The Giving Garden

A fable by Martha Attridge Bufton

On an early spring day, a man arrived in a land full of light and warmth and rich soil. "This looks like a fine place to live, " he thought to himself. "I will find a house and plant a garden." He bought a small cottage at the edge of the village and began to settle in.

A week later, just as he was preparing to begin work on the garden, he was visited by the old woman who lived down the way. "Good day neighbour," he said. "What a fine day it is today for planting." But his neighbour shook her head. "Oh no sir, do not waste your time," she said. "I no longer plant a garden for this is a wicked land and thieves will steal my vegetables before I will be able to eat them."

But the man was not so sure. "People can only steal that which is not freely given," he thought and went ahead with his plans. First, he tilled the tiny plot, turning over the soil to let in fresh air and rid it of weeds. Then he used his hoe to make rows, one for potatoes, one for carrots, and one for beans. Finally, he carefully placed the seed in each row, covered it with earth, and sprinkled it with water.

All summer long he tended the plants and they grew strong. Then one fine evening he knew that the crop was ready for harvest. He placed something at the end of one row and went to bed.

That night a poor and desperate child, who had been watching the man labour all summer, came to take everything in the garden. As she was about to sneak away with her arms full, she stumbled. Looking down, she could make out a small sign at her feet and by the glow of the bright moon, she read, " You cannot steal these vegetables for I have planted them for you."

When the man went to the garden the next morning, he found a neat pile of potatoes, carrots, and beans, not the entire crop but just enough so that he would not go hungry that year. He smiled.

Be hopeful and give freely. The rewards are priceless.