**Growing Time**

My name is Angela. Our family lived in the rain forest. We had worked hard to cut away the trees and bushes, and make a clearing where we built our huts. I was only a young girl at the time of our arrival to this particular part of the forest, but I remember clearly how hard my father and older brothers worked, and how beautiful our little home was. My mother helped to make our huts cozy and began planting things like yams, cassava, corn and millet. We even had some banana trees. I loved eating bananas.

I would watch my mother dig and prepare the earth, doing what little I could to help out, as I was only four years old at the time. I would bring water when she needed it; I would fetch the seeds or roots when she was ready to plant. I'd bring her little snacks when she was hungry, or act as a go-between for my mother and father, running little errands here and there. I'd watch over my baby brother who was very small at the time.

I had two older brothers, and one younger brother. I was the only girl in our family, and I wanted so much to grow up and be able to do all of the things that my mother did. I wanted to be able to plant the food and watch it grow. I was still very young, and was learning little by little as the days went by. It just seemed to take forever, and time was passing by so slowly. One day my mother found me sitting in the corner of our hut crying. "What's the matter, my dear?" she asked. "I want to grow up and be a big girl like you. I want to be able to prepare the earth and plant the seeds and roots. I don't want to be a little girl, but it takes so long to grow up." I sobbed. "Maybe you don't feel like you're growing up very quickly, and it will take some time before you can till the ground and grow food by yourself. But you do help a lot and are learning very quickly, and one day real soon you'll be able to do all of the jobs that I do. You just have to be patient.

"Look at the seeds and roots we've been planting. We put them under the soil where ifs dark and moist, and it takes a long time for them to start to grow. They probably want to be big plants right away, but they begin as seeds-little, tiny seeds, or roots. They're small at first, but then if they patiently wait, they begin to grow. Slowly but surely, they poke their head out from underneath the soil, and day by day they grow stronger and bigger until they finally start to bear fruit or vegetables or grains.

"And what about the banana trees? We have to wait patiently for the bananas. The cluster of bananas starts to grow, but at first they're small and green and we can't eat them. Then they grow and grow, bigger and bigger, growing sweeter and sweeter. We can then pick them, but we still have to wait for them to turn yellow before we can eat them. You see, waiting takes patience, but in the end we get to eat the delicious, ripe bananas.

"And consider your father and your brothers. They have to be patient too. When they go hunting, they have to wait patiently and quietly for the game. They can't be in a hurry; otherwise they'll scare the animals away. See, we all have to learn patience.

''You're learning patience too. You want to be big right now, and you want to do so many things, but growing up takes time. There are many things about being little that are fun, and you'll be big enough to do the other things soon, so enjoy each day that you have. Just like the banana, you'll grow big and beautiful," she said, as she held me in her arms and wiped away my tears.

Everything that my mother told me that day was true. It wasn't long before I began learning how to plant and care for fruit trees, seeds, roots, vegetables and other plants. Then a few years later my mother had a couple of other daughters, my younger sisters. When they grew up, I began to teach them everything that I knew. We even started learning how to make bricks out of the clay that we'd collect from anthills, which my father and brothers would then use for our houses.

So don't worry if you feel like growing up takes so long. It takes time to grow and learn, just like it took me time to learn how to farm and grow things. There's a time and a season for us all, and we each have a special place and job. You have a special job too. If you haven't found it yet, just patiently wait and you'll discover it soon enough. Remember that it takes time for the banana to grow, but it’s worth waiting for.

* What did Angela have to learn?
* If we worry and fret, does it help things go faster?
* Why should we go slow and be patient?

