

Long ago, in a little village
between green hills,
lived a girl named Mei.

Mei loved plants
more than anything.



Just then, her friend Lian arrived.

“Mei! Come with us!”

Mei shook her head.

“I can’t.”

“Why?”

Mei looked at her empty pot.

“My seed didn’t grow.”



An illustration of two young girls walking on a stone path in a garden. The girl on the left is wearing a red traditional Chinese top and white pants, holding a large red pot. The girl on the right is wearing a green traditional Chinese top and tan pants. They are both smiling. In the background, there is a large tree with pink blossoms, a stone wall, and traditional Chinese buildings with tiled roofs. The foreground is filled with various colorful flowers and rocks.

Lian smiled.

**“Maybe your little seed
is just taking its time.”**

Mei smiled back.

Then she picked up her pot.

“Let’s go.”

At the courtyard,
the children proudly showed
Master Lin their plants.

Tall leaves.
Bright flowers.

Tiny green shoots.
Mei quietly held her empty pot.



When it was Mei's turn,
she took a deep breath.

"My seed didn't grow,"
she said.

**"I tried everything.
But this is what I have."**



The illustration depicts a serene garden setting. A large, gnarled plum tree with pink blossoms dominates the upper half of the frame. In the background, a traditional Chinese building with a tiled roof is visible. In the foreground, an elderly man with a long white beard and hair tied in a bun is kneeling on a stone path, wearing a dark green robe. He is looking towards two young girls. The girl on the left has long dark hair in a braid and wears a green robe. The girl on the right has short dark hair and wears a red robe; she is holding a large, empty terracotta pot. Two other children, a boy and a girl, stand in the background near a doorway. The ground is covered with stone tiles and scattered pink petals.

Master Lin smiled.

**“You did everything
you were supposed to do.”**

Mei looked up.

“But everyone else has flowers.”



**"I gave every child
the same seed,"**
said Master Lin.

**"But before I gave them to you...
I boiled them."**

The children gasped.



"A boiled seed cannot grow,"
Master Lin explained.

**"Mei was the only one
brave enough to bring me
the truth."**

Mei looked at her empty pot.

And smiled.

Every morning, Mei watered the flowers.

She talked to the bamboo.

She even whispered,

“Good morning, old plum tree.”



One spring morning,
Master Lin called all the children
to the village courtyard.

On a wooden table sat
a basket of little red pots.





“Inside each pot is a special seed,”
said Master Lin.

“Take it home.
Give it sunlight.
Give it water.
And give it patience.”



Mei hurried home.

She filled her little red pot
with soft brown soil.

Then she planted the seed
very carefully.

**"I'll take good care of you,"
she whispered.**

A young girl with dark hair in pigtails, wearing a red robe with white trim and white pants, is kneeling on the ground in a garden. She is looking down at a red pot. The garden is filled with various flowers, including a large white flower on the left, a large red flower on the right, and several smaller blue and orange flowers. In the background, there is a traditional building with a tiled roof and a tree with blossoms.

The next morning,
Mei ran to her pot.

She looked.

She waited.

She looked again.

Nothing.

So Mei tried again.

She gave the seed water.

She moved the pot into the sunshine.

Then she waited.

And waited.





Days passed.

Then one morning,
Mei saw the other children.

Their pots were full of green leaves
and tiny flowers.

But Mei's pot was still empty.



A young girl with dark hair in pigtails, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and white pants, sits on a mossy rock under a large, gnarled tree with pink blossoms. She has a sad expression and her hand is resting on a red bucket on the ground. The scene is filled with falling petals and various flowers in the foreground.

Mei's heart felt heavy.

"What did I do wrong?"
she wondered.

She had watered the seed. She had given it sunlight.
She had waited patiently.