

Chapter 1

Thelma Awakening

Thelma considered herself to be "just a plain, little thistle"; and not very big as thistles go.

Like her father, thistles can grow to be three or four feet tall.

Thelma was barely four inches tall if she stretched way up as far as she could stretch.

But no matter. Thelma was a happy little thistle who lived on a happy little country ditch with her family and friends.

This morning Thelma opened one sleepy eye in no hurry to end her soft sleep.

"Oh, Pooh!" she exclaimed. Now her ears were waking up, too. She would never get back to sleep. She could hear the morning waking up and could feel a gentle breeze blowing the black, sleepy night away.

Through one sleepy eye, Thelma could see that, indeed, the sun was pushing up a new day. The night sky slowly changed from black to gray to a gentle pink color.



"Oh, my!" she said. She remembered how Grandfather Thistle told her stories of a pink morning sky when he was a boy. A pink morning sky means rain is on the way.



She listened to see if she could hear rain. But no rain. She only heard one little bird starting his morning song.

"It must be Mr. Cardinal," she thought.

Mr. Cardinal was always the first bird to wake up in the morning and the last bird to go to sleep at night. All day long he and Mrs. Cardinal were busy, busy, busy flying from bush to bush. They searched for just the right twig and bit of fluff to make a soft, warm nest. Mrs. Cardinal was soon to lay eggs and she knew the design

of her nest had to be not only soft, but safe and snug, too.

Soon Thelma heard another bird singing. This bird's song was not as loud as Mr. Cardinal's. This bird sounded like he was far off in the distance. Thelma listened. It sounded like Mr. Cardinal and the other bird were talking to each other.

Mr. Cardinal would sing, "Pretty bird. Pretty bird." Then Thelma could hear in the distance the other bird singing, "Me, too! Me, too!" Mr. Cardinal would sing back, "This tree is mine. This tree is mine."

The other bird politely sang, "Okay. Okay."

Thelma stretched sleepily and tried to open her other eye. The calm sky was brighter color or pink now, and there were a few patches of blue in between.

Grandfather called this color sky-blue-pink. He said it was because it was not all blue, like the sky is usually blue. But it was not all pink, like little flowers are pink. It was sky-blue pink.



"Oh, Grandfather you are so wise." Thelma said giggling to herself.

Thelma tried again to get both eyes open at one time. She peeped through her left eye, then peeped through her right eye. "So far, so good," she thought.

Then her nose wiggled and tickled. "Ah-choo." The earth was so dry and dusty it made her sneeze. "Ah-choo. Ah-choo." "I hope it does rain!" she said out loud. "Then maybe my little nose will not have to sneeze so much".

Just then she had a happy thought. "I wonder how much my little nose grew over night -- and the rest of me, too." Now she really was awake. She wanted so much to be big. Big like Ruby.

Ruby was Thelma's older sister. Ruby was older by several years, and taller by several inches. Mother said that Ruby was becoming a beautiful thistle with ruby-colored hair. Although she was not yet fully grown, Mother did say she was "blossoming".

Whatever that meant. It must have something to do with her dress getting too small.



"Mother! Mother!" Thelma called excitedly. "Am I big like Ruby yet?"

Mother looked at Thelma with a twinkle in her eye and a sweet smile on her face and said, "Oh, no. Not yet, Dear. But you do not want to grow up too fast. Just enjoy being a sweet little thistle."

"Oh, pooh!" pouted Thelma. "I guess I will have to find something that a 'sweet little thistle' enjoys doing," Thelma said with a mocking tone in her voice. What does a little thistle enjoy doing on a beautiful sky-blue pink day?