

# 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-blond 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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