Sadie sighed, her eyes glittering like light in the dark sky. The trees around her shone with an enchanted glow as the moon descended slowly over their heads. There, in the middle of the clearing, was her most important possession. The green stem seemed to mock her with a playful tilt.

Perhaps entering the gardening competition wasn’t such a good decision after all. Maybe I shouldn’t have entered it at all, Sadie thought gloomily.

The prize was too entrancing: a free trip to Hollywood. As soon as she had seen it, she knew she had to try. Unfortunately, her dreams faded away as fast as lightning, leaving her angry and frustrated.

Why can’t it just grow? The due date was a week away, and yet it had not even risen an inch since last month. All her hard work — from pulling the weeds to watering it — had been for nothing. She’d seen the sunflower field the neighboring farm had grown. The flowers had beautiful golden petals, perfect down to the last atom. Meanwhile, hers seemed like a joke compared to the farmer’s.

As the clock slowly ticked by, hope turned into desperation, and desperation grew extreme. Looking at the farmer’s rows of carefully cared for sunflowers, an idea started to form in Sadie’s head.

Why can’t she just take one? It would be better than handing in hers, which hadn’t even sprouted any petals yet. The farmer wouldn’t notice; there were too many for him to care for anyway. But again, that would be cheating — taking someone else’s hard work to impress the judge was unacceptable. If she was found to be cheating, she would surely be disqualified. And even if she wasn’t caught, the glory and triumph of winning the competition wouldn’t be Sadie’s after all.

When only three days remained and her own sunflower still hadn’t grown, Sadie became more worried and desperate than ever. Her heart seemed to be beating rapidly every second, and she was twitching her fingers every time she saw the farmer’s sunflowers. Finally, on the second last day, Sadie’s patience relented. She was going to steal one.

Creeping under the fence, she glanced all the sunflowers hungrily. Sadie chose the finest one she could find. The flower shuddered as she slowly pulled it out of the earth, seeming as if it knew that Sadie wasn’t supposed to be touching it. After a while, Sadie planted the flower next to her own, seeing the contrast between the two clear and bright. As the princess and the servant sat together in the cold moonlight, Sadie was finally satisfied.

The next morning, Sadie woke up feeling guilty but assured she would win the competition. When she arrived at the clearing with a pot, electricity ran through her veins. How was that possible?

The flower she had borrowed from the farmer now drooped, its petals grey and withered. The small one, in fact, was now sprouting. Golden petals wrapped around a small core, bestowing warmth to the place.

Suddenly, she understood. She shouldn’t have stolen the flower from the farmer, as it had withered under her care. True success isn’t about perfection; it is about the work you do and the lessons you learn along the way. She would have to give her flower to the farmer as payback. Despite this, Sadie smiled. She had learnt a valuable lesson, and the competition didn’t matter now.