountains.

Gardens.

Birds.

Sunsets.

One afternoon a little boy walked behind the loom.

He gasped.

The back was filled with tangled knots.

Loose threads.

Crossed colors.

"It looks ruined!"

Mrs. Sinclair smiled.

"Come around."

From the front...

every knot had found its place.

Every thread belonged.

Years later, whenever life became confusing, that little boy remembered the back of the tapestry.

Perhaps, he thought...

we are not yet standing on the right side.

Reflection

Faith trusts that today's loose threads may become tomorrow's masterpiece.

Parable Sixty-Four

The Lantern in the Window

Every night before bed, Mrs. O'Connor placed a lantern in her front window.

She had done so for nearly fifty years.

One evening a visitor finally asked,

"Who are you expecting?"

She smiled.

"Someone who thinks no one is waiting for them."

The visitor laughed kindly.

"But no one ever comes."

Mrs. O'Connor looked toward the glowing light.

"Perhaps."

"But they know they could."

Years later, during a terrible snowstorm, a lost traveler noticed one small lantern shining through the darkness.

He knocked.

Mrs. O'Connor opened the door.

"I've been expecting someone."

She had been right.

She simply hadn't known who.

Reflection

Faith keeps the light burning, even before footsteps appear.

Parable Sixty-Five

The Candle Maker

At the edge of a quiet village lived an old woman named Elise who made candles.

Not ordinary candles.

She made candles for weddings.

For birthdays.

For Christmas.

For vigils.

For the first night in a new home.

For the final night beside someone who was dying.

One afternoon a young apprentice asked,

"Which candle is your favorite?"

Elise smiled.

"The one I haven't made yet."

The apprentice looked around the workshop.

Hundreds of candles stood on the shelves.

"Surely one of these is the most beautiful."

Elise shook her head.

"Beauty isn't what makes a candle important."

"What does?"

"The darkness it enters."

Years later, after Elise had passed away, her apprentice found a note hidden beneath the workbench.

It read:

**Never measure your light by how brightly you shine.
Measure it by how gently you help someone else see.**

Reflection

Faith is not about being noticed.

It is about quietly helping others find their way.

Parable Sixty-Six

The Gardener Who Waited

Every spring, Daniel planted flowers along the road into town.

Every spring, children ran ahead asking,

"When will they bloom?"

Daniel always answered,

"They already have."

The children laughed.

"No, they haven't!"

Daniel pointed toward the earth.

"They've begun."

One impatient boy dug up a bulb.

"It isn't doing anything."

Daniel carefully covered it again.

"It is."

"It is becoming."

Years passed.

That little boy became an architect.

Whenever a great project seemed to move too slowly, he smiled.

He remembered the buried bulbs.

Not everything beautiful announces its progress.

Reflection

Faith trusts the unseen work that is quietly taking place beneath the surface.

Parable Sixty-Seven

The Bell Ringer

For nearly sixty years, Mrs. Simmons rang the small bell outside the village school every morning.

Children rushed toward the sound.

Teachers checked their watches by it.

Travelers often smiled as they passed.

One morning, a visitor asked,

"Doesn't it become repetitive?"

Mrs. Simmons laughed.

"So does sunrise."

The visitor looked puzzled.

"You've rung that bell thousands of times."

She nodded.

"And every morning a child begins another day."

When she retired, the school board offered to replace the old hand bell with an electronic system.

The students objected.

They wanted the bell.

Not because it was louder.

Because it reminded them that someone had faithfully welcomed them every morning.

Reflection

Faithfulness is love repeated.

Parable Sixty-Eight

The Feather in the Bible

An old grandfather kept a single white feather inside his Bible.

His granddaughter noticed it every Sunday.

Finally she asked,

"Why is that there?"

He smiled.

"It reminds me."

"Of what?"

"That truth should make us lighter."

Years later, after he had gone home to God, she inherited the Bible.

The feather was still there.

Pressed gently between the pages.

Whenever life became heavy, she would open the book.

Sometimes she read.

Sometimes she simply held the feather.

Either way...

she always left lighter than she arrived.

Reflection

Faith is not meant to increase the weight we carry.

It is meant to help us carry life with greater hope.

The Tenth Path
The Path of
Love



Parable Sixty-Nine

The Old Coat

Every winter, Mr. Russo wore the same heavy wool coat.

It was patched at both elbows.

One pocket had been sewn three different times.

His grandchildren often begged him to buy a new one.

One snowy afternoon, they finally discovered why he hadn't.

He quietly removed the coat and wrapped it around a man shivering on a park bench.

As the family walked home, one grandson asked,

"But Grandpa...

what will you wear?"

Mr. Russo smiled.

"I've always found that generosity keeps me warmer than wool."

The next Christmas, without telling anyone, every grandchild donated a winter coat.

Some new.

Some gently used.

The tradition continued every year.

Long after the old coat had disappeared...

its warmth had not.

Reflection

Love is remembered long after the gift itself is gone.

Parable Seventy

The Dance

The community center hosted a dance every Friday evening.

Young couples filled the floor.

Laughter echoed from every corner.

Near the entrance sat an elderly man in a wheelchair.

Every week he watched.

One Friday a little girl walked over.

"Would you dance with me?"

The old man looked down at his motionless legs.

"I can't dance."

The girl smiled.

"I didn't ask about your legs."

She gently placed her hands in his.

Then she began moving her feet.

Slowly...

he moved his hands.

Soon they were laughing.

The music ended.

The entire room applauded.

As they returned to his chair, the little girl whispered,

"You were wrong."

The old man smiled.

"I suppose I was."

Reflection

Love rarely asks what is impossible.

It begins with what is still possible.

Parable Seventy-One

The Quilt of Names

When Mrs. Harper turned eighty, her children decided to make her a quilt.

Instead of patterns...

they stitched names.

Every square contained the name of someone whose life she had quietly touched.

Former students.

Neighbors.

A nurse.

A bus driver.

A lonely widow.

The mail carrier.

A child she had once comforted after falling from a bicycle.

There were hundreds.

When they unfolded the finished quilt, Mrs. Harper wept.

"I don't remember doing anything extraordinary."

Her daughter kissed her forehead.

"You didn't."

"You simply loved ordinary people extraordinarily well."

Reflection

Love leaves a trail of names, not monuments.

Parable Seventy-Two

The Empty Birdhouse

Every spring, Mr. Ellis cleaned the old birdhouse hanging from the maple tree.

Some years birds arrived.

Some years they did not.

Still...

he cleaned it.

His grandson finally asked,

"Why bother if no one comes?"

Mr. Ellis smiled.

"Hospitality begins before the guest arrives."

The following spring, bluebirds built a nest.

The children watched tiny eggs hatch.

Weeks later, the young birds took flight.

The birdhouse stood empty once again.

Mr. Ellis quietly cleaned it.

His grandson picked up the little brush.

"I'll do it this time."

Reflection

Love prepares a welcome long before it receives one.

Parable Seventy-Three

The Last Rose

Mrs. Bennett's garden was famous throughout the neighborhood.

Every June it exploded with color.

People often stopped just to admire it.

But every autumn, when only one rose remained in bloom, Mrs. Bennett never left it in her garden.

She carefully cut the final blossom.

Then she walked.

Sometimes it went to the woman who lived alone at the end of the street.

Sometimes to a nurse finishing a long shift.

Sometimes to a child recovering from an illness.

One chilly October afternoon, a little girl asked,

"Don't you want to keep your last flower?"

Mrs. Bennett smiled.

"I already have."

The girl looked around.

"But it's gone."

Mrs. Bennett gently touched the child's shoulder.

"No."

"It's simply blooming somewhere else."

Years later, that little girl planted roses of her own.

Every autumn...

one always disappeared.

Reflection

Love never truly loses what it gives away.

Parable Seventy-Four

The Blanket

A terrible winter storm swept through the town.

The community center opened its doors to anyone who needed warmth.

Volunteers hurried about carrying soup, coffee, and blankets.

Late that evening, a young volunteer noticed an elderly man sleeping peacefully.

Without hesitation, she quietly placed her own blanket over him.

She shivered for the rest of the night.

The next morning someone asked,

"Weren't you cold?"

She smiled.

"A little."

"Was it worth it?"

She looked toward the sleeping man.

"I slept warmly enough."

Years later, when people asked why she volunteered so often, she never mentioned awards or recognition.

She remembered only one cold night...

and one warm heart.

Reflection

Love is willing to borrow a little discomfort so someone else may find rest.

Parable Seventy-Five

The Empty Swing

Every afternoon after school, the playground filled with children.

Except one swing.

No one used it.

It had become known as the "quiet swing."

If someone looked lonely...

another child quietly invited them there.

No questions.

No speeches.

Just two people swinging gently beside one another.

One spring, a teacher asked who had started the tradition.

No one knew.

One child thought it had always existed.

Another believed an older brother had begun it years before.

The mystery remained.

The swing eventually needed replacing.

The town installed a brand-new one.

Beside it stood a tiny plaque.

Leave no one to swing alone.

Reflection

Love often begins with simply noticing who has been left behind.

Parable Seventy-Six

The Family Photograph

Every Christmas the Wilson family gathered for a photograph.

Year after year, the pictures filled the hallway wall.

One afternoon, their youngest grandson looked closely.

"Grandpa..."

"Who's that man?"

No one recognized him.

They searched old memories.

Finally Grandma laughed.

"He wasn't family."

"He was a delivery driver whose truck broke down during the snowstorm."

"So why is he in the picture?"

"He had nowhere else to spend Christmas."

The family stood quietly.

Decades later...

no one remembered what gifts had been opened that year.

Everyone remembered the stranger in the photograph.

Reflection

Love has a remarkable way of turning strangers into memories.

Parable Seventy-Seven

The Clay Bird

A little boy carefully molded a bird from clay.

Its wings were uneven.

Its beak crooked.

Its tail far too short.

Embarrassed, he tried to throw it away.

His grandmother gently stopped him.

"Why?"

"It's ugly."

She held it in her hands for a long moment.

Then she placed it on the windowsill.

Sunlight caught its rough edges.

For years it remained there.

Visitors often admired it.

"Did your grandson make that?"

She always smiled proudly.

When the boy grew into a man, he visited one afternoon.

The little bird was still there.

"I can't believe you kept it."

She looked at him with kind eyes.

"My dear...

I never loved it because it was perfect."

"I loved it because it came from you."

Reflection

Grace sees the heart behind the gift.

Parable Seventy-Eight

The Raincoat

One rainy afternoon, a teacher noticed a little boy walking home without a coat.

The following morning, an extra raincoat quietly appeared on the classroom hook.

No note.

No announcement.

No explanation.

The boy wore it every rainy day for the rest of the year.

Years later, after becoming a teacher himself, he purchased one extra raincoat every September.

No one ever knew where it came from.

Except the children who quietly needed it.

Reflection

Grace often arrives without introducing itself.

Parable Seventy-Nine

The Marble

Tommy treasured one beautiful blue marble.

It shimmered in the sunlight.

He carried it everywhere.

One afternoon he met a little girl crying beside the sidewalk.

She had lost hers.

Without thinking very long, Tommy placed his own blue marble into her hand.

She smiled immediately.

He walked home with empty pockets.

That evening his father asked,

"Do you miss it?"

Tommy thought for a moment.

"No."

"I think I traded it for something better."

Reflection

Grace discovers that some treasures become more valuable only after we let them go.

Parable Eighty

The Open Gate

At the edge of the village stood a beautiful garden surrounded by an old stone wall.

The gate was never locked.

Travelers often wandered inside.

Some rested.

Some prayed.

Some simply sat beneath the shade of an ancient maple tree.

One visitor asked the gardener,

"Aren't you afraid someone might damage your flowers?"

The gardener smiled.

"If I locked the gate to keep out the few who might harm them...

I would also keep out the many who need them."

Years later, after the gardener had died, the villagers replaced the old wooden gate.

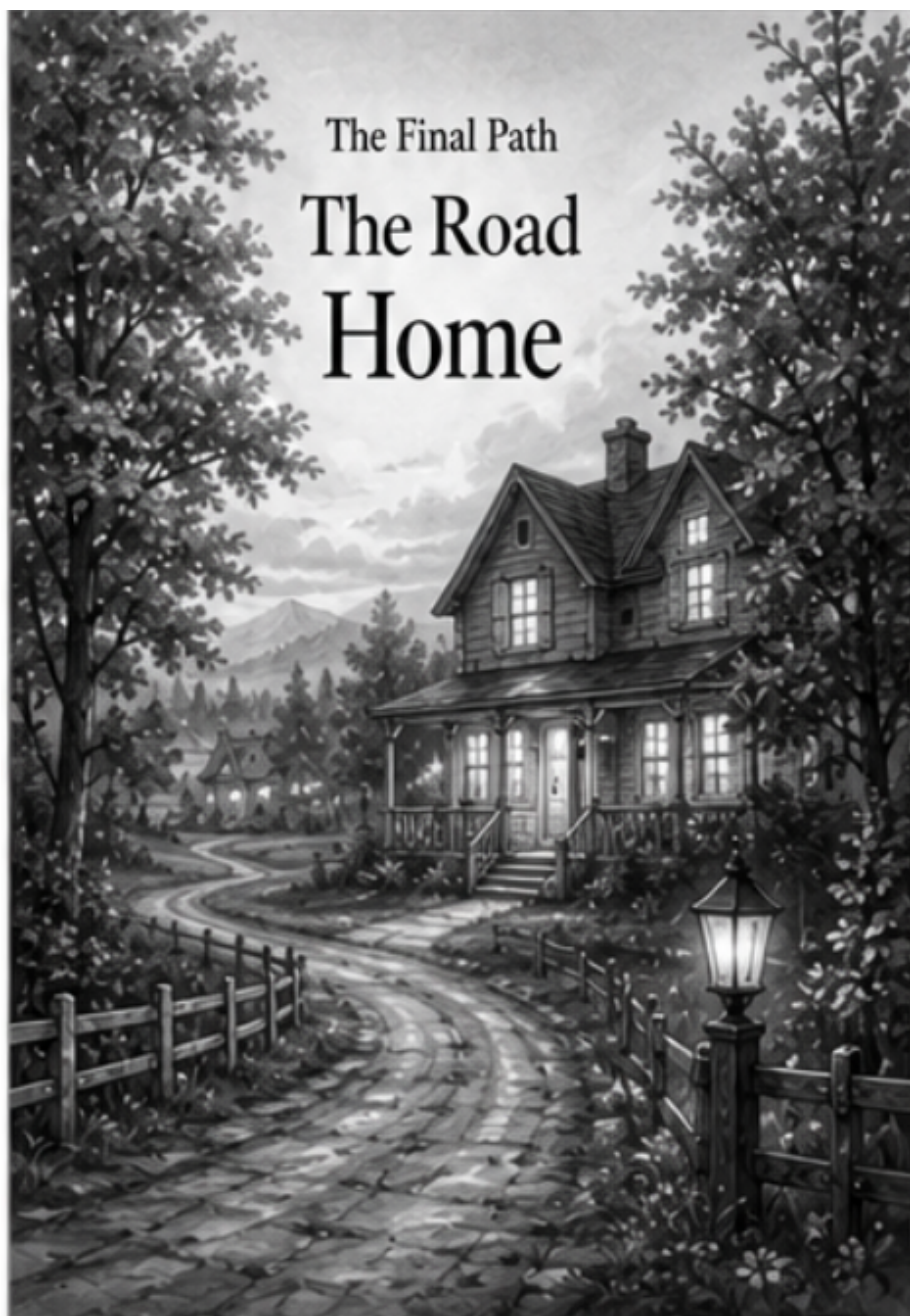
The first thing they did...

was remove the lock.

Reflection

Grace always leaves the gate open a little wider than fear thinks is wise.

The Final Path
The Road
Home



Parable Eighty-One

The Front Porch Light

Every evening at exactly sunset, Mrs. Walker stepped onto her front porch and switched on a single light.

The neighbors joked that she was always the first.

Even in summer, when darkness would not arrive for hours.

Even in winter storms.

Even when no one seemed to be outside.

One afternoon her grandson asked,

"Grandma, why do you turn it on so early?"

She smiled.

"Because someone may already be looking for it."

Years passed.

Children grew up.

Families moved away.

New neighbors arrived.

Still, the porch light appeared every evening.

Then one icy December night a teenager became lost while walking home through a blizzard.

Street signs disappeared beneath the snow.

The wind erased every familiar landmark.

Just as panic began to settle in...

he saw a warm light glowing from the porch.

Mrs. Walker opened the door before he knocked.

"I thought someone might need it tonight."

The young man never forgot that light.

Years later, after buying his own home, he installed a lamp on his porch.

His children assumed it was simply decorative.

He smiled each evening as he switched it on.

"No," he whispered.

"It is for whoever hasn't found home yet."

Reflection

The smallest light often means the most to someone walking through darkness.

Parable Eighty-Two

The Lost Dog

One autumn afternoon, posters appeared throughout the town.

LOST DOG

Children searched after school.

Cyclists looked down every alley.

Neighbors called softly through wooded trails.

For three days no one found him.

On the fourth morning, old Mrs. Romano placed a bowl of water and another of food outside her gate.

She sat quietly on her porch.

She did not whistle.

She did not chase.

She simply waited.

Just before sunset, a frightened little dog crept cautiously toward the bowls.

He ate.

Drank.

Then slowly rested his head against her knee.

When the grateful family arrived a short time later, the youngest child asked,

"How did you find him?"

Mrs. Romano smiled.

"I didn't."

"I simply made sure that if he was looking for kindness...
he would know where to stop."

Reflection

Sometimes the surest way to help the lost is simply to become
a safe place.

Parable Eighty-Three

The Old Compass

When Grandpa Samuel died, his grandchildren gathered to divide his belongings.

There were books.

Fishing rods.

Old photographs.

A weathered leather journal.

And a brass compass.

The oldest grandson picked it up.

"It still works."

His grandmother smiled.

"It always did."

"Did Grandpa use it often?"

She nodded.

"Every difficult decision."

The children looked surprised.

"You mean when he went hiking?"

"No."

"When someone needed forgiving."

"When work became uncertain."

"When he was afraid."

"He would hold the compass for a moment."

"And then?"

"He would ask himself one question."

"What is true?"

Years later, the compass sat upon another desk.

Still pointing north.

Still asking the same quiet question.

Reflection

The heart needs a true direction even more than the feet do.

Parable Eighty-Four

The Welcome Mat

In front of an ordinary little house lay an unusual welcome mat.

Instead of saying **WELCOME**, it simply read:

We're Glad You're Here.

People smiled when they noticed it.

Delivery drivers.

Neighbors.

Children.

Friends.

One rainy afternoon, a little girl asked the homeowner,

"Why doesn't your mat say Welcome like everyone else's?"

He smiled.

"Because 'Welcome' is what we say to visitors."

"And?"

"'We're glad you're here' is what we say to people who belong."

The little girl thought about those words for many years.

As an adult, she placed the same message outside her own front door.

Many guests noticed it.

A few quietly wiped away tears.

Reflection

Home is not where people are merely admitted.

It is where they know they belong.

Parable Eighty-Five

The Returning Swallows

Every spring, the swallows returned to the old barn.

The children watched excitedly as they rebuilt the same little nests beneath the rafters.

One year, a violent storm damaged the roof.

The nests were destroyed.

The birds circled overhead for hours.

The children became sad.

"They won't come back."

Old Mr. Ellis smiled.

"Oh, I think they will."

"But the nests are gone."

"The home wasn't the nest."

"It was this place."

The next morning, the swallows returned carrying tiny twigs.

By summer, the barn was once again filled with birdsong.

Reflection

Home is not something we lose because the walls have changed.

It is something we rebuild with hope.

Parable Eighty-Six

The Suitcase

Every vacation, Grandpa packed one small, worn suitcase.

His grandchildren teased him.

"Why don't you buy a bigger one?"

He smiled.

"I've discovered something."

"What?"

"The more room I leave...

the more wonderful things I bring home."

Shells.

Postcards.

A child's drawing.

A smooth stone from a mountain trail.

A recipe from a village bakery.

Every object carried a memory.

Years later, after Grandpa was gone, his granddaughter packed for her own journey.

She reached for a much larger suitcase.

Then she stopped.

She smiled.

And chose the old one instead.

Reflection

A grateful heart always leaves room for unexpected gifts.

Parable Eighty-Seven

The Window Seat

Mrs. Harper always chose the window seat on the train.

Not because she loved the scenery.

Because she loved the people.

Every station brought new faces.

Children waving.

Friends embracing.

Travelers hurrying.

Soldiers returning.

Grandparents waiting.

One day a young woman asked,

"Don't you ever get tired of watching strangers?"

Mrs. Harper smiled.

"They stop being strangers if you watch long enough."

Years later, that young woman found herself sitting by another window.

She smiled at people she had never met.

Several smiled back.

Reflection

The world becomes smaller each time we remember that every stranger has a story.

Parable Eighty-Eight

The Small Bell

At the entrance to a tiny country inn hung a brass bell.

Every departing guest rang it once.

One child finally asked,

"What is the bell for?"

The innkeeper smiled.

"So we remember to be thankful."

"For what?"

"For everyone who trusted us enough to stay."

Many years later, the child opened a café in another town.

Above the door hung a little brass bell.

Each evening, after locking up, she rang it once.

Not because the day had been profitable.

But because it had been shared.

Reflection

Gratitude quietly turns ordinary places into homes.

Parable Eighty-Nine

The Doorbell

Every afternoon at precisely four o'clock, Mrs. Campbell baked something.

Sometimes bread.

Sometimes cookies.

Sometimes blueberry muffins.

The wonderful smell drifted down the street.

Yet what the neighbors remembered most was not the baking.

It was the doorbell.

Almost every day, Mrs. Campbell rang someone else's.

An elderly widower.

A family with a newborn baby.

A teenager studying for exams.

A nurse just home from a night shift.

She never stayed long.

She simply handed over the warm plate.

Smiled.

And walked home.

One afternoon her grandson asked,

"Grandma, why don't you wait for people to thank you?"

She laughed.

"Oh, they already have."

"They have?"

"Every smile is a thank-you."

Years later, after Mrs. Campbell had gone home to God, something remarkable happened.

At exactly four o'clock...

doorbells all over the neighborhood began ringing.

Reflection

Love has a beautiful habit of teaching itself to others.

Parable Ninety

The Bench at the Station

There was a bench at the train station that no one seemed to own.

Travelers rested there.

Children tied their shoes there.

Workers ate their lunches there.

One rainy morning, a man noticed an elderly woman sitting alone, quietly crying.

He sat beside her.

Neither spoke for several minutes.

Finally she whispered,

"My husband and I used to meet here every Friday."

"I wasn't sure I could come back."

The man simply nodded.

When her train arrived, she stood.

"Thank you."

"I don't think you said ten words."

He smiled.

"It sounded like you needed company more than conversation."

Years later, someone placed a small plaque on the bench.

It read:

Sit Beside Someone.

No names.

No explanation.

None was needed.

Reflection

Sometimes the greatest comfort comes from a presence rather than a solution.

Parable Ninety-One

The Empty Frame

A famous photographer filled his studio with magnificent pictures.

Mountains.

Forests.

Children laughing.

Old hands holding young ones.

In the center of the wall hung one empty frame.

Visitors always asked about it.

"When will you put a picture there?"

The photographer smiled.

"I'm waiting."

"For what?"

"The most beautiful photograph I'll ever take."

Years passed.

One afternoon his granddaughter walked into the studio carrying her newborn son.

The photographer lifted the child gently into his arms.

He looked at the empty frame.

Then quietly removed it from the wall.

He never placed a photograph inside.

Instead, he carried it home.

Some moments, he realized...

should never be confined by glass.

Reflection

The greatest treasures are often carried in the heart rather than displayed on the wall.

Parable Ninety-Two

The Key

When Mr. Peterson retired after forty-five years as caretaker of the town hall, the mayor presented him with a large golden key.

"It doesn't open anything," the mayor admitted.

"It simply reminds us of everything you opened."

Mr. Peterson looked puzzled.

"I only unlocked doors."

The mayor smiled.

"You opened classrooms."

"You opened wedding halls."

"You opened community meetings."

"You opened concerts."

"You opened hope."

Mr. Peterson wiped away a tear.

For the first time in his life...

he realized what his ordinary work had really meant.

Reflection

Every ordinary task carries an extraordinary purpose when done with love.

Parable Ninety-Three

The Path Through the Snow

A heavy snowfall covered the park overnight.

By morning there wasn't a single footprint anywhere.

A little girl stood at the entrance.

"It looks too beautiful to walk on."

Her grandfather smiled.

"So someone must be first."

Together they stepped into the untouched snow.

Behind them, others followed.

By afternoon a winding path stretched through the entire park.

The little girl looked back.

"We made the trail."

Her grandfather nodded.

"So others wouldn't have to wonder where to begin."

Reflection

Every worthwhile journey begins with someone willing to make the first footprints.

Parable Ninety-Four

The Name Tag

At every community supper, volunteers wore simple paper name tags.

One evening a little boy noticed that Mrs. Green had written something unusual beneath her name.

It said:

Ask Me About My Garden.

Another volunteer had written:

Ask Me About My Grandchildren.

Another:

Ask Me About My Dog.

People who had never met suddenly found themselves talking.

Laughing.

Sharing stories.

The room grew louder with conversation.

Warmer somehow.

When the evening ended, the little boy asked why everyone had done it.

Mrs. Green smiled.

"Because every heart hopes someone will ask."

Years later, the boy became a physician.

He never forgot that lesson.

Before discussing symptoms, he often asked,

"What brings you joy these days?"

His patients frequently smiled before answering.

Sometimes...

their healing had already begun.

Reflection

To ask with genuine interest is one of the quietest forms of love.

Parable Ninety-Five

The Pocket Watch

Grandfather James carried the same silver pocket watch every day for more than fifty years.

Every evening, just before bed, he wound it carefully.

His grandson finally asked,

"Grandpa, why don't you buy one that winds itself?"

The old man smiled.

"I could."

"Then why don't you?"

He opened the watch and held it in the boy's hand.

"Because every evening it reminds me of something."

"What?"

"That the things we love deserve our attention."

Years later, after the watch had stopped forever, the grandson found himself doing something very similar.

Not with a watch.

With people.

He learned to put away his phone.

To look into someone's eyes.

To truly listen.

The watch had never really been teaching him about time.

It had been teaching him about presence.

Reflection

The greatest gift we can give another person is our undivided attention.

Parable Ninety-Six

The Worn Bible

Every morning before sunrise, Mrs. Matthews sat beside the same kitchen window with her old Bible.

Its cover was cracked.

Several pages were loose.

The margins were filled with tiny notes.

Pressed flowers rested between many chapters.

One day her granddaughter asked,

"Grandma, why don't you buy a new one?"

Mrs. Matthews gently closed the book.

"I have."

The little girl looked puzzled.

"But you still read this one."

Mrs. Matthews smiled.

"The new one has clean pages."

"This one has a faithful friend."

Years later, after her grandmother had gone home to God, the granddaughter inherited the old Bible.

She discovered tiny notes beside many verses.

Beside one passage was written:

Prayed for your father today.

Beside another:

God answered this on Tuesday.

Beside another:

Don't give up yet.

The Bible had become more than a book.

It had become a conversation spanning generations.

Reflection

Faith grows stronger when it remembers where grace has already been found.

Parable Ninety-Seven

The Empty Bird Feeder

Every winter, Mr. Wallace filled the bird feeder outside his kitchen window.

One particularly harsh February morning, he noticed it had become empty.

He reached for his coat.

His grandson stopped him.

"They'll survive until tomorrow."

Mr. Wallace looked toward the snow-covered yard.

"They probably will."

"So why go now?"

He smiled.

"Because kindness loses something whenever it becomes tomorrow's job."

The two walked together through the deep snow.

Within minutes, the feeder was alive with cardinals, sparrows, and chickadees.

The boy stood silently watching them.

Years later, whenever he caught himself saying, *I'll do it later*, he remembered the hungry birds.

Reflection

Love usually knows the right time.

It calls it today.

Parable Ninety-Eight

The Shoes

A cobbler spent his life repairing shoes.

One afternoon, a wealthy traveler entered his little shop.

"I don't understand your prices," the traveler said.

"You charge less than you're worth."

The cobbler smiled.

"I've often wondered about that."

"So why not charge more?"

The old man gently held up a child's tiny boot.

"Because I have never met a child whose feet deserved less care because their parents had less money."

The traveler was quiet.

Before leaving, he placed extra money upon the counter.

The cobbler pushed it gently back.

"If you'd like to help..."

He pointed toward a shelf.

"There are three pairs waiting for children who cannot pay."

The traveler nodded.

He purchased all three.

When he returned home, he quietly started a similar shelf in his own business.

Reflection

Justice asks what people deserve.

Love asks what people need.

Parable Ninety-Nine

The Sunrise

Every morning, before the rest of the house awakened, Mrs. Ellis carried her tea onto the back porch.

She watched the sunrise.

Without fail.

Her children never understood.

"It looks the same every day."

She smiled.

"Does it?"

One spring morning she invited her granddaughter to join her.

They sat together without speaking.

As the first light reached the tops of the trees, birds began singing.

A rabbit crossed the dew-covered grass.

The breeze carried the scent of lilacs.

The little girl whispered,

"I've never noticed all this before."

Mrs. Ellis smiled.

"It was always here."

Years later, when life became busy and noisy, that little girl—now a grandmother herself—rose before dawn.

Not because she had to.

Because she remembered.

Reflection

Wonder has been waiting for us every morning.

Sometimes we simply sleep through it.

Parable One Hundred

The Whisper

An old storyteller lived in a cottage at the edge of the woods.

People came from everywhere to hear him.

Children sat cross-legged on the floor.

Parents leaned against the walls.

Grandparents smiled from rocking chairs.

He never told the same story twice.

Yet every story somehow left people kinder than when they had arrived.

One evening, after finishing his hundredth tale, a little girl raised her hand.

"Which story is your favorite?"

The old storyteller looked around the room.

At the faces.

The smiles.

The quiet tears.

Then he gently closed his book.

"The next one."

The children looked puzzled.

"But you haven't written it yet."

He smiled.

"Oh..."

"I have finished writing."

Now it is your turn.

The room became very still.

He walked to the window and opened it.

The evening breeze carried the fragrance of pine trees and fresh rain.

Somewhere in the distance, a church bell rang.

A dog barked.

Someone laughed.

The old storyteller whispered,

"Listen carefully."

The children strained to hear.

"What is it?"

He smiled.

"The world..."

"...is asking for another parable."

The little girl looked down at her hands.

"What if I don't know how to write one?"

The old storyteller gently took one of her hands in his own.

"You already do."

"Smile at someone who expects to be ignored."

"Forgive someone who has forgotten how to ask."

"Carry hope into a room that has grown dark."

"Sit beside the lonely."

"Feed the hungry."

"Welcome the stranger."

"Tell the truth kindly."

"Keep your promises."

"Plant trees whose shade you will never enjoy."

"Leave every place gentler than you found it."

He placed the little book into her hands.

It was completely blank.

She looked up in surprise.

"There are no stories."

He smiled.

"There never were."

"They were only waiting..."

"...for someone to live them."

The old storyteller quietly walked outside.

No one noticed exactly when he disappeared.

But from that day forward, strange things began happening.

A lonely neighbor found a friend.

A hungry child received a warm meal.

A forgotten park filled with flowers.

An old argument ended.

A porch light stayed on.

An extra chair was set at the table.

A stranger became family.

No newspaper reported these things.

No monument was ever built.

The world simply became a little brighter.

One ordinary day at a time.

And if you look very carefully...

you may still find that little blank book.

It appears whenever someone chooses love instead of fear.

Kindness instead of indifference.

Hope instead of despair.

Its pages are never full.

Because every sunrise begins another chapter.

Reflection

The finest parables are not written with ink.

They are written with lives.

Epilogue

If these stories have remained only on these pages, then they are unfinished.

A parable reaches its true ending only when someone carries it into the ordinary moments of life.

When a child is encouraged.

When a neighbor is welcomed.

When forgiveness is offered before it is requested.

When gratitude is spoken aloud.

When hope is chosen, even on difficult days.

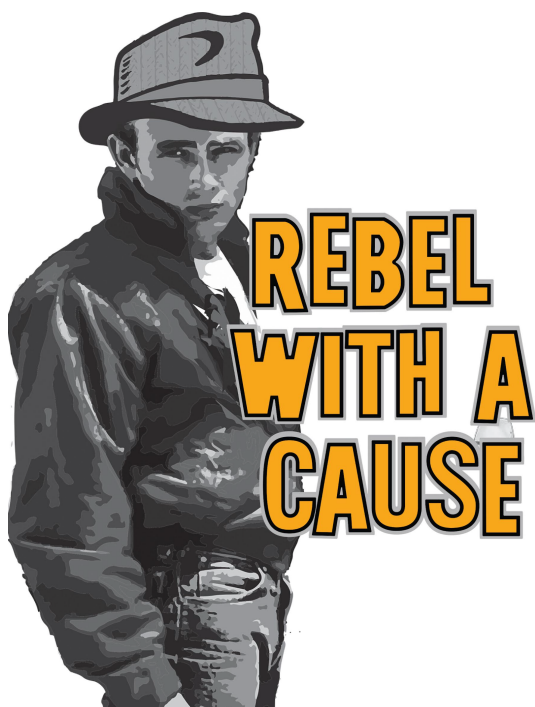
Perhaps that has always been the quiet purpose of every good story—not merely to entertain us, but to help us recognize the countless opportunities we have to become authors of goodness ourselves.

Thank you for walking these pages.

May you leave them with gentler eyes, a more generous heart, and the quiet courage to write the next parable—one ordinary day at a time.

And may the whisper you hear most often be this:

The world still needs your story.



rossG3.ca