



BETWEEN  
STORY  
&  
TRUTH

A Blending of  
Fiction and Reflection

## Between Story & Truth

### *Why Blend?*

Most books ask you to choose: is this story true, or is it imagined? We are trained to separate fiction from nonfiction, as if they live on different shelves in the mind. Yet life itself never divides so neatly. Memory blurs with dream. Experience shades into metaphor. We tell each other “true” stories, and later realize we have shaped them with imagination.

This book does not ask you to choose. It invites you into the space between.

### The False Divide

Fiction is often treated as invention, nonfiction as fact. But both are ways of seeking meaning. Fiction says: *this could be true*. Nonfiction says: *this was true*. Both are lenses on the same mystery of being alive.

When we blend them, something richer emerges. Fiction carries the heart, characters, moments, sensory details that pull us inside a world. Nonfiction carries the root, reflection, context, grounding in the lived and the herbal. Together, they allow us to feel *and* to think, to imagine *and* to remember.

### The Shape of This Book

You will notice a pattern:

- First, a story. A widow tying rosemary bundles, sisters meeting beneath a linden tree, a weaver dyeing thread with St. John’s Wort. These are fictions, but they carry truths.
- Then, an essay. A reflective, nonfiction exploration of the same theme: memory, forgiveness, renewal. Here you will find herbal lore, cultural echoes, and gentle invitations to journal or reflect.
- Between them, a bridge. A brief interlude: a fragment of notebook, a poem, a voice that lingers between worlds.

The goal is not to separate, but to braid. You will walk with characters and then pause with reflections. You will shift from story to essay, from image to root, from leaf to soil.

## **Why Blend?**

Because healing rarely lives in one category. Stories heal us by letting us imagine what could be. Reflections heal us by naming what has been. Plants, too, carry this doubleness: they are both physical medicine and living metaphor.

By blending fiction and nonfiction, we honor the fullness of truth. Not the flat truth of fact alone, nor the airy truth of imagination alone, but the layered truth that lives between.

## **The Reader's Invitation**

You are free to read this book in rhythm, story, reflection, interlude, or to wander, skipping between fiction and nonfiction as mood calls. However you enter, I hope you feel held.

My invitation is simple: let story soften you, let reflection ground you, let both speak together.

Because life is not only story or essay, invention or record. It is both. And so, this book is both.

Welcome to the in-between.

## **Story One: *The Widow's Garden***

The garden was quiet, except for the bees.

They drifted between the rosemary hedge and the lavender bush, heavy with the weight of midsummer. The old stone walls of the cottage held the day's warmth, releasing it slowly, like breath. Terracotta pots lined the worn flagstones, each one filled with herbs: thyme spilling over the rim, sage leaves silver in the light, rosemary standing tall and evergreen.

She moved among them with care, her hands remembering the paths her husband once walked. The pruners rested in her apron pocket, though she rarely used them now. Most days she simply touched the leaves, pressing them between finger and thumb, carrying the scent back into herself.

Rosemary. Always rosemary.

Her husband had planted the first bush the spring after they married. "For remembrance," he'd said with a grin, quoting the old saying as though he'd invented it. Over the years, he planted more, cuttings tucked into soil, roots catching. Now the hedge stood tall, bordering the garden like a memory made solid.

She broke a sprig, crushed it, lifted it to her face. The scent rose sharp, almost medicinal, yet softened by sun. And with it came him: his laughter, his hand brushing hers, the way he'd knelt to tie the twine that held their beans upright. Memory was never a ghost; it was a fragrance.

On the bench by the wall, a basket waited. She placed the sprig inside, already half-filled with rosemary bundles tied in twine. Each bundle was meant for a memory. One for the day he built the trellis. One for the night they danced barefoot on the grass, the record player dragged out under the stars. One for the morning they argued and then laughed, realizing the argument wasn't worth more than their time together.

The tying of rosemary became her ritual. A way to hold what could not be held.

When neighbors passed, they often found her bent over the hedge, tying, gathering. They nodded politely, perhaps thinking she was preserving herbs for cooking. None knew that each bundle held a life, a moment she refused to let dissolve into the air.

By evening, her fingers smelled of resin, sharp and lingering. She carried the basket inside, setting it on the old oak table. The bundles dried slowly in the dim kitchen, scenting the room with memory.

She touched one, whispering: *I remember.*

Grief no longer came like a storm. It lived with her like a companion, quiet, steady, softened by rosemary's green. Love had not left. It had only changed its form.

In the silence of her garden, the widow tended both herbs and memory, knowing they were the same.

### ***Memory and Rosemary***

Rosemary has long been called the herb of remembrance. Across centuries, cultures tucked its sprigs into wedding bouquets, laid them on graves, wove them into crowns for scholars and poets. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia says: "*There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.*" The association lingers still.

Memory is not only what we recall with the mind. It is also what lingers in the body, in scent, in taste, in the rituals we repeat. Rosemary reminds us that remembrance is both fragrant and tactile, carried not only in thought, but in the senses.

### **Rosemary in History and Lore**

- **Greek tradition:** Students wore rosemary garlands around their heads during study, believing it sharpened focus and memory.
- **Medieval Europe:** Rosemary was burned in sickrooms to ward off illness, its smoke a purifier of air and spirit.

- **Funeral rites:** Sprigs of rosemary were placed with the dead, carried as tokens of love that endures beyond loss.

In each tradition, rosemary holds the same thread: to remember is to keep alive.

### **The Healing Edge of Memory**

Grief often feels like forgetting. We fear that time will erase the voices, the laughter, the ordinary gestures of those we have loved. Rituals with plants, tying rosemary bundles, steeping it in tea, planting it in gardens, give us a way to hold memory close.

Rosemary does not remove sorrow. But it offers a companion. Its evergreen nature reminds us that love, like its needle-thin leaves, endures through all seasons.

### **Rosemary in Practice**

- **A sprig by the bedside:** Place dried rosemary near where you sleep as a symbol of remembrance.
- **Memory tea:** Steep a teaspoon of rosemary leaves with lemon balm for a calming, clarifying infusion.
- **Ritual of tying:** Create small bundles of rosemary with string, dedicating each to a memory you want to honor. Keep them in a bowl, or burn them gently as incense.

### **Reflective Prompt**

- *What memories do you fear losing?*
- *What rituals might help you honor and carry them?*
- *If you tied a bundle of rosemary for each, what would you whisper into the leaves?*

Rosemary reminds us that remembrance is not a burden but a gift. It allows us to carry love into the present, to honor grief without letting it vanish into silence.

In story, as in life, rosemary keeps memory alive, fragrant, evergreen, enduring.

## Story Two: *The Letter & the Linden Tree*

The linden tree stood at the edge of the meadow, where the path from the village bent toward the river. Its branches spread wide, leaves heart-shaped and trembling in the summer air. In June, the blossoms opened, small and pale, releasing a fragrance so sweet it seemed to draw forgiveness out of the earth itself.

It had been years since she had come here. Years since her sister had written the letter that waited, folded and refolded, in her satchel. The ink had faded, but the words still pressed like a bruise: *Meet me under the linden. If you can.*

She almost hadn't come. Too many winters had passed since they had last spoken, each one hardening the silence between them. But the blossoms had opened again, and she found herself walking the path with slow steps, her hand tight around the strap of her satchel.

Her sister was already there. Sitting on the grass, back against the trunk, a thermos beside her, and two cups. She looked older, of course, lines deeper at the edges of her eyes, hair streaked with gray, but the curve of her shoulders was the same. Familiar and strange all at once.

Neither of them spoke at first. The meadow held its breath.

At last, her sister poured tea. Linden blossoms steeped in hot water, their fragrance rising between them like a gentle offering. She handed over a cup. Their fingers brushed.

"It's been too long," her sister said.

She nodded, words catching in her throat. The bitterness she had carried for years felt suddenly heavy, like something she no longer had the strength to hold. She sipped the tea. It was light, almost honeyed, the kind of taste that lingered in the chest more than the tongue.

"I wrote," her sister said softly, "because I didn't want to leave it as it was. I don't even know if forgiveness is possible. But I wanted to try."

The letter. The reason she had come. She set her satchel down and unfolded it, smoothing the creases with trembling hands. "I read this a hundred times," she whispered. "Every time, I told myself I couldn't answer. But here I am."

They sat in silence again, sipping. Around them, bees moved through the blossoms, the hum steady, grounding.

Finally, she let out a long breath. "I don't even remember what we were fighting about."

Her sister's lips curved in a sad smile. "Maybe that's why it doesn't matter anymore."

The meadow loosened its hold. The wind shifted through the linden leaves, scattering fragrance over them. Something softened in her chest, not quite forgiveness yet, but the possibility of it.

When they laughed, awkward at first, then freer, it felt like the sound of something breaking open. Not the past erased, but the present mended.

By the time the tea was gone, the silence between them had changed. Not the silence of distance, but of ease.

The linden tree swayed, blossoms falling lightly into their cups. The meadow carried the sound of their laughter away, as though to keep it safe.

And for the first time in years, the sisters let themselves begin again.

### ***Forgiveness as Linden Shade***

The linden tree has long been a gathering place. In European villages, linden trees often grew in the center of town, their wide branches shading markets, councils, festivals, and songs. Beneath the linden, people met not just to trade, but to reconcile, to share, to begin again.

Forgiveness, like linden, creates a kind of shade, a shelter wide enough for two people to sit together, even after years apart.

### **Linden in History and Tradition**

- **Sacred in Slavic culture:** Villages planted lindens near churches as symbols of peace and community.
- **The tree of councils:** In medieval Germany, courts often met beneath linden trees, as they were believed to inspire fairness and mercy.
- **Folk medicine:** Linden blossoms, fragrant and honey-sweet, have been used for centuries to ease tension, calm the heart, and soothe the nervous system.

In each role, linden invites softening. It is not a tree of sharpness or fire, but of easing, gathering, and reconciliation.

### **Forgiveness as Shelter**

Forgiveness is not always about erasing harm. More often, it is about creating enough shade that two people can sit together again. Beneath that shelter, laughter can return, even if scars remain.

Like linden tea, forgiveness is gentle medicine. It soothes the tightness of resentment, cools the heat of anger, and makes space for breath. It does not rush the process, but invites it slowly, like blossoms steeping in water.

### **Linden in Practice**

- **Tea for softening:** Steep linden blossoms in hot water. Drink slowly, reflecting on what heaviness might ease within you.
- **Forgiveness ritual:** Write a letter you may never send, releasing words that weigh on you. Place a linden blossom (or a symbol of it) with the letter. Burn or bury it when you are ready.
- **Gathering under trees:** When possible, reconcile or converse outdoors, especially under shade. Nature itself can hold space that words alone cannot.

### **Reflective Prompt**

- *What shade do I need in order to forgive, for myself, or for another?*
- *Is there a letter I need to write, even if it is never delivered?*
- *How might I steep forgiveness slowly, instead of forcing it?*

Forgiveness is not forgetting. It is remembering differently, remembering in shade rather than in harsh sun. The linden teaches us that reconciliation is not a single act, but a shelter created over time.

Beneath its branches, bitterness softens. Laughter can return. And what was broken can, at the very least, begin again.

### **Story Three: *The Weaver's Thread***

Winter pressed heavy against the cottage walls. Frost crept along the windowpanes, blurring the world into white and gray. Inside, she sat at the loom, her hands still at first, the shuttle resting across her lap. For weeks she had been unable to lift it, as though the weight of grief had numbed her body.

The loom waited. The threads stretched taut, silent, asking nothing.

She rose at dawn, tended the fire, boiled water for tea, but the days blurred into sameness. The shawl she had meant to weave, a gift for her mother, lay half-finished, a row of threads dangling, loose and untended. Every time she looked at it, the ache in her chest deepened.

One morning, when the light was pale and thin, she found herself reaching for the bundle of dried St. John's Wort hanging by the hearth. She had gathered it in summer, when the fields were golden and full of sun. Now, the blossoms were dark, but still held their faint, resinous scent.

She crumbled some into a cup and poured hot water over them. The steam rose, carrying a memory of warmth, of bees in tall grass, of laughter she thought she had forgotten. She breathed it in slowly.

With trembling hands, she dipped a skein of thread into the infusion. The pale wool absorbed the golden tint, as though it were drinking in the memory of sunlight. When she lifted it out, the color clung faintly, a whisper of summer in the heart of winter.

For the first time in months, her hands did not resist. She threaded the shuttle, guided it across the loom, and pulled. The sound, soft, steady, rhythmic, filled the room. A pulse. A heartbeat.

Hour by hour, she wove. The golden thread crossed the darker ones, a line of light running through shadow. She thought of her mother, of summers long ago, of laughter beneath the trees. The ache was still there, but it no longer silenced her hands.

Each row she wove became a prayer. Not for the grief to vanish, but for light to live within it. St. John's Wort had always been a plant of midsummer, carrying the sun's fire in its blossoms. Now it carried her through the dark, reminding her that renewal did not erase sorrow, it wove alongside it.

By the time the shawl was finished, winter had not yet lifted. Snow still pressed against the windows. But inside, the loom no longer stood silent. A golden shawl, luminous against the dim room, rested on her lap.

She wrapped it around her shoulders and closed her eyes. The warmth was more than wool. It was memory and renewal, grief and light, woven together.

Outside, the cold remained. But within her hands, summer lived again.

### ***Light in Darkness, St. John's Wort and Renewal***

St. John's Wort is a midsummer plant. Its golden blossoms open around the solstice, when the sun burns longest in the sky. For centuries, people believed it carried the sun's fire within it, a ward against despair, a lantern in the dark. Hung above doorways, woven into midsummer garlands, steeped into oils and teas, it was thought to protect both body and spirit.

Even today, herbalists know it as a plant that lifts heaviness, eases sadness, and kindles resilience.

Renewal, too, is a kind of midsummer. It does not erase winter's cold, but it invites light back in, thread by thread, moment by moment.

### **The Folklore of St. John's Wort**

- **Midsummer fires:** In European tradition, sprigs of St. John's Wort were tossed into bonfires at solstice as protection against evil spirits and ill fortune.
- **The herb of warding:** It was believed to keep away not only storms but also the "darkness of the mind."
- **Golden oil:** Fresh blossoms steeped in oil turn it a deep red, sometimes called the "blood of the sun," used to soothe wounds and burns.

Always, the plant is linked to light: carrying it, restoring it, protecting it.

### **Renewal as a Thread of Light**

Depression often feels like endless winter, gray, heavy, silent. Renewal does not come as a sudden summer storm. It comes as a single thread of gold woven into the dark: a smile, a remembered song, the return of work to the hands.

Like weaving, renewal is slow. Each line of light crosses the shadow, until a pattern begins to form. St. John's Wort teaches that the light is never fully gone, it is waiting to be called back, slowly, gently, consistently.

### **St. John's Wort in Practice**

- **Infusion for resilience:** Steep a teaspoon of dried blossoms in hot water. Drink as a reminder of the sun, especially in winter months.
- **Golden oil:** Use St. John's Wort oil (infused in olive oil) to soothe sore muscles and skin, a literal way of carrying light into the body.
- **Thread ritual:** Weave or braid a small cord with golden yarn or thread. With each pass, name one small renewal you are grateful for.

*(Note: Always check for interactions before using St. John's Wort medicinally; it is a potent plant that can interfere with some medications.)*

### **Reflective Prompt**

- *What does renewal mean to me right now?*
- *Where has a thread of light appeared in my life, even in darkness?*
- *How might I weave that thread slowly, consistently, into something larger?*

St. John's Wort reminds us that darkness is not permanent. It teaches us that light, even in the smallest threads, can be woven back into our days.

Renewal is not about denying grief or pretending winter does not come. It is about carrying midsummer's fire within us, enough to keep weaving, enough to begin again.

## Story Four: *The Midwife's Candle*

Night had fallen over the village, pressing its hush against the shuttered windows. In one cottage, the fire burned low, casting a dim glow over the wooden table where the midwife set down her satchel. She moved with the quiet steadiness of someone long accustomed to being called in the dark.

From the bag, she drew out what she always carried: linen cloths, a small jar of oil, a bundle of dried herbs, and a single beeswax candle. Tonight, she knew, would be difficult. The laboring woman's husband had come running breathless to her door, fear written across his face.

She set the candle in the center of the table and lit it. The flame rose, golden and unwavering, and the room shifted, from ordinary to sacred. This was her ritual: never attend a birth without first calling the light.

Next, she crumbled a pinch of motherwort into her palms, rubbing it gently until the scent released, earthy, bitter, grounding. She whispered a prayer she had said a hundred times: *Give courage. Steady the heart. Carry us through the threshold.*

Motherwort had been her ally since she first apprenticed as a girl. It was said to calm the anxious heart, to steady trembling hands, to remind both mother and midwife that they were not alone in the work of birth.

When she entered the next room, the air was thick with pain and fear. The young mother lay sweating, her hands clutching the blankets. The midwife placed her satchel down and touched the woman's shoulder, steady as stone.

"Breathe," she said softly. "You are not alone."

Hours passed. The labor was long, the cries sharp. At times, the husband faltered, fear rising again. The midwife touched his arm, passed him the candle, and said, "Hold this. Let it remind you, she carries the fire within her too."

Through each contraction, she whispered courage. When panic threatened, she breathed the motherwort again, letting its strength steady her. Her hands knew what to do, they pressed, guided, waited.

And then, at last, the cry of a newborn filled the room. The mother collapsed in relief, tears streaking her face. The husband sobbed openly, clutching the candle as though it had carried him through.

The midwife wrapped the child, laid it on the mother's chest, and let silence return, not heavy, but holy.

Later, when she gathered her things, the candle was still burning low. She left it behind on the table, wax dripping slowly, flame steady until morning.

As she stepped back into the night, she whispered once more to the earth and stars:  
*Thank you for the courage to walk another threshold.*

### ***Transitions with Motherwort, Courage in Thresholds***

Motherwort's very name reveals its role: "mother's herb." For centuries it has been used to steady the heart, calm anxiety, and support women through transitions, especially childbirth. But its medicine extends beyond the physical. Motherwort is a plant of courage, carrying us through thresholds where fear and strength walk side by side.

#### **Motherwort in Tradition**

- **Midwifery herb:** Used to ease tension and steady the heartbeat of women in labor, motherwort was trusted as an ally for both physical and emotional resilience.
- **The lion-hearted plant:** Its botanical name, *Leonurus cardiaca*, means "lion-hearted," a reminder of its gift of courage for the heart.
- **A plant of thresholds:** In folk practice, motherwort was given during times of transition, not only childbirth, but grief, change of seasons, and times of personal upheaval.

Always, motherwort speaks of the courage to remain steady in difficult passages.

#### **The Thresholds of Life**

Every life contains thresholds: birth, death, marriage, loss, migration, illness, new beginnings. At these points, the familiar falls away and the unknown opens before us. Fear often arises here, not because we are weak, but because change always carries uncertainty.

Motherwort reminds us that courage is not the absence of fear, it is the willingness to move through fear with steadiness. Like the midwife's candle, its medicine lights the path without demanding that we walk faster than we can.

#### **Motherwort in Practice**

- **Calm the heart:** A gentle tea of motherwort can ease tension and steady the nerves. (*Note: it has a bitter taste, best combined with lemon balm or spearmint*).
- **Threshold ritual:** Light a candle, crush motherwort in your palms, and inhale its scent while naming aloud the transition you are facing.
- **Lion-hearted affirmation:** Whisper to yourself: *My heart is steady. My courage is enough.*

## Reflective Prompt

- *What threshold am I standing at now?*
- *What fears accompany me into this passage?*
- *What would it mean to move forward lion-hearted, even if still afraid?*

Thresholds are rarely easy, but they are the places where life expands. Motherwort offers us steadiness in these passages. It does not remove the pain, but it reminds the heart that courage is possible.

When we light a candle, whisper a prayer, and step through the doorway, we carry its medicine with us.

Motherwort teaches us this: courage is not loud. It is steady, quiet, and faithful, enough to carry us through the night into morning.

## **Story Five: *The Potter's Hands***

The clay felt strange in his palms, as if it no longer belonged to him. His fingers, once so sure, trembled when he tried to press them into shape. The wheel had sat untouched for years, gathering dust in the corner of the studio. After the accident, after the silence, he had closed the door and walked away.

But today, the door was open. The light streamed in across the workbench, catching the motes of dust like tiny sparks. On the table beside him, a steaming bowl of nettle tea gave off its sharp, green scent. He had brewed it that morning, bitter, earthy, grounding. An old habit returning, like a friend who had not forgotten him.

He dipped his hands into the bowl of water, then pressed them into the clay. The wheel began to turn slowly, humming beneath his touch. At first, his hands shook. The clay buckled, collapsing into itself. He pulled back, closing his eyes against the old shame.

But the scent of nettle drifted up again, reminding him of resilience. Of stings that gave way to strength. Of how even the harshest plants could heal when given time and care.

He breathed. Tried again.

The wheel turned steady this time. His hands, though unsteady, began to remember. Muscle and memory worked together, pressing, guiding, shaping. Clay rose beneath his touch, wobbling, then firming. A vessel began to form, wide at the base, narrow at the neck. Imperfect, but alive.

As he worked, his thoughts quieted. There was only the spin of the wheel, the hum of breath, the feel of earth sliding between his fingers. His body, broken once, moved with a rhythm that felt almost whole again.

Hours passed. By evening, the studio smelled of wet clay and nettle tea. On the shelf, three new vessels stood drying, uneven, rough, but steady. He touched the rim of the last one, his thumb smoothing the edge. His hands still trembled, but not with fear. With effort. With life.

When he set the final vessel down, he whispered into the silence: *I am still here.*

The clay had steadied him, grounding him back into his body. The nettle had reminded him that healing is not smooth, it stings, it shakes, it steadies. And the wheel, once silent, turned again, carrying him back into himself.

### ***Hands in Clay, Body in Story, Nettle and Grounding***

Nettle is not a gentle herb at first glance. Its sting startles, its bite lingers on the skin. Yet beneath its sharpness, nettle is among the most nourishing plants we know; rich in minerals, deeply strengthening, grounding to body and spirit.

Clay, too, holds this doubleness. Cold and heavy at first, it softens under the hands, taking shape, becoming vessel. To work with clay, to knead it, center it, shape it, is to ground oneself in earth.

Together, nettle and clay remind us that healing is not always soft. Sometimes it stings. Sometimes it shakes. And then, slowly, it steadies.

### Nettle in Tradition

- **The sting and the gift:** Folk wisdom often said, “Grasp nettle firmly and it won’t sting.” Whether or not true, the phrase became a metaphor for facing challenges directly.
- **The nourishing green:** Infusions of nettle leaves have been used to strengthen blood, bones, and resilience.
- **Protective plant:** Bundles of nettle were once hung in doorways to keep away ill spirits, a reminder that what stings can also protect.

Nettle teaches us that strength is sometimes hidden inside what first feels harsh.

### Clay as Ground

Working clay draws us back into the body. The hands press, shape, remember. Muscles ache, yet the rhythm is steadying. Like nettle, clay reminds us that healing often comes through touch, tactile, raw, direct.

When grief or trauma pulls us out of ourselves, grounding practices return us. Nettle strengthens from within; clay steadies from without. Together, they remind us that healing is as much about inhabiting the body as it is about tending the mind.

### Practices for Grounding

- **Nettle infusion:** Steep dried nettle leaves overnight in hot water. Strain and sip slowly, imagining yourself rooted like the plant.
- **Clay practice:** Work with clay, even simply rolling it in your hands. Let it remind you that you are connected to the earth.
- **Sting as strength:** Reflect on moments in your life where what first hurt later became healing.

### Reflective Prompt

- *What stings in my life right now? How might it also carry medicine?*
- *What practices bring me back into my body when I feel untethered?*
- *Where do I feel the weight of earth supporting me?*

Nettle and clay carry the same truth: healing is not always soft, but it is steady. The sting leads to strength. The weight leads to grounding.

When our hands tremble, we can return to these elements, the earth beneath us, the plants around us, and remember that healing is possible, even if imperfect.

Grounding is not about never falling. It is about finding the weight, the soil, the roots that hold us steady when we do.

## Writing at the Edge

This book has carried you through both stories and essays, through characters and herbs, through memory and meaning. Perhaps you felt more at home in the fictions, or perhaps the nonfiction spoke more directly to you. But the truth is: you don't need to choose.

The real invitation is to explore your own in-between space. To let story and reflection braid together in your own life. To write at the threshold where truth and imagination meet.

## Why Your Stories Matter

Every person carries stories worth telling. Some are shaped by memory, others by dream, others by moments so ordinary they almost vanish unless named. By blending fiction and nonfiction, you give yourself permission to tell them all, not worrying about category, only about care.

Your stories matter because they keep memory alive. They hold forgiveness, renewal, courage, grounding. And they offer healing, both for you and for those who might one day read them.

## How to Begin

- **Choose a Plant Ally:** Begin with one plant that calls to you. Rosemary, linden, nettle, or another. Let its history, scent, and presence guide your words.
- **Write a Fiction Fragment:** Imagine a character who carries this plant into their life. Let them move through a moment, grief, reconciliation, renewal, courage.
- **Write a Reflection:** Then, write a nonfiction piece beside it. What does this plant mean to you? What does it symbolize in culture or healing? What truth does it carry for your life?
- **Bridge Them:** Create a short interlude between, a journal entry, a poem, a fragment. This becomes the thread tying story and essay together.

## Gentle Prompts

- *What memory do I want to preserve in story?*
- *What plant has walked with me through hardship or joy?*
- *What truth lives both in my imagination and in my lived experience?*
- *What interlude would I write to bridge them?*

## A Reader's Ritual

1. Make tea with an herb that speaks to you.
2. Sit with notebook or page.
3. Write a story fragment (fiction).

4. Write a reflection (nonfiction).
5. Place them side by side.
6. See how they speak to one another.

This simple ritual mirrors the shape of this book, a way of reminding yourself that you don't have to divide the parts of your voice.

## **Invitation**

You have read five stories and five reflections. Now the question is: what will yours be?

Do not worry about perfection, or category, or form. Write with rosemary's remembrance, linden's forgiveness, St. John's Wort's renewal, motherwort's courage, nettle's grounding. Write with both hands, one in story, one in truth.

Because healing, like story, is never only one thing. It is both.

And so are you.

## **Conclusion**

### ***The Gentle Edge***

Stories end, but they never really end. They echo in the body, in memory, in the way we turn a phrase days later without realizing it. Reflections do the same, they plant themselves quietly, waiting to be remembered. This book has been both: story and reflection, invention and root. My hope is that you felt them not as separate, but as a braid.

Life rarely divides cleanly. Memory mixes with imagination. Grief carries both fact and dream. Healing comes not only from herbs boiled into tea, but also from the way a story stirs something within us.

The gentle edge is this: the place where fiction and nonfiction meet, where truth is not flattened into either/or. It is not about proving what "really happened," nor escaping into what "could have happened." It is about honoring the layered nature of reality, how we live in both at once.

### **Plants as Bridge**

The plants in these pages, rosemary, linden, St. John's Wort, motherwort, nettle, each carried a story and an essay, a character and a reflection. They remind us that plants, like stories, are always more than one thing. They are medicine and metaphor, memory and presence, root and leaf.

They bridge the edge because they have always lived there. They heal bodies and they carry symbols. They steady the heart, and they inspire stories.

### **An Ongoing Experiment**

This volume is not meant to be finished, but to be continued. My invitation is that you try the experiment yourself: write a pocket story, then write its reflection. Let fiction hold the heart, nonfiction hold the root, and place a bridge between them.

There is no wrong way to do this. Only the way that honors both your imagination and your truth.

### **Closing Thought**

Between story and truth there is no dividing wall. Only a gentle edge. A place where both belong.

If you walk away with anything from this book, may it be this:

- That your memories are stories worth shaping.
- That your imagination carries truths worth naming.
- That healing lives not only in the facts or the fictions, but in the space where they meet.

Carry both. Write both. Let your life hold both.

Because between story and truth is where we live.

*You Make Your Own Medicine, Bitter Sweet Novels, and The Apothecary's Atlas series, The Apothecary Press published books...*

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