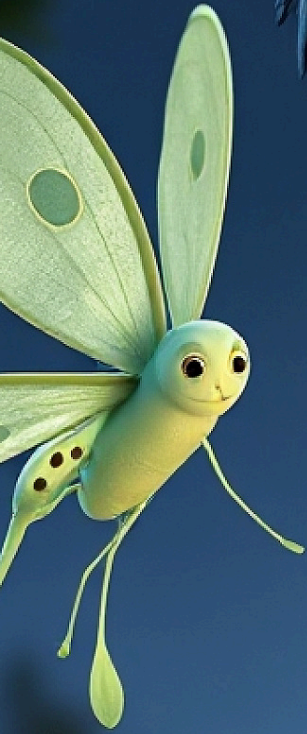


The Boy and the Moth Garden



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Boy and the Moth Garden

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL



In a small house at the edge of town lived a boy with warm brown skin and tousled black hair. He had round dark brown eyes and freckles across his nose. Every evening, when the sun dipped low, he sat on his porch and watched the sky turn from blue to purple to black. While other children were inside, he noticed tiny wings fluttering in the dark. "Who are you?" he whispered, but the night was silent.



One evening, the boy found a packet of seeds in his mother's shed. The picture on the packet showed white flowers that bloomed at night. "Moonflowers," he read slowly. His gap-toothed smile grew wide. He pulled on his mud-stained sneakers and grabbed his small canvas satchel. "I will make a garden for the night," he said. "A special garden for the creatures no one sees."



The boy chose a quiet corner of the yard, away from the porch light. He knelt in the soft dirt with his trowel, his blue shirt sleeves rolled up. He planted the seeds in neat rows, patting the soil gently. "Grow big and strong," he told them. "The night flyers are waiting." Every evening after that, he watered the garden and watched. But for many days, nothing happened. The dirt stayed brown and bare.



Then one evening, tiny green shoots pushed through the soil. The boy clapped his hands. "You did it!" he cheered. He tended the plants every day, pulling weeds and whispering encouragement. His olive-green shorts grew muddy at the knees. Slowly, leaves unfurled and buds appeared. The boy waited patiently, even when the other children ran off to play. He knew something wonderful was coming.



At last, on a warm night with a full moon, the first flower opened. It was pale and glowing, like a tiny lantern. The boy gasped. The petals shimmered softly in the moonlight. One by one, more flowers bloomed, until the whole garden glowed with a gentle light. "It's beautiful," he whispered. He sat very still, his heart thumping, and waited to see who would come.



The first visitor was a luna moth. Her wings were pale mint-green with long sweeping tails and soft yellow eyespots. A faint silver shimmer traced the edges of her wings. She fluttered down and rested on a glowing flower. The boy held his breath. "Hello," he said softly. The moth waved her feathery antennae and sipped nectar. She seemed to smile. Then she lifted off and circled the garden, as if checking every bloom.



More moths arrived, drawn by the glow. Small brown ones, grey ones, and one with pink and yellow wings. They fluttered and danced among the flowers. The boy watched, delighted. "You're all welcome here," he said. The luna moth led them to the sweetest blooms. She seemed calm and graceful, showing the others where to find food. The garden was alive with tiny, silent wings.



Then a tiny light blinked on and off. The boy leaned closer. It was a firefly, thumb-sized and quick, with a glossy black body and a soft orange-red head. Her tail glowed golden-green, pulsing like a heartbeat. "You light the way!" the boy laughed. The firefly zipped along the garden paths, guiding a new moth to a flower. She seemed playful and cheerful, and the boy felt happy.



As the night grew deeper, an old moth landed on the boy's knee. He was large, with dusty brown wings that had worn, tattered edges. His amber eyes were gentle, and thick grey fuzz covered his back. He carried a tiny curled leaf like a walking stick. "You made this?" the old moth asked in a crackly voice. The boy nodded. "For you," he said. "For all of you."



The old moth, Grandpa Moth, told the boy which flowers the night flyers needed most. "We love the white ones that glow," he said, tapping his leaf stick. "And the ones with long tubes for our tongues." The boy listened carefully. He had noticed that the moths liked the moonflowers best. "I'll plant more," he promised. "I'll make it a home for every little night flyer." The old moth nodded wisely and settled on a leaf.



The next evening, the boy brought new seeds. He planted evening primrose and honeysuckle, flowers that opened at dusk. The firefly lit the way as he dug. The luna moth floated above, as if approving. "This will be a peaceful home," the boy said. He worked until the moon was high, his small hands covered in soil. He felt proud and happy, knowing he was helping creatures that most people never even notice.



Word spread among the night creatures. More moths came, and beetles and a sleepy brown bat. The boy greeted each one. "Welcome to the moth garden," he said. The firefly pulsed her light, and the luna moth led the newcomers to the best flowers. The old moth sat on a stone, watching with kind amber eyes. The garden hummed with quiet life. The boy felt like the luckiest boy in the world.



One night, a cold wind blew. The boy worried about his tiny friends. He built a small shelter from leaves and twigs, a cozy place to rest. The moths huddled inside, safe and warm. "Thank you," whispered the luna moth. The boy smiled. "Everyone needs a home," he said. He realized that these quiet visitors were just as important as the busy bees of daytime. They worked hard, too, pollinating flowers in the dark.



From that night on, the boy tended his garden every evening. He watched the moths and fireflies and beetles. He learned their names and habits. His freckled face glowed with joy. "You don't have to be big or loud to be important," he told his mother. She hugged him tight. The garden became a peaceful home for every little night flyer. And the boy felt happy, knowing he had helped creatures that many people never even notice.



The boy grew older, but he never forgot his moth garden. Other children came to see it. He showed them the glowing flowers and the tiny wings. "Look closely," he said. "The night is full of wonders." The luna moth still visited, graceful and shy. The firefly still lit the paths. And Grandpa Moth still told stories on his leaf walking stick. The garden was a home, and the boy was its keeper.



One night, the boy sat in his garden and looked up at the stars. He thought about all the creatures that come out when the world is quiet. They were small and unnoticed, but they mattered. "Thank you," he whispered to the night. A moth landed on his shoulder. He smiled his gap-toothed smile. The garden glowed softly, a little patch of moonlight on Earth. And the boy knew that every little night flyer had found a home.