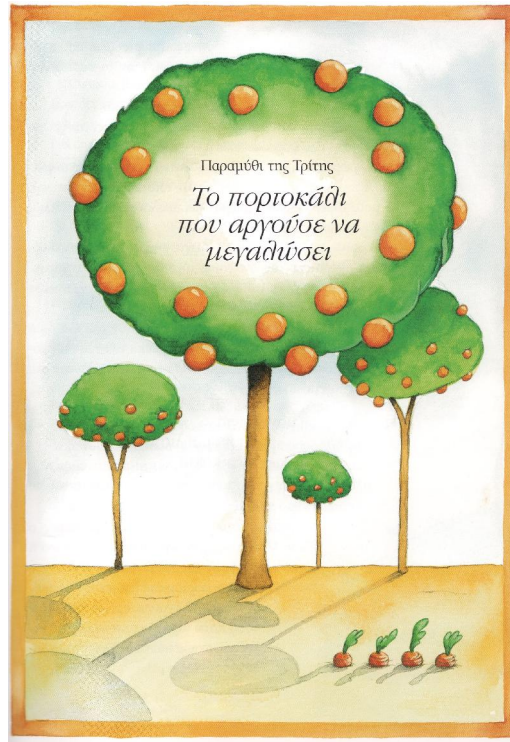


*Tuesday's tale:*

## The orange that was a late bloomer



In the middle of a garden sprouted an orange tree and every year it grew dozens of oranges. In the summer the oranges were small and green.

“Sun, help me grow my oranges!” said the orange tree.

And the sun did her the favor and sent down color for the orange tree’s children. The oranges drank the color of the sun little by little. By autumn, they began to grow. They would all become yellowish.

“Sun, send me some more color!” pleaded the orange tree. “My children need some more.”

Even during the fall, when the sun was very tired and appeared less and less in the sky, it did them the favor. The sun sent down color for the children - the same color it wore from the time it woke till the time it went to sleep.

By winter, all the oranges had a bright color of their own, a color that people called orange. And that orange was such a beautiful color that the neighbors in the garden were jealous.

The **bitter orange** tree,  
the tangerine tree,  
the loquat tree,  
the apricot tree,

even the carrots in the ground were all jealous. They cried to the sun to send down color for their children also.

“Soon, soon. All in good time,” answered the sun. “First the orange tree! Then it’s your turn. Patience!”

The orange took pride in watching her children grow beautifully in time. And her greatest joy was when her ripened oranges let go of her branches and set off on their own path.

However, one year something unexpected happened for the first time. Once winter arrived, the orange tree sensed that one of her oranges was still green and small.

“Mommy, when will I grow up?” asked the orange upset. “When will I be ripe like my siblings? When will I be orange like them? When will I have color like the neighbor’s tangerines and bitter oranges? When will my color be the same as the carrots’? When?”

What could the orange tree do? She asked the sun for help.

“It’s difficult this time of year to send color to your child,” said the sun. “I’m tired from all the work I did during the summer and now I’m on my winter vacation in order to rest. In the spring when I’ll have more strength, around the time the loquats and apricots need me, I will help. You will have to wait! Patience!”

What was the orange tree to do? Since she had no where else to turn for color for her child, she said to the sun,

“Alright, I’ll wait.”

Afterwards, she advised her little orange that was late in growing up:

“Patience! We must be patient until spring comes, my child.”

“But until then, how will the time go by?” whined the little orange. “I’ll get bored waiting.”

“We’ll find a way for you not to get bored,” consoled the orange tree. “Every morning I will gather the birds on my branches to teach you songs. And every night I will tell you stories before you go to sleep.”

And that is exactly what they did. In the morning the birds gathered on her branches and taught the little orange songs. And at night its mother would tell it a story before going to sleep.

First she told it the story of the Ugly Duckling, whose nose and feet were orange, and everyone thought it was a duck. Everybody called it ugly because it was different from the other ducks. But when it grew, in time, the reason was clear. It wasn't a duck. It became a swan and dazzled the world with its beautiful feathers and long neck.

Afterwards, the orange tree told it the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. The dwarves may have seemed different, small like children, but they were all filled with kindness. They lived in their house happily and could do everything brilliantly. That is why Snow White loved them with all of her heart. And she stayed with them until she married.

Next was the story of Thumbelina, the tiny girl who could sit on a leaf and fit in the palm of her mother's hand. But the love her mother had for her was great, oh so great. She was loveable because Thumbelina she was a special child. It didn't matter that she was tiny.

Then the orange tree told her little orange the story of Little Tom Thumb, who went into the forest with his brothers and nearly got lost. However, in the end they made it and were saved. Tom Thumb helped them because he had a sharp mind despite his height.

The orange tree told other stories as well. She told so many stories that the little orange was filled with them. And bit by bit, the orange slowly began to grow. Now all that was missing was a little orange color.

"When will the sun send color down for me, mommy?" it asked eagerly.

"Patience. You need patience, my child," answered the orange tree and began telling stories again.

Her child heard her every night. The neighbors heard as well:

The bitter orange tree,  
the **tangerine tree**,  
the loquat tree,  
the apricot tree,

even the carrots in the ground. The stars bent over to hear as well. The sky lowered down and the moon listened also.

And so time passed.

Winter was finally gone and spring had arrived. The sun began sending color to the little orange as was requested.

Bit by bit the little orange acquired a bright orange color.

“It is time for you to leave my branches now,” said the mother tree happily one morning. “It’s time for you to take your own path, just like your siblings.”

“I will leave tomorrow,” said the orange. “But tonight I want you to tell me all the stories you told me all winter – so as to remember them always.”

The orange tree did not deny this favor – how could she? When it became dark and the moon rose, she began telling all the stories from the beginning – all of the stories that nurtured the orange as it waited to grow.

The orange tree did not forget any stories. She told them all in a row until the orange was very tired. The neighbors were also tired:

The bitter orange tree,  
the tangerine tree,  
the **loquat tree**,  
the apricot tree,

even the carrots in the ground. Even the stars were sleepy, along with the sky and the moon.

“It’s time for bed now,” said the orange tree to her child. “Good night, my orange little orange! Sweet dreams, my big, good orange!”

“Good night, mommy!” yawned the orange happily.

And it fell into a deep sleep until the morning.