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### **The spirit in the soil**

Long before anyone planted their roots in this land, this place was a forest. Plants and animals flourished, the roots tangled in rich soil, trees grew high into the sky, and in the forest lived a spirit. A guardian thrived on the harmony from the forest. The spirit's strength came from the harmony of the forest. From the sunlight shining on the forest to the animals that lived in peace. However, as time passed morals began to build more and more across the guardian's land. Trees were cut, animals ran out of their homes, and in their places, abodes were built. This caused the guardian to become weakened but even still it stayed where it could, unwilling to abandon the place it called home. As mortals moved into the abodes, the guardian had an idea. If it could get the attention of someone, maybe they could help restore the forest to its original state and help restore what's been lost.

Two full moons later on a sunny day, when the sun marked a new age of sanctuaries, a man and a woman moved into the abode the spirit was behind. The man and woman were so excited to be there, with space for children, family, friends, and even a small backyard. As the woman went to finish unpacking, the man went out onto the second floor back porch and looked around. He realized that most of the backyard was covered in trees, but he also was comforted by the peace and stillness of the trees and watched them, so he didn't mind. As he was looking around outside, that's when the spirit saw him. The spirit began to grow excited thinking maybe this could be his chance to get someone's attention and get help repairing the land to its former glory. As the man went back inside, the spirit started to come up with ways to get the attention of the new homeowners before he ran out of energy himself.

His first attempt came on a windy autumn evening. The man often came out to the back porch, so the spirit came up with a way to get his attention when he came out. As the man sat outside reading a book, the spirit tried to carry his voice along the wind uttering a cry for help and asking if the man could hear him. For a moment the man looked up, and the spirit looked back at him from the trees, thinking maybe he did it but then the man shivered and went back inside to hide from the cold. The spirit was disappointed and was running out of energy to use, but he was determined to try as hard as he could no matter what.

His second attempt was a lot bolder. It happened during sunset in early spring. One day the man and woman were outside on the back porch eating. The woman thought it was a beautiful sunset and wanted to eat outside to experience it more. While they were talking and enjoying their time

together, the spirit bent and shifted the light in the backyard causing shadows to form that didn't belong. Silhouettes of trees that had been cut down and shapes of deer and foxes moved throughout the backyard. The man paused and for a moment was unsettled by the patterns, confused by what was going on and how it was happening. The women, on the other hand, thought it was just a once in a lifetime experience caused by the tricks of the sun and told him that it was just that and that they were lucky to see it. The man agreed but was still confused more by the shadows of the animals. As they finished their food and the women went inside to tell her friends about it, the man looked back one more time to see the shadows gone. As he looked towards the trees, what he couldn't see was the spirit in front of him, looking right back at him with a bittersweet smile on his face.

After his second attempt, the spirit was exhausted using most of his remaining power on it. He was afraid that he wouldn't get to see his home at its best again but wasn't ready to give up yet. He couldn't do much because of his lack of energy but he realized that maybe he wouldn't have to. He called out to the remaining animals in the area. There weren't many left but birds, spiders, and crickets came to his call. He begged them to help him carry his message to the mortals as a last act. The animals knew the spirit after so much time around him, so they agreed with no hesitation. The spiders spun webs across the porch and windows, making complex patterns in hopes of catching the man's eye, birds would appear and sing at random times, making calls for help, and crickets would make a rhythm, echoing the spirit's plea. While the man and women didn't fully pay any attention, just brushing it off as animals being animals, the man did seem to notice sometimes that something wasn't natural but would brush it off as him just being paranoid.

With the spirit's last idea failing like the rest, his voice faded and couldn't move much anymore, however the spirit smiled. He smiled because he knew there was a chance. A chance that the man and other mortals like him would notice the spirit's signs and help. So, to preserve the spirit's last bit of energy, he planned to sleep. To stay dormant until he felt the power of the forest return to him. Before he did that though, he asked the animals to remain as they are now. To keep trying to get people's attention so that perhaps one day, someone would pause long enough to see the patterns as what they really are, messages. With that, the spirit laid on the ground between the trees that remained and looked up into the sky seeing faint images of what his home used to be. He closed his eyes, ready to wake up to see that once more.

Till this day people have come and go from this sanctuary, never knowing what's just outside of it. A spirit that lays silent and still, biding its time till he can awake to see his home reborn. The tree's rising to brand new heights, animals running all throughout the forest, and plants bathing in the sunlight flourishing in their brand-new home. There the spirit lays holding onto hope and dreaming that one day his voice will be heard.

