

The Secret of the Autumn Leaf



By JoDee Martin

The crisp wind of autumn drifted through the forest, carrying the scent of pine and the soft rustle of falling leaves. Beneath the wide branches of a grand old maple tree, five woodland friends gathered: Owl, Turkey, Fox, Raccoon, and Porcupine.



They gazed up at the canopy above. The leaves, once bright green, had turned to shades of gold, crimson, and amber, shimmering like tiny flames in the afternoon sun.



Owl tilted his head thoughtfully.
"Every season teaches us something,"
he hooted.

"But I wonder — why do the leaves
change their colors and let go each fall?
There must be a secret hidden inside."



Turkey fluffed his feathers and looked around.

"Maybe it's a message of abundance!"
he said warmly.

"When the leaves fall, they cover the forest floor like a blanket, feeding the earth below. They remind us to share what we have before the cold comes."



Fox flicked her tail and smiled.

"Or perhaps," she said slyly,
"the leaves are showing off one last bit of
beauty before winter. That's clever — a
way of celebrating change!"



Raccoon rubbed his paws together curiously. "I think the leaves are just being resourceful," he said.

"When the days grow shorter and colder, the trees pull their food and energy back into their roots to save it for later.

That's why the green disappears! The bright colors were hiding there all along."



Porcupine nodded slowly, his quills rustling softly.

"It's true," he said in his gentle voice.
"The green comes from something called chlorophyll, which helps the tree make food from sunlight. When the sunlight fades, the chlorophyll fades too — and the secret colors finally show."

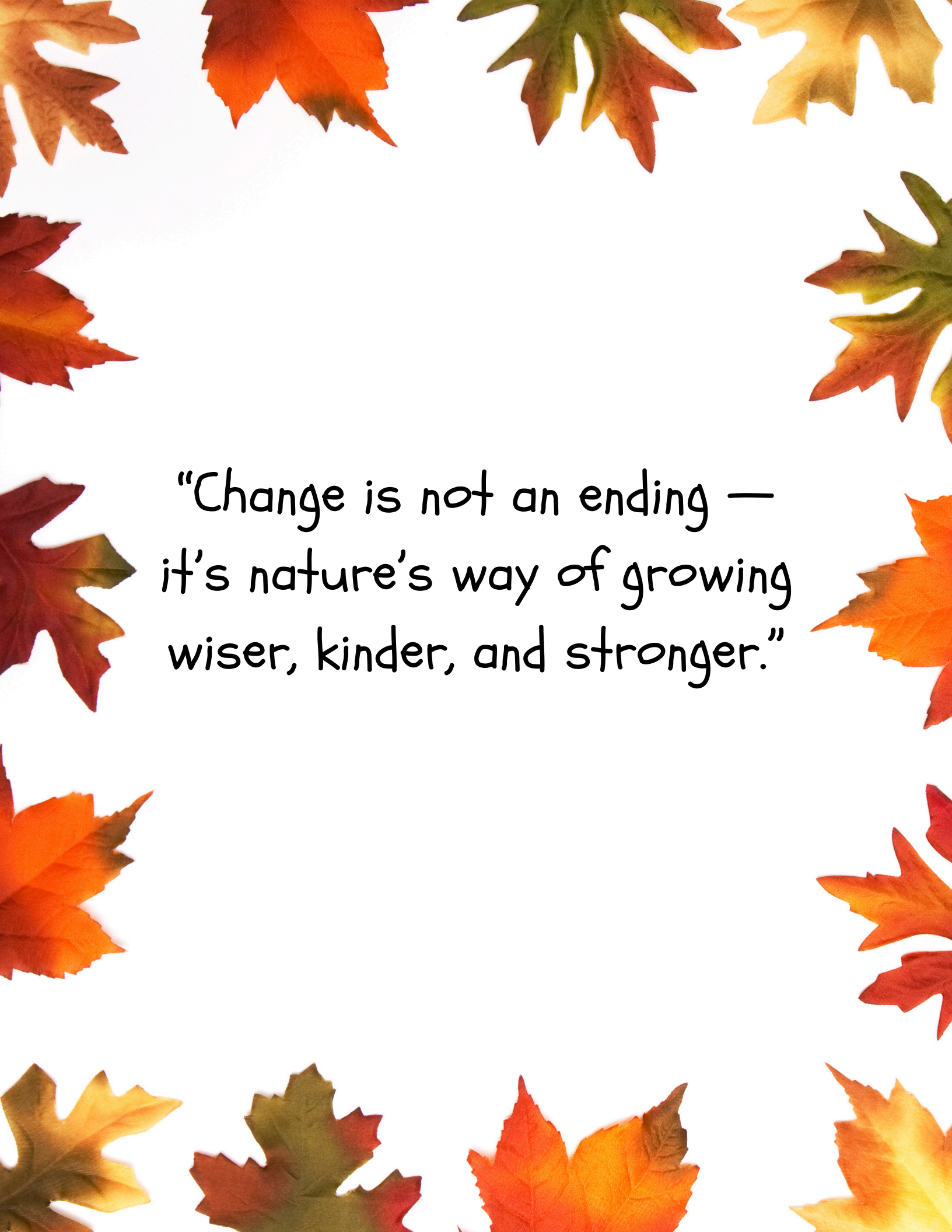
Owl's eyes gleamed. "So the leaf's secret isn't just about beauty," he said wisely. "It's about wisdom — knowing when to let go and trust the cycle of nature." The friends grew quiet as the wind danced through the branches. A single red leaf loosened and spiraled down between them. It landed softly on the ground, glowing like a tiny ember.



"Maybe," Porcupine said softly, "the leaf also teaches patience — to rest and return when the time is right. After all, the tree will sleep now, but spring will wake it again."

The wind picked up once more, swirling around the animals and lifting the fallen leaves into the air. The forest shimmered with color as the leaves twirled and whispered their hidden message:



A decorative border of autumn leaves in various shades of orange, red, and yellow, arranged around the central text.

"Change is not an ending —
it's nature's way of growing
wiser, kinder, and stronger."

Owl closed his eyes, Turkey puffed his chest proudly, Fox twirled playfully, Raccoon grinned with curiosity, and Porcupine smiled quietly to himself.



They each carried the leaf's secret home that evening — tucked not in their paws or feathers, but in their hearts.