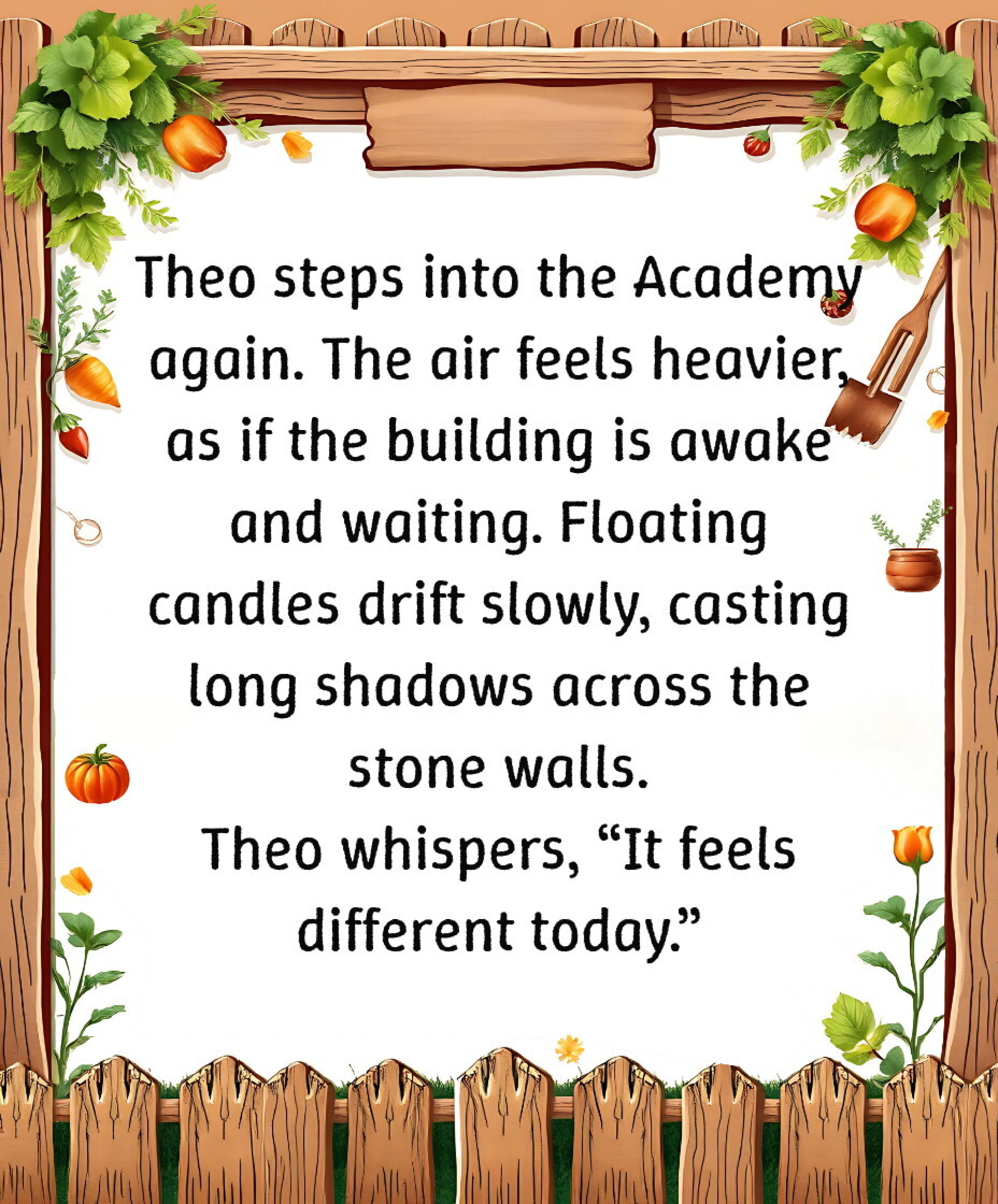


THE ACADEMY OF WHISPERS

Chapter 2: The Watching Halls



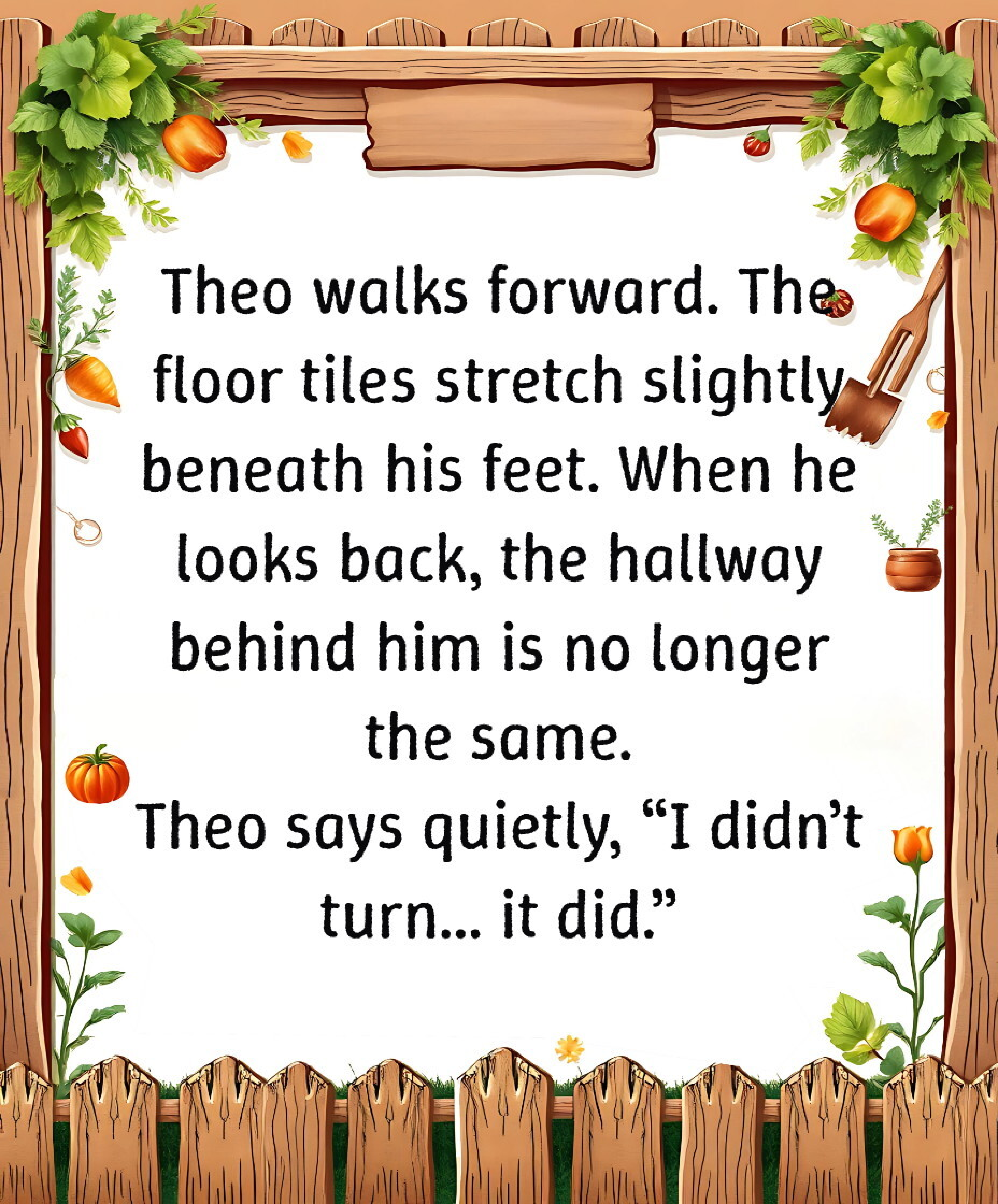




Theo steps into the Academy again. The air feels heavier, as if the building is awake and waiting. Floating candles drift slowly, casting long shadows across the stone walls.

Theo whispers, “It feels different today.”

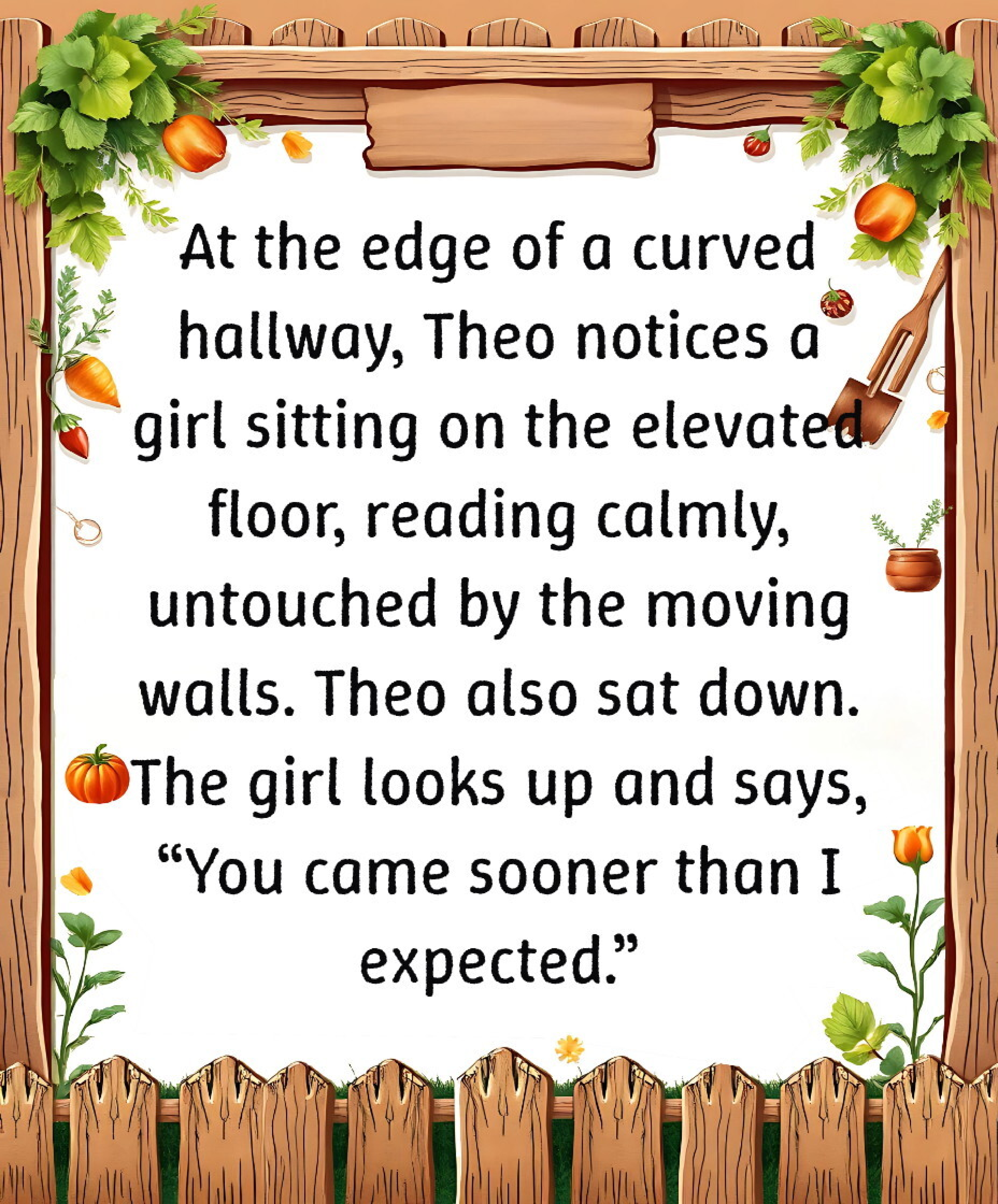




Theo walks forward. The floor tiles stretch slightly beneath his feet. When he looks back, the hallway behind him is no longer the same.

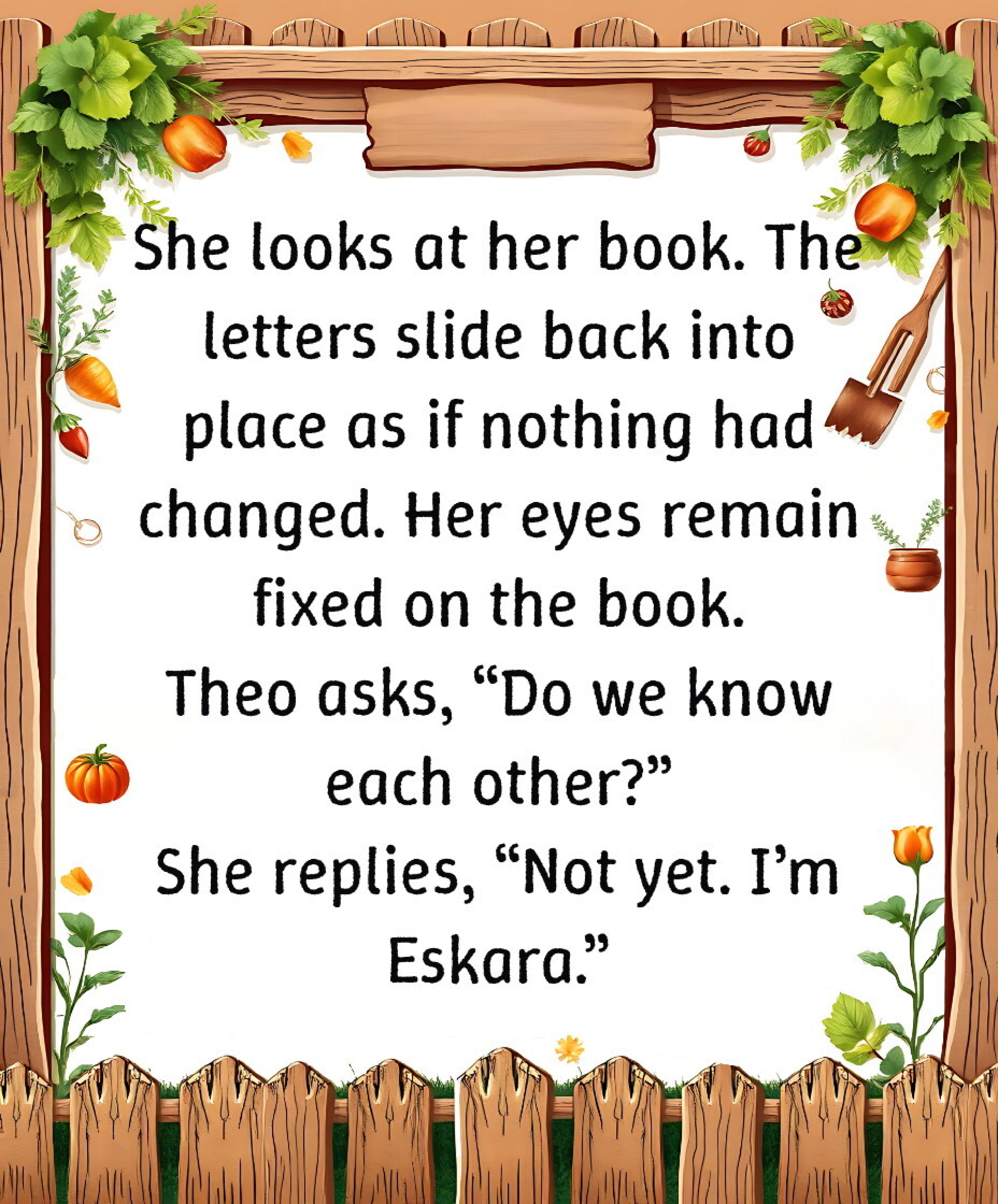
Theo says quietly, "I didn't turn... it did."





At the edge of a curved hallway, Theo notices a girl sitting on the elevated floor, reading calmly, untouched by the moving walls. Theo also sat down. The girl looks up and says, “You came sooner than I expected.”



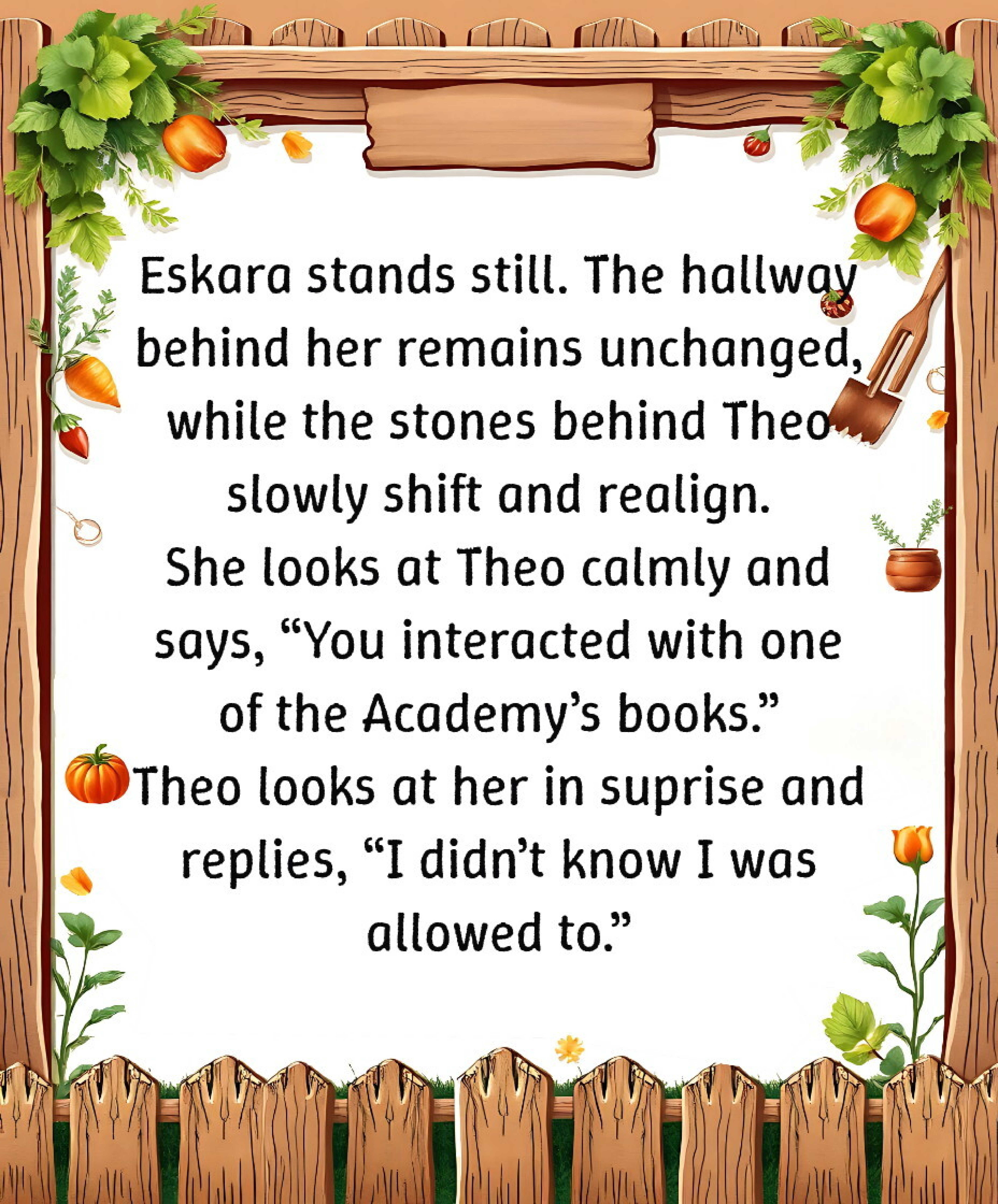


She looks at her book. The letters slide back into place as if nothing had changed. Her eyes remain fixed on the book.

Theo asks, “Do we know each other?”

She replies, “Not yet. I’m Eskara.”



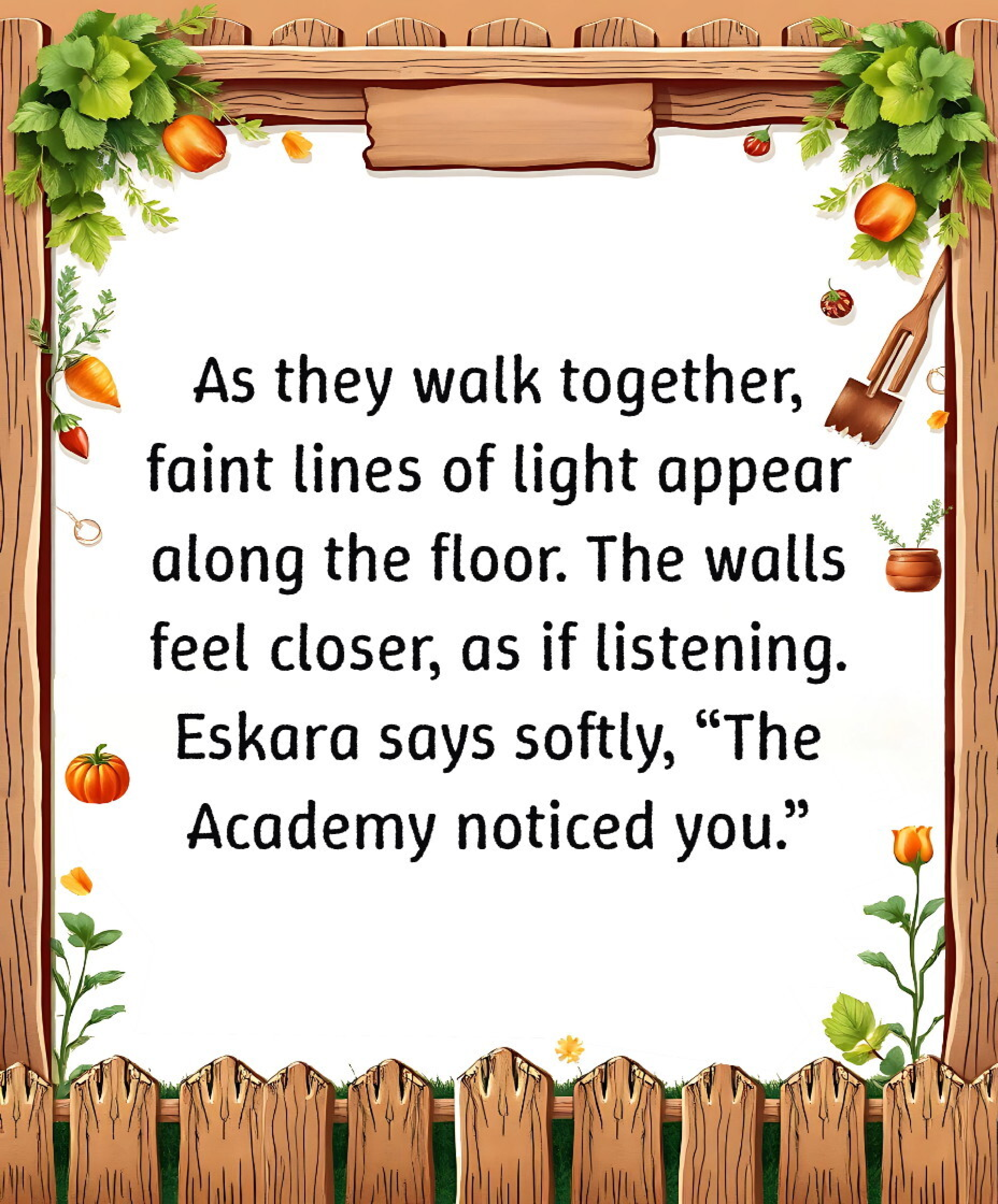


Eskara stands still. The hallway behind her remains unchanged, while the stones behind Theo slowly shift and realign.

She looks at Theo calmly and says, “You interacted with one of the Academy’s books.”

🍅 Theo looks at her in surprise and replies, “I didn’t know I was allowed to.”

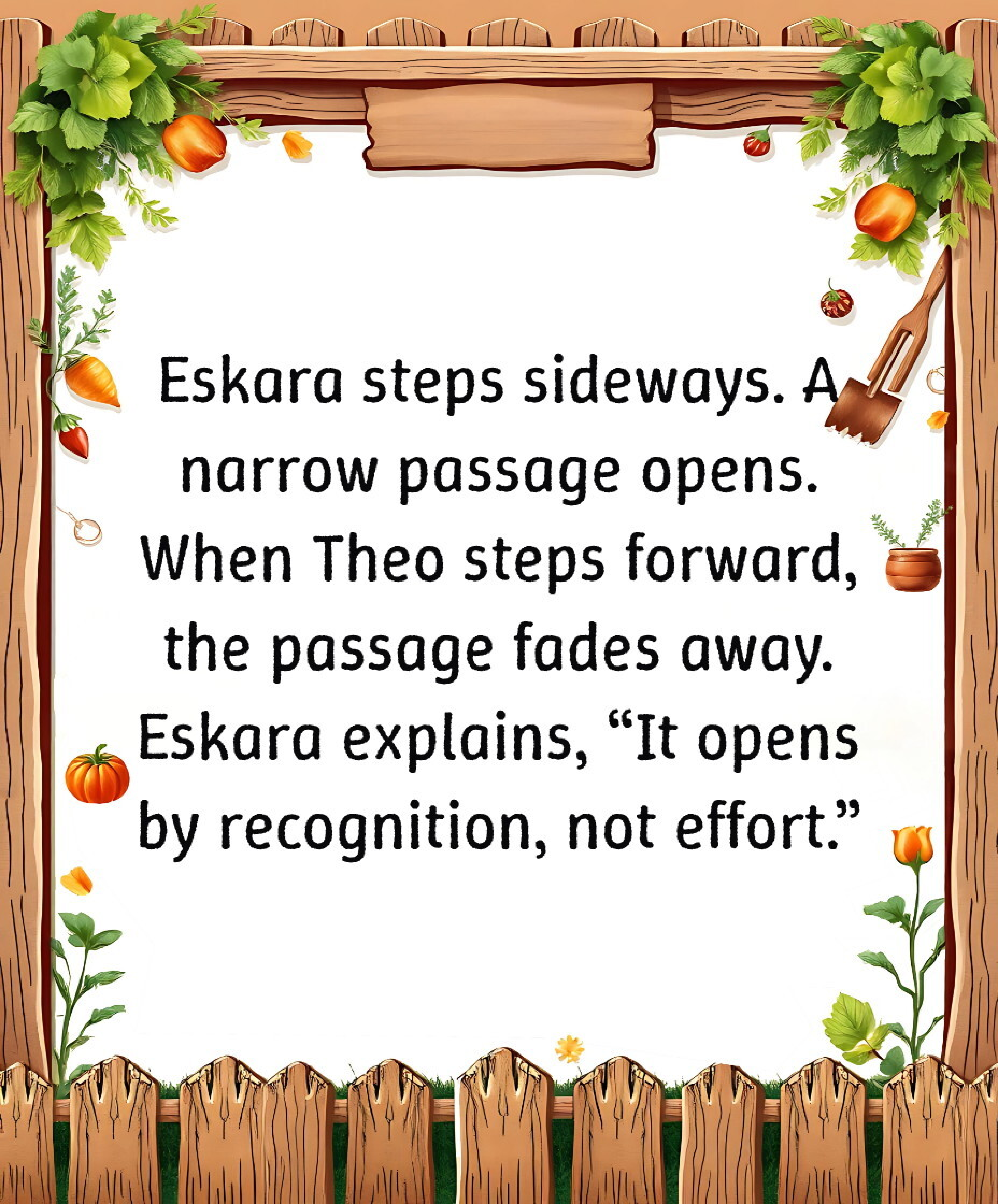




As they walk together,
faint lines of light appear
along the floor. The walls
feel closer, as if listening.

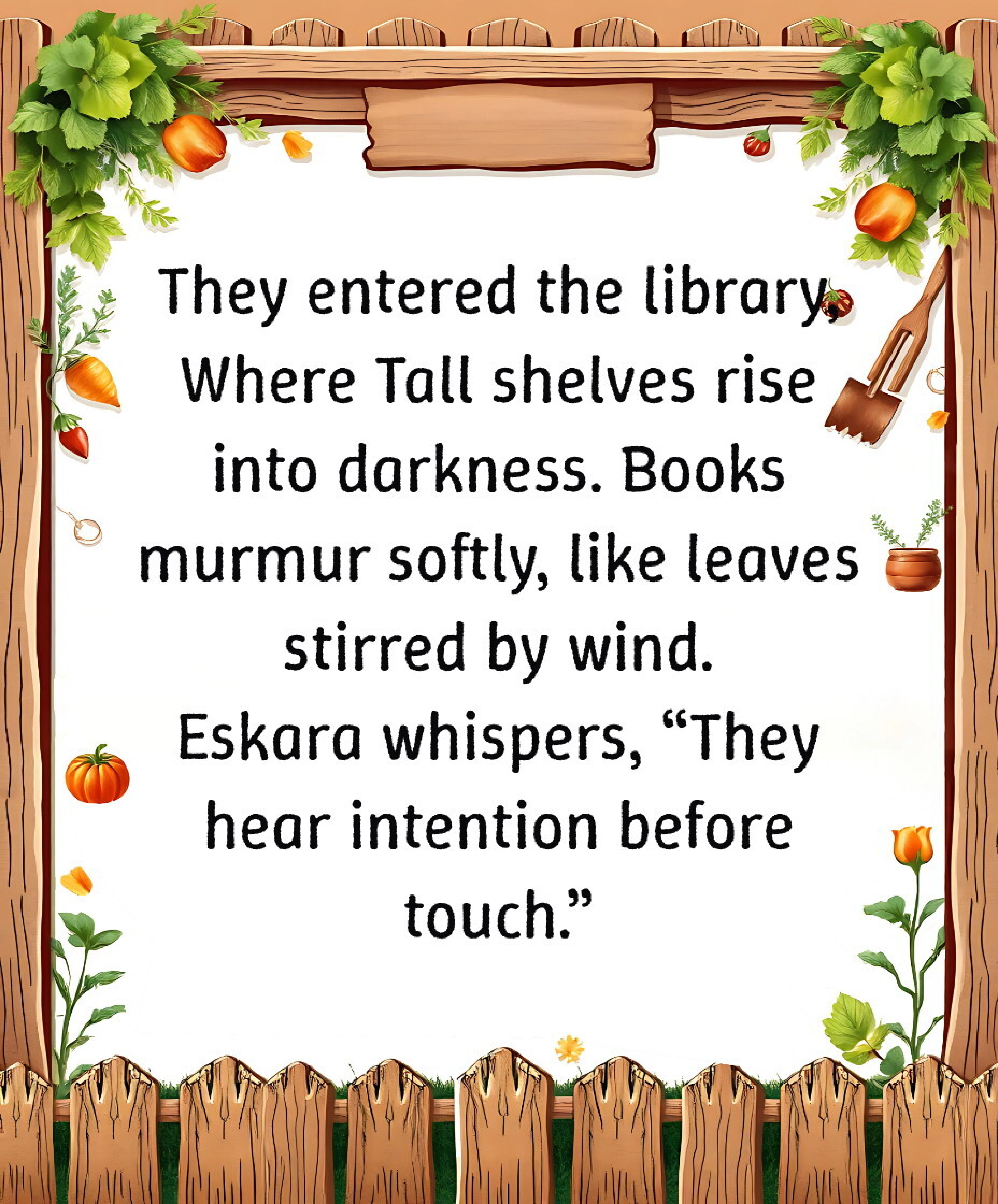
Eskara says softly, “The
Academy noticed you.”





Eskara steps sideways. A narrow passage opens. When Theo steps forward, the passage fades away. Eskara explains, "It opens by recognition, not effort."

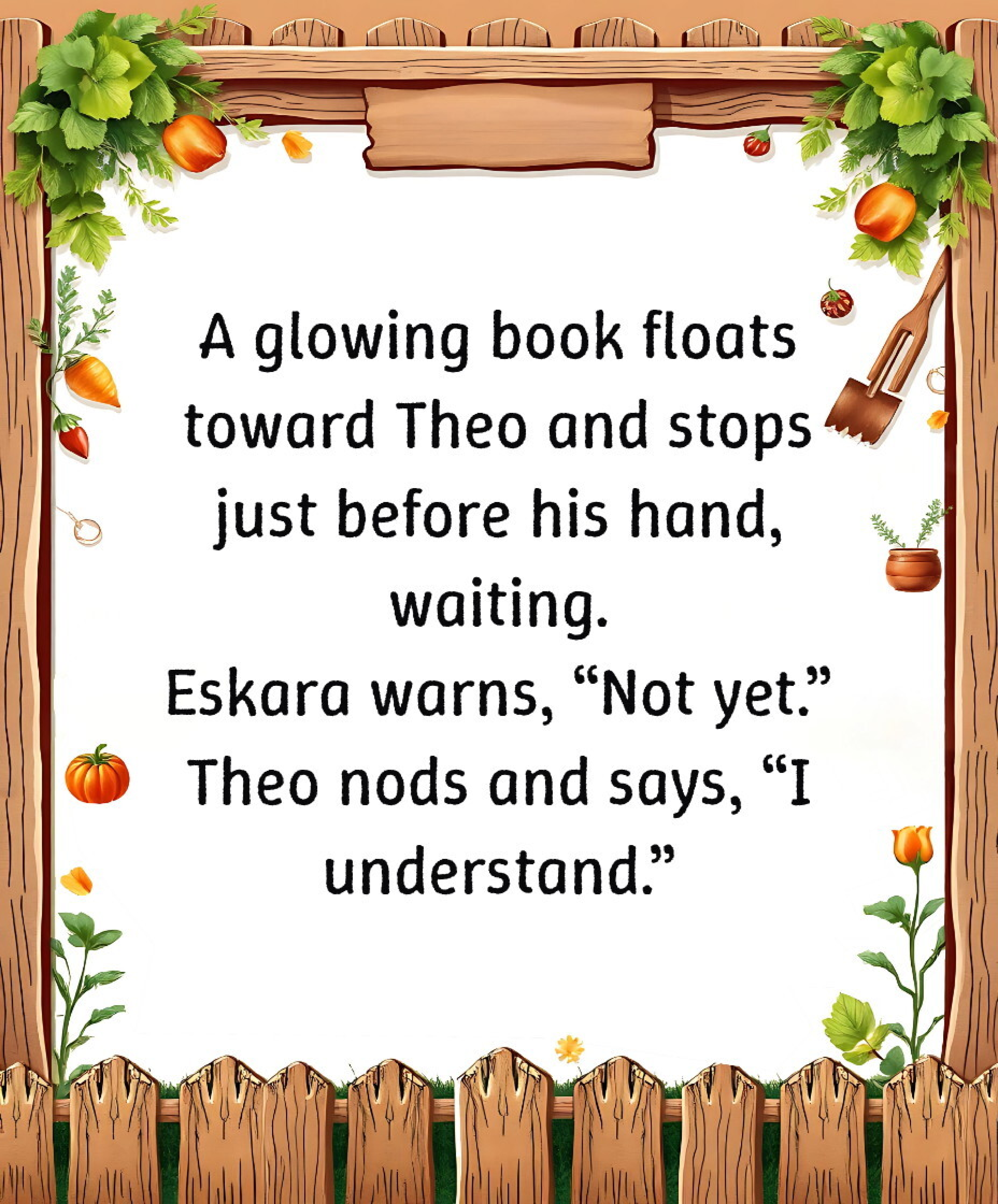




They entered the library,
Where Tall shelves rise
into darkness. Books
murmur softly, like leaves
stirred by wind.

Eskara whispers, “They
hear intention before
touch.”



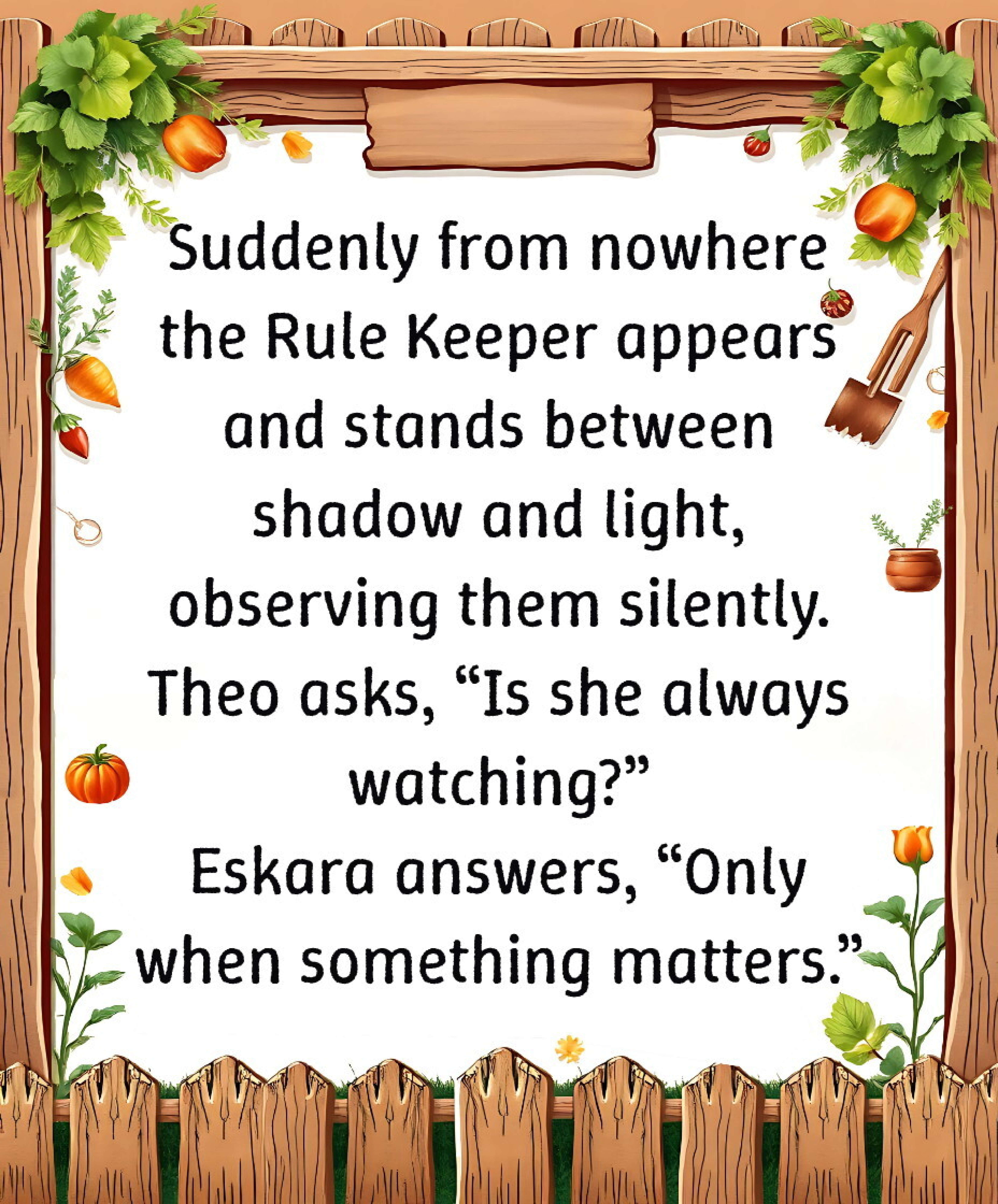


A glowing book floats
toward Theo and stops
just before his hand,
waiting.

Eskara warns, “Not yet.”

 Theo nods and says, “I
understand.”

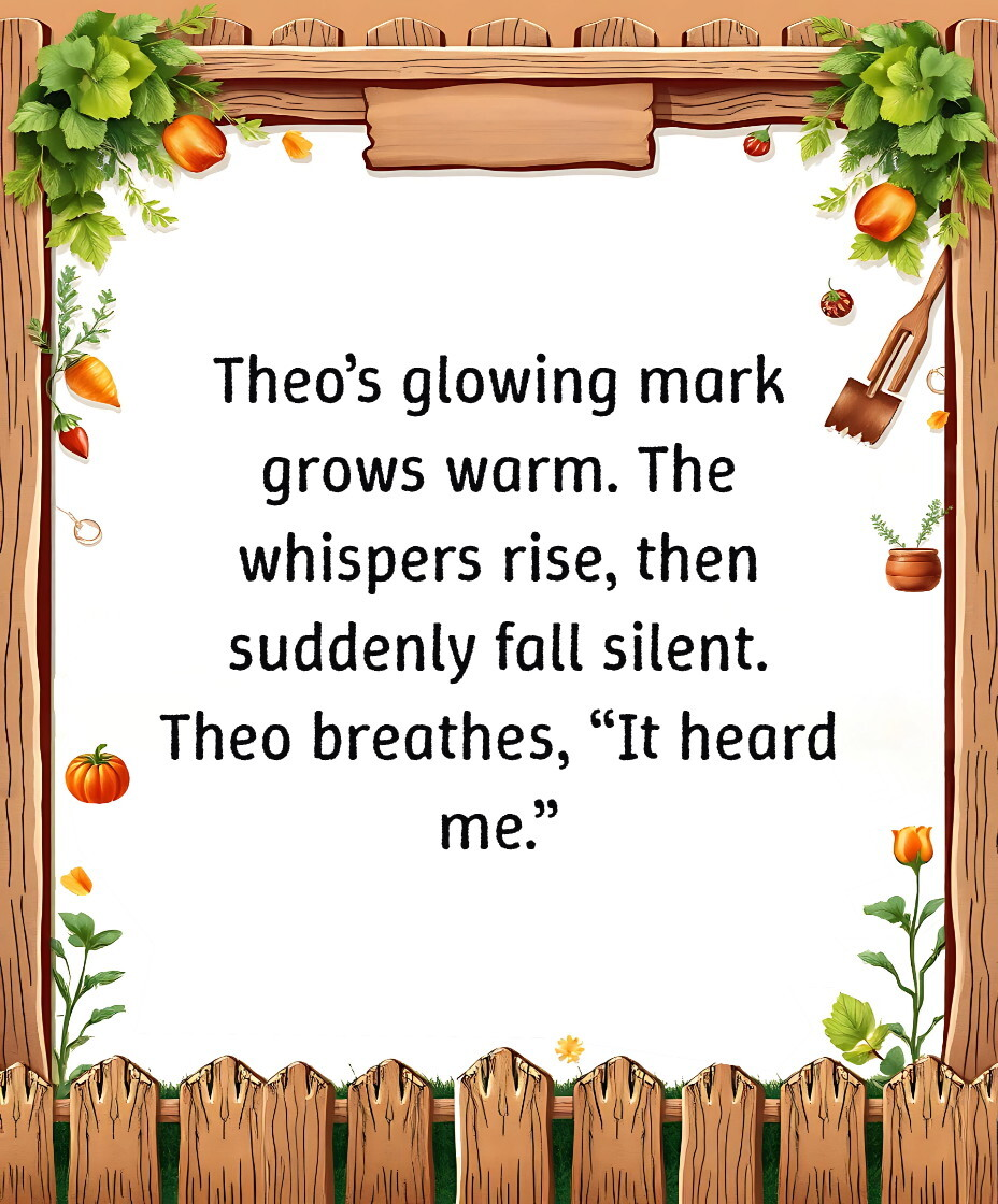




Suddenly from nowhere
the Rule Keeper appears
and stands between
shadow and light,
observing them silently.
Theo asks, “Is she always
watching?”

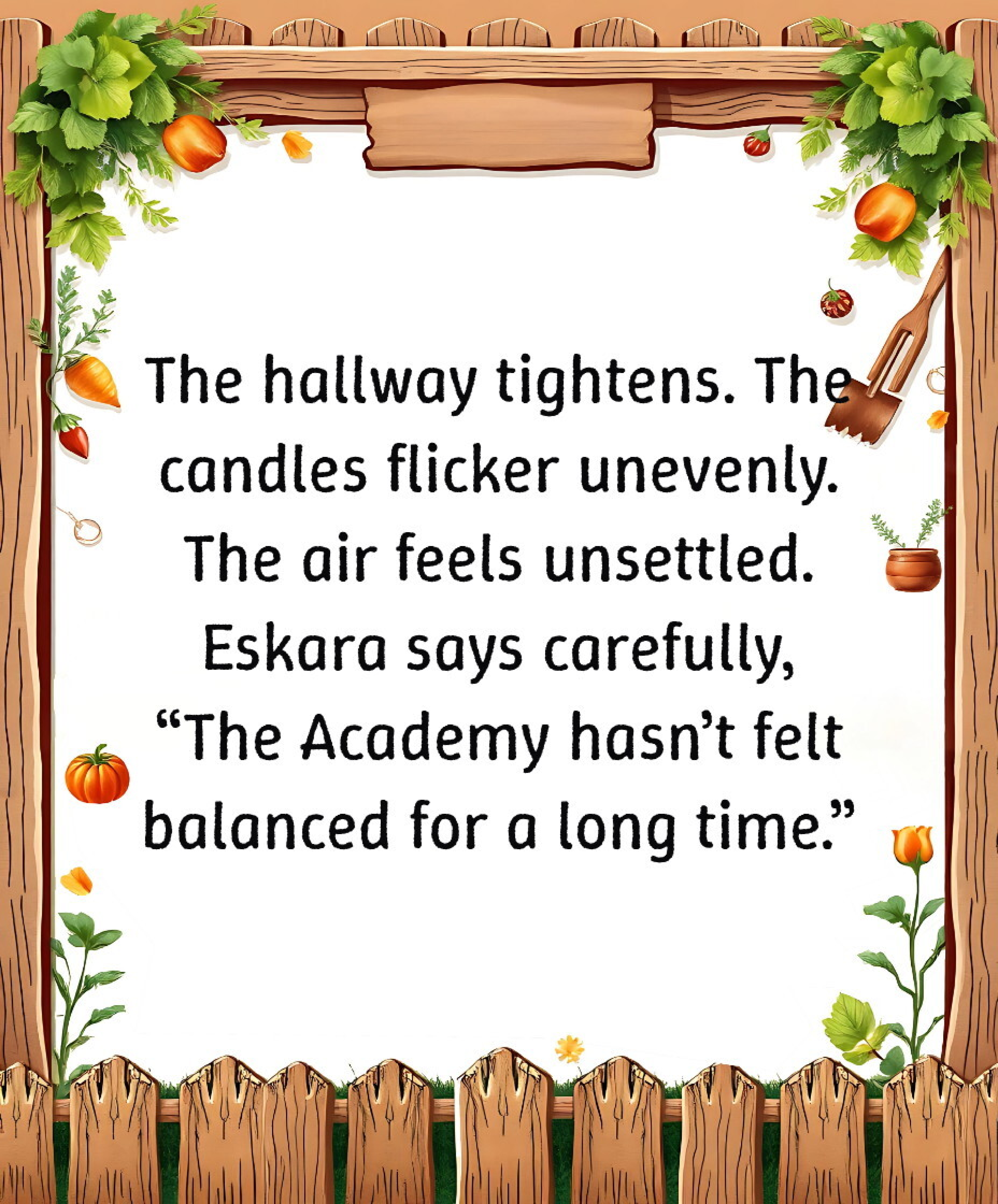
Eskara answers, “Only
when something matters.”





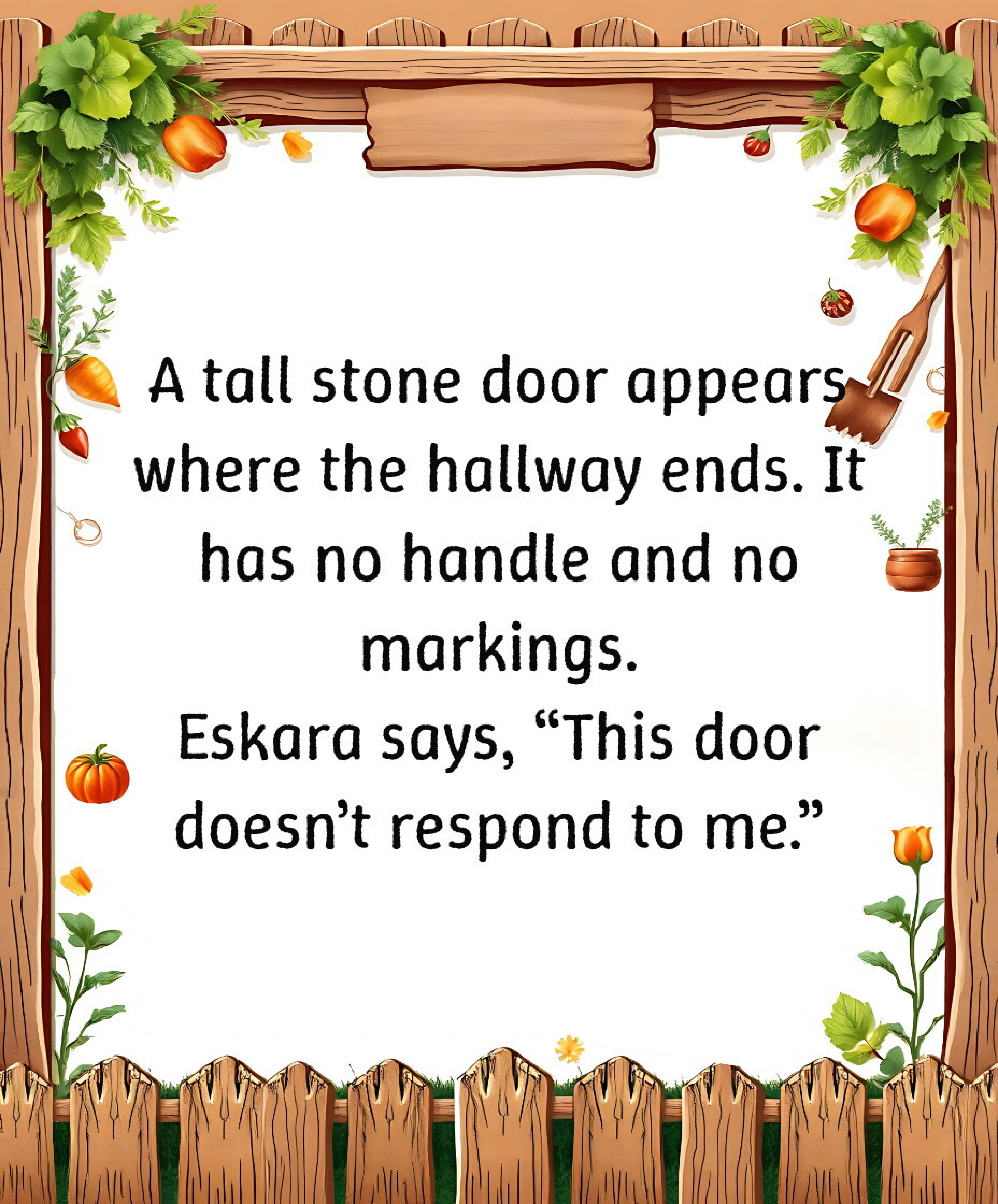
Theo's glowing mark
grows warm. The
whispers rise, then
suddenly fall silent.
Theo breathes, "It heard
me."





The hallway tightens. The
candles flicker unevenly.
The air feels unsettled.
Eskara says carefully,
“The Academy hasn’t felt
balanced for a long time.”

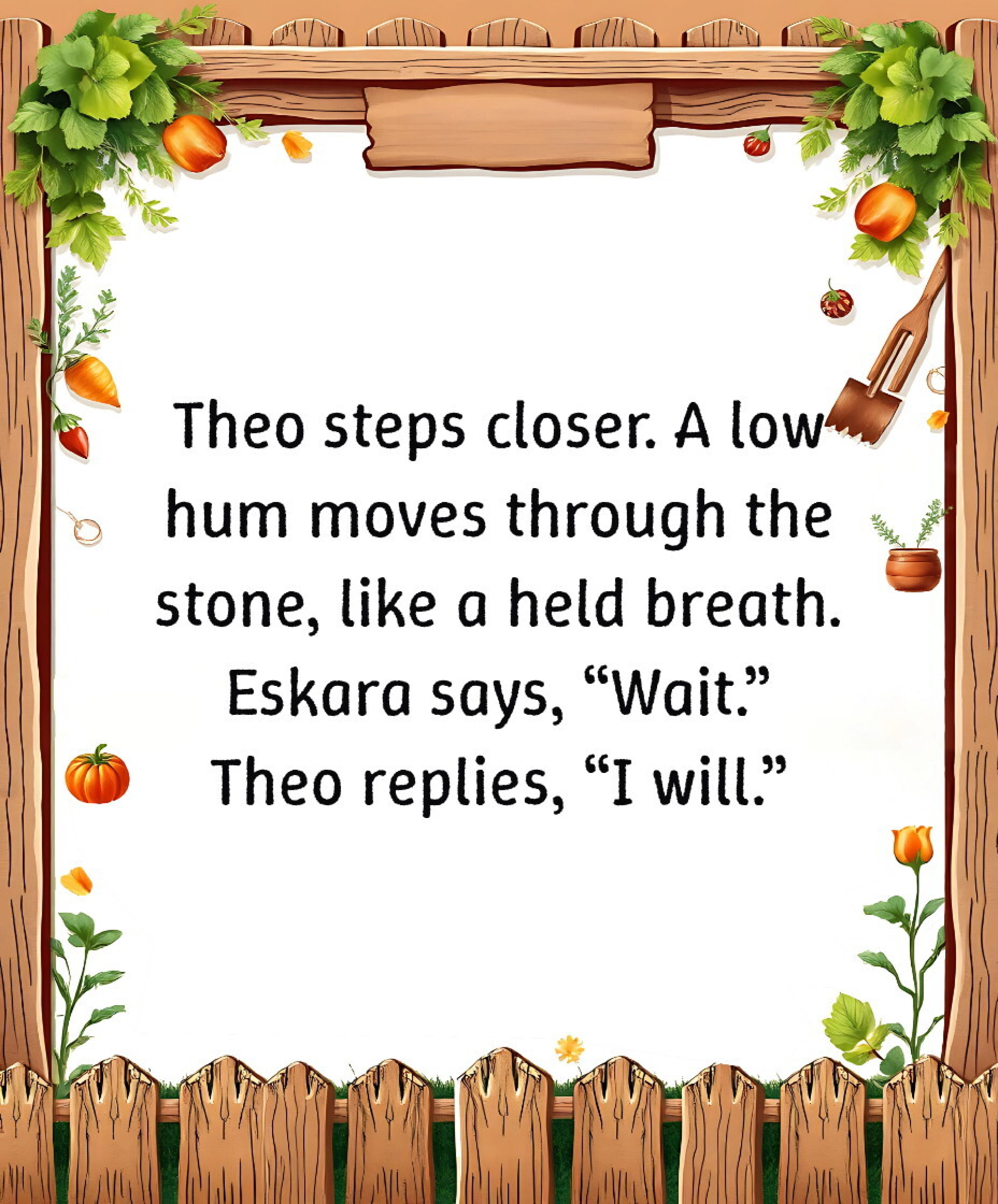




A tall stone door appears
where the hallway ends. It
has no handle and no
markings.

Eskara says, "This door
doesn't respond to me."





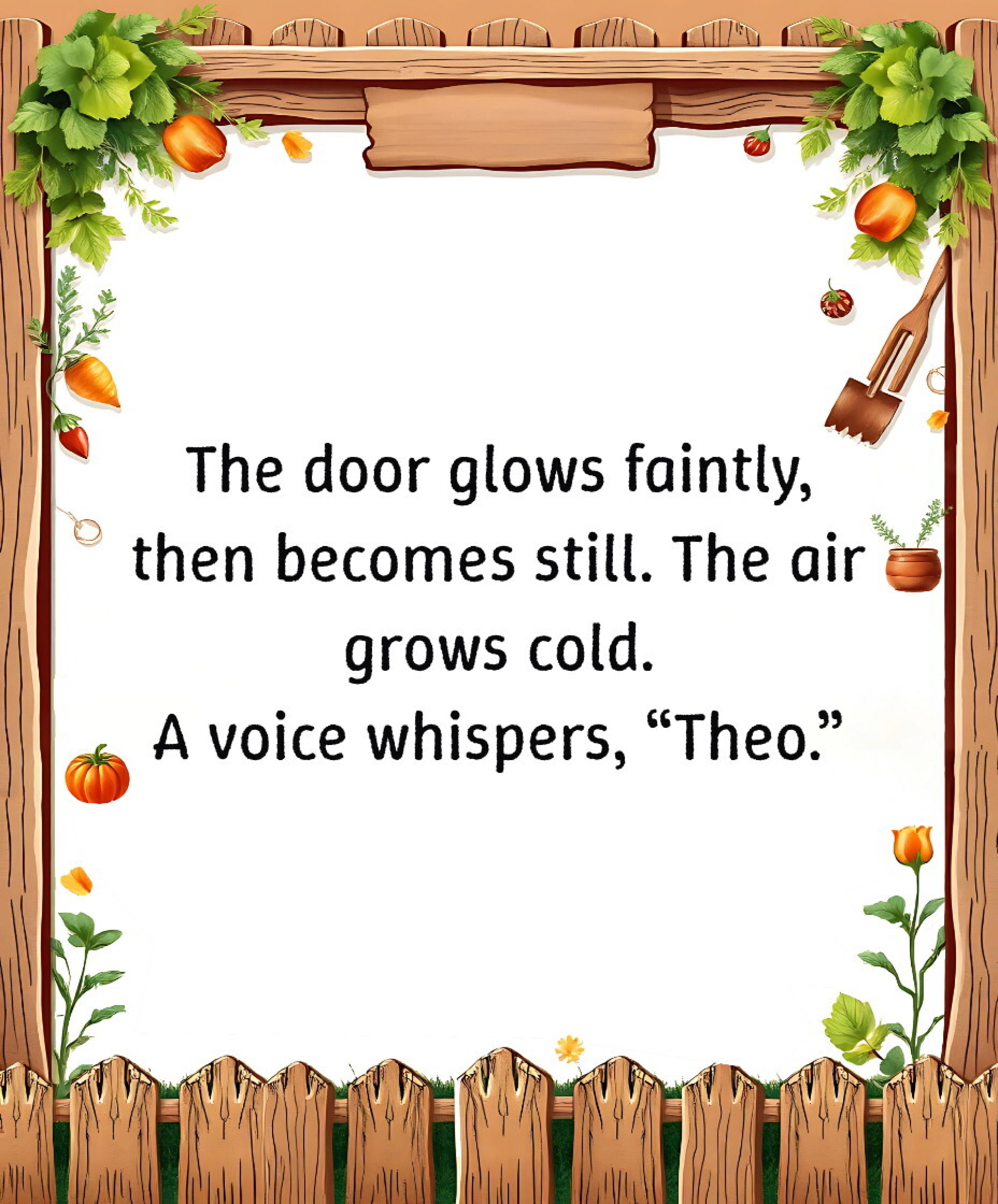
Theo steps closer. A low
hum moves through the
stone, like a held breath.

Eskara says, "Wait."

Theo replies, "I will."



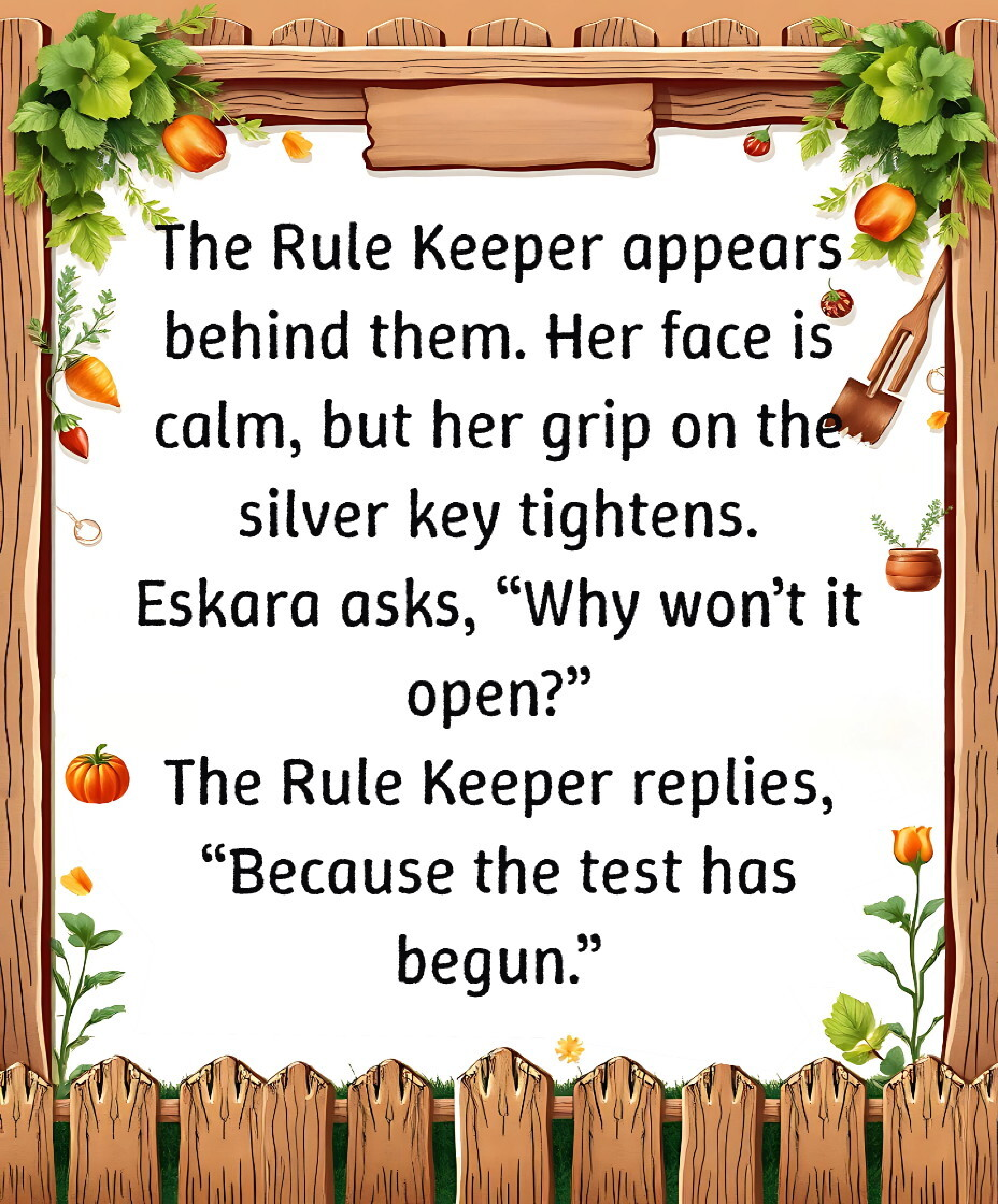
"Theo."



The door glows faintly,
then becomes still. The air
grows cold.


A voice whispers, "Theo."



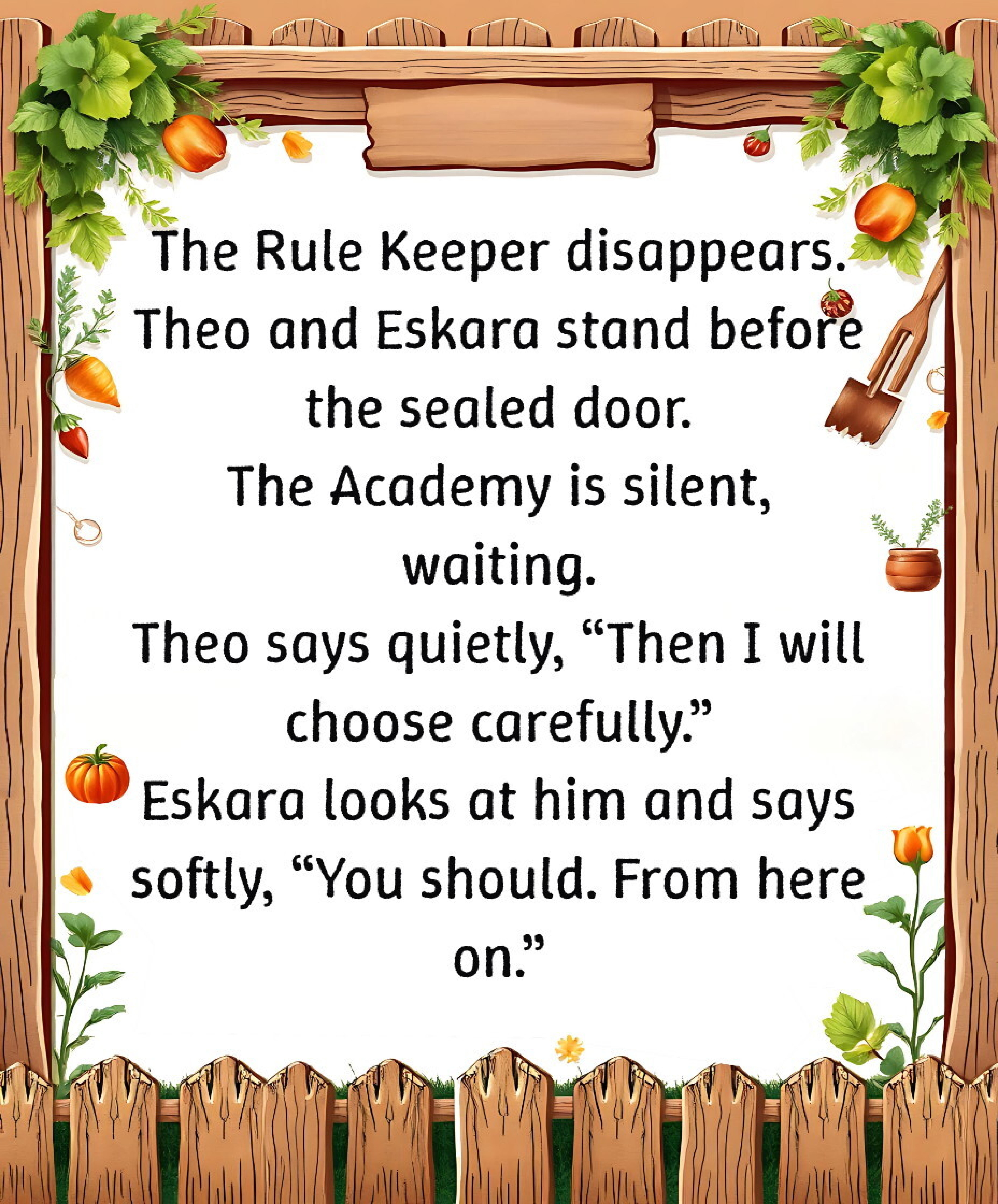


The Rule Keeper appears behind them. Her face is calm, but her grip on the silver key tightens.

Eskara asks, “Why won’t it open?”

 The Rule Keeper replies, “Because the test has begun.”


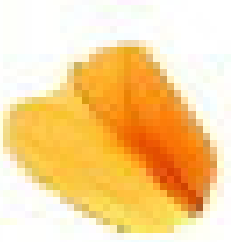




The Rule Keeper disappears.
Theo and Eskara stand before
the sealed door.

The Academy is silent,
waiting.

Theo says quietly, "Then I will
choose carefully."

 Eskara looks at him and says
 softly, "You should. From here
on."

End of Part – 2

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