

The Little Peace Maker



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Little Peace Maker

Yavuz DEMİRKİRAN



Between two green hills lay a wide, sunny meadow full of soft grass and tiny wildflowers. On one side stood the village of Oakfield, where children ran and laughed in the lanes. On the other side stood the village of Riverbend, where neat rows of vegetables grew behind every house. Little Theo lived right in the middle, in a small cottage at the meadow's edge. He had warm light brown skin, curly dark brown hair, and a soft, friendly smile for everyone he met.



Every morning Theo pulled on his mustard yellow tunic, tied his little red neckerchief, and stepped into the meadow. He loved how the wind made the tall grass wave like a green sea. Children from both villages often met there to chase butterflies and share berries. Theo was the smallest of them all, but he had the biggest ears for listening. When someone felt sad or left out, Theo sat beside them until they felt better.



His best friend was Lily from Riverbend, a cheerful girl with two black pigtails and a gap-toothed grin. She wore a striped pink and white dress and a woven flower bracelet on one wrist. Lily and Theo built tiny stick bridges over the meadow stream and named every beetle they found. "This meadow belongs to everybody," Lily said one day, flopping onto the grass. "I hope it always stays this way." Theo nodded and smiled, because he hoped so too.



But one spring morning, a meeting was called in the meadow. Mara, the tall gardener from Riverbend, stood with her straw hat and blue apron, pointing at the open grass. "We need more room to grow carrots and beans and sweet peas," she said firmly. "This sunny spot would make a wonderful garden." The Riverbend villagers clapped and nodded, already dreaming of ripe tomatoes and tall sunflowers.



Then Bram, the carpenter from Oakfield, stepped forward with his red-brown beard and tool belt jingling. "A playground!" he boomed, waving his measuring string. "Swings and a slide and a climbing frame right here. Our children need a place to play and grow strong." The Oakfield villagers cheered loudly. "A garden is useful," Bram added, "but a playground is fun!" The two groups stared at each other across the grass.



Soon voices grew loud. "We were here first!" said a woman from Oakfield. "You have plenty of land already!" called a man from Riverbend. Mara folded her arms, and Bram's bushy eyebrows pulled together. The children stopped playing and watched with wide eyes. The lovely meadow, which had always felt so peaceful, suddenly felt prickly and strange. Theo stood very still at the edge, listening to every angry word.



That night Theo could not sleep. He thought about the carrot rows and the swings, the shouting and the crossed arms. In the morning he walked into the meadow and found Lily waiting by the stream. "Everyone is cross," she said sadly. "My mother and your neighbor won't even wave to each other." Theo looked at the wide, sunny grass and had a small, bright idea. "Maybe the meadow is big enough for both," he said quietly.



He asked the villagers to meet again, and they came, though they grumbled and stood far apart. Theo stood on a small wooden crate so everyone could see him. His curly hair blew in the breeze, and his little red neckerchief fluttered. "Please," he said, his voice small but steady, "could we all listen to each other, just for a little while?" The grown-ups blinked and grew quiet, surprised by the tiny peace maker.



Mara spoke first, her strong jaw softening. "I miss walking here with my neighbors," she admitted. "I want fresh vegetables, but I don't want to lose friends." Bram scratched his beard. "And I miss your pumpkin soup, Mara," he said, and a few people smiled. Slowly, more villagers shared what they hoped for. Theo listened to every word, nodding, holding the quiet space open for everyone.



Then Theo shared his idea. "What if we split the meadow into two parts?" he said, spreading his arms wide. "A garden on the sunny side, and a playground on the other side. And shared paths in between, so we can visit each other every day." Lily clapped her hands. "And the paths could have flowers on both sides!" she added. The villagers looked at the grass, then at each other, and slowly began to nod.



Mara and Bram unrolled a long sheet of paper and, for the first time, worked side by side. Bram measured with his string, and Mara planned the beds and the bean poles. "The swing could face the sunflower patch," Bram said. "The peas can climb a trellis beside the slide," Mara replied. "We can share the stream for watering," she added. "And share the paths," Bram agreed. Listening turned into planning, and planning turned into a friendly handshake.



On the first work day, everyone came with tools and big smiles. Bram hammered and sawed while Oakfield children handed him wooden pegs. Mara dug and planted while Riverbend children tucked in tiny seeds. Theo and Lily carried water in a bucket, sloshing happily over their shoes. People who had argued now passed nails and seeds and jokes. The meadow filled with hammering, humming, and the smell of fresh earth.



Weeks later, the meadow looked wonderful. On one side, bright green rows of carrots and beans grew tall, and sunflowers turned their golden faces to the sky. On the other side, children swooped on swings and slid down the slide with squeals of joy. Shared paths wound between the garden and the playground, lined with little flowers. "Look," said Lily, "the vegetables and the swings are neighbors!"



Now the two villages meet in the meadow every Saturday. Gardeners share baskets of vegetables, and builders share benches with everyone who needs a rest. Mara and Bram sit together on a bench with their backs to the sunflowers, laughing at old stories. "You were right, little one," Mara told Theo. "Listening is a kind of building too." Theo smiled his soft smile, his neckerchief bright red in the sunshine.



The children learned to plant seeds and pump their legs on the swings, sometimes in the same afternoon. They shared snacks, tools, and turns, and nobody ever felt left out. When a new disagreement popped up, someone always said, "Let's listen first, like Theo taught us." Peace was not just the quiet meadow anymore. It was sharing, cooperation, and friendship growing side by side, like the carrots and the sunflowers.



Theo still lives in his small cottage at the meadow's edge, and he still listens more than he talks. He knows that a meadow, like a friendship, grows best when everyone gets a little space and a lot of care. The tall grass waves, the stream sings, and the paths stay busy with visitors. And whenever someone asks how the little peace maker did it, Theo simply says, "I just asked everyone to listen, and then we shared."