

The Girl and the Hedgehog



Çınar BİBER

The Girl and the Hedgehog

Çınar BİBER



Lily loved her garden more than anywhere else in the world. She wore her yellow rain boots and blue dungarees every day, even when the sun shone bright. One morning, while hunting for snails under the bushes, she heard a rustle in the leaves. A small, round creature with brown spines and a cream face peeked out. It had a tiny black nose and a little leaf stuck on its back.



Lily knelt down slowly, her big brown eyes wide with wonder. 'Hello, little hedgehog,' she whispered. The hedgehog snuffled and wiggled its nose. It trotted along the garden path, its little pink feet pattering on the stones. Lily followed quietly, careful not to scare it. She watched as it reached the tall wooden fence at the end of the garden and stopped.



The hedgehog pushed its nose against the fence, but there was no gap. It walked up and down, up and down, looking for a way through. Lily frowned. 'You want to visit the next garden, don't you?' she said. 'But the fence is closed tight.' The hedgehog looked up at her with shiny dark eyes, as if it understood every word.



Lily fetched her green canvas satchel and pulled out a sheet of paper and a pencil. She drew a map of all the gardens on her street. Each garden had a fence around it, and the fences had no gaps. 'Hedgehogs need to roam,' she said to herself. 'They need safe paths to find food and friends.' She decided to ask her neighbours for help.



First, Lily visited Mr Patel, who lived next door. He was tall and slightly stooped, with short grey hair and round glasses. He wore a brown cardigan over a checked shirt and carried garden shears. 'Mr Patel,' said Lily, 'can we make a little gap in your fence for the hedgehog?' Mr Patel smiled, his thin silver moustache twitching. 'What a grand idea!' he said.



Mr Patel knelt by the fence and carefully cut a neat, arched gap at the bottom. 'Just the right size for a hedgehog,' he said. He gave Lily a spare pair of gardening gloves and showed her how to smooth the edges. 'Now the hedgehog can pass through safely,' he said. Lily clapped her hands. 'One gap done!' she cheered.



Next, Lily knocked on Mrs Okafor's bright blue door. Mrs Okafor was cheerful and sturdy, with a colourful floral headscarf and a wide warm smile. She wore an orange apron over a green dress. 'A hedgehog path?' she said. 'Count me in!' She brought out a tray of lemonade and some flower seeds. 'We can plant flowers along the path to make it pretty,' she said.



Mrs Okafor organised the neighbours. She called them on the phone and knocked on doors. Soon, everyone on the street knew about the hedgehog. 'We need small gaps in our fences,' Mrs Okafor told them. 'Just a little hole at the bottom, so the hedgehog can travel from garden to garden.' The neighbours nodded and promised to help.



On Saturday morning, everyone gathered in their gardens with tools. Mr Patel shared his shears. Mrs Okafor handed out lemonade. Lily went from garden to garden, showing each neighbour where to cut. Some fences were wooden, some were wire, but each one got a neat little gap. The hedgehog watched from under a bush, its nose twitching with curiosity.



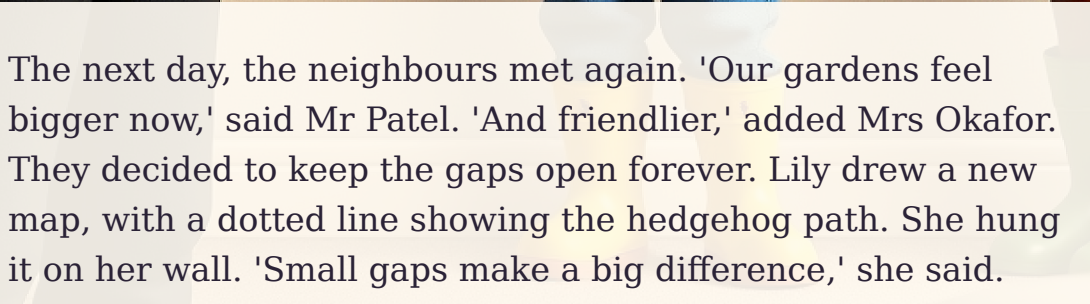
By lunchtime, every fence had a gap. The gaps lined up like little doorways, making a path that wound through all the gardens. Mrs Okafor planted marigolds and daisies along the way. 'Now it's not just a path,' she said. 'It's a friendly path.' Lily looked at the connected gardens and felt proud. 'We did it together!' she said.



That evening, Lily sat quietly by the first gap. She waited and watched. Soon, she heard a rustle. The hedgehog appeared, its leaf still stuck on its back. It sniffed the gap, then trotted through. It crossed Mr Patel's garden, then Mrs Okafor's, and kept going. Lily followed at a distance, her heart full of joy.



The hedgehog visited every garden that night. It found beetles under Mr Patel's shed and worms in Mrs Okafor's flower bed. It met another hedgehog in the garden three doors down. They snuffled noses and trundled off together. Lily smiled. 'The path works!' she whispered. 'The hedgehogs are safe.'





From then on, the hedgehog became a regular visitor. It would appear at dusk, snuffling along the path, sometimes with a friend. The neighbours would smile and say, 'There goes our hedgehog.' Lily felt happy knowing that her small idea had brought everyone together. The gardens were now one big, safe home for wildlife.



Lily learned that teamwork can solve problems. A little gap in a fence might not seem like much, but it can change a hedgehog's life. She also learned that asking for help is a brave and kind thing to do. The hedgehog path showed that when neighbours work together, they can make the world a better place for everyone.



And if you ever visit that street, you'll see the gaps in the fences and the flowers along the path. You might even see a hedgehog trotting through, its little leaf still on its back. Lily waves from her garden, her yellow boots muddy and her smile wide. 'Every garden is connected now,' she says. 'And every hedgehog is welcome.'