

THE MOONLIT PAGE

Morning Through the Arch



Every morning, Elise walked through the little iron gate behind her building. Its latch made a familiar double click. She had listened for it since long before she retired.

The new gate closed almost silently.

For several mornings she looked back, checking that it had caught. Then her neighbour Karim offered to show her the path through the walled garden instead.

It was only a few minutes longer. Dry stems stood beside the gravel, and two small seed heads had fallen across the path. Karim picked one up and shook it lightly. Elise took the other.

They rattled with a papery sound.

Beneath the garden's stone arch, Elise said, "Morning."

The echo returned the word in a voice a little warmer than her own. Neither spoke again to test it.

They stood listening to the seed heads. A breeze moved through the bare stems beyond the wall.

At the far gate, Karim tucked his seed head into the empty pocket of his walking jacket. Elise carried hers home and laid it beside her keys.

The following morning she picked up the keys, then left the dry stem where it was. Karim was waiting downstairs.

They took the garden path together, closing the new gate gently behind them without turning to check its latch.

To remember

1. Elise's familiar clicking gate is replaced by a quiet one
2. Karim shows her the garden path and they find rattling seed heads
3. An arch returns one greeting in a warmer voice
4. They choose the garden route again and leave the new gate quietly behind them.