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# My Gardening Buddy

*Is still with me. In the garden.*

*By Loren Billings*



I never connected my little dog, Jenna, to gardening until the day she died.

You see, in her last years we no longer hiked our New Hampshire mountain each day. Instead we opted for trips down the flat road, which passed right by the garden. As we headed out, I couldn't help but scan my plot to see what was new. I had to resist getting involved, though—this was Jenna's time. Her piercing stares made sure I knew that.

But the return trip was different. Then I would step into the garden, filled with vegetables and flowers. Sometimes it would be hours before I would step out again. Jenna would spend this time sitting on the cool earth by the foundation of the nearby old garage, watching birds and the occasional snake and breathing in the wonderful scents carried on the breezes from the woods. Jenna, who called me Lo (or so I imagined), told everyone (ditto) that when I gardened, I was "being boring."

So on that warm, sunny October morning when I walked into the garden after returning from the vet without her, I was stunned to find her there—her memory, that is. I felt her spirit in the orange and yellow marigolds, the huge, heavy sunflower heads, and the Brussels sprouts, all of which we had nursed together day in and day out since Springtime. She was with me again at lunchtime, when I opened my thermos, which was filled with what I call garden soup, a medley concocted from whatever bounty Mother Nature had offered up.

It was then I realized for the first time that we had gardened together for years, and though she was gone now, I was joyous, knowing we would close out the season together. ❖

