The Purple Tulip

A Poem for Brigitte from Karolos

One sunny, crisp spring morning
As I rushed along the street
I glimpsed a purple tulip
Rising through some old concrete

It was in a vacant lot
That I traveled past each day
But never really noticed
As I hurried on my way

Perplexed, I paused and wondered
How this flower here now stood
Amid rocks and broken glass
And discarded bits of wood

“We could move that rock a bit,”
A soft voice behind me said
“Your friend would get more sunshine
In a proper flowerbed”

I turned to see a woman —
Just how old I could not say
Her eyes were wise yet youthful,
And her hair both blonde and gray

“Of course,” I nodded slowly
“Yes, let’s see what we can do”
She took my hand and led me
Through the early morning dew
Time’s largely but perception
And who knows how long I stayed
A minute or an hour
Or till light began to fade

We accomplished much that day —
We moved rocks and pulled out weeds
And tended to this garden’s
Many other pressing needs

In the coming days and weeks
Every morning they were there
The single purple tulip
And my friend with gray-blonde hair

Inspired by our example
Others helped improve the site
Bringing tools and plants and soil
They’d work late into the night

A neglected, fallow lot,
Once a shambles filled with gloom,
Was now a vibrant garden,
Regal chalice in full bloom

“Who owns this lovely garden?”
A man asked one afternoon
Wistfully my friend replied:
“I do now, but you will soon.”

She turned and looked upon me
As a tear ran down her cheek
Her gaze moved toward the tulip
We held hands and didn’t speak
Almost imperceptibly
Gentle wilting had begun
The petals curled up slightly
Purple embers in the sun

At last she broke her silence:
“I will miss you my dear friend.
Life’s mysterious in ways
That we cannot comprehend.”

“But we’ve so much left to do,”
I protested angrily.
“Lead by doing — you’ll know how
If you can’t, just think of me.”

Today I see the garden
With its missing centerpiece
The vision of that tulip
In my mind shall never cease

As for Brigitte, this I know
A new garden she has found
Where sun and work and love and
Purple tulips now abound

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