

Tales from the Stormthrower
Esmiralda: A walk in the park

I

On her first time to the park, she stood staring at the huge marble gate. Massive but looking slim and beautiful from this far away. Finally she spotted her teacher, picked her bag from the pavement and started to close in on the gate.

A cloud temporarily blocked off the sun and suddenly the white gate seemed to glow a light blue. With the crest on top of it shining as a beacon. Closer still she counted the carvings on the pillars, spanning the road and watched them all turn white again. One of the carvings depicting a male athlete took a bow towards her, answered by her with a little nod, knowing all too well only a few people were able to see this.

It seemed however an invitation to all the characters on the main beam. They started to move over the surface and after a little while she recognized it as a pantomime about the master of the woods and the mistress of the lake.

“You are staring way to much at the gate”: the voice of her teacher whispered behind her. She smiled, telling him that if someone was setting up a play just for you, you should have the decency to watch it, greeted him and let him push her slowly through the gate. Nodded to the players on the beam as thanks and entered the park.

All the columns lining the main path, leading to the big lake in the middle of the park, seemed twisted as all the statues were stretching, turning their head to find out what was happening at the gate, but suddenly falling in line again when they got a glimpse of the earnest looking face of her teacher.

The sun hid behind the clouds once more and it seemed it might rain a little. Still an endless queue of people flocked through the park, crowding the small twisting paths branching off into the low hanging trees left and right. One way signs controlled the flow seeking the sea of flowers and the millions of butterflies feasting on them. There was however much more to see, if only you were gifted with the blessing of some magical powers.

Following the scent of her favorite, bright pink, flower. They entered one of the paths and were immediately surrounded by butterflies chasing from flower to flower, eating with urgency, to be ready for their big show in the ritual of life. Way too busy to be disturbed by her she watched them, meanwhile searching for fairies taking advantage of the rush of the butterflies picking up spilled nectar of this otherwise difficult to access flower. As they spotted some, her teacher whispered their origin. Teaching her the subtle differences of dress and leaf, the little creatures were wearing.

She already knew how to keep apart the fair haired grassland fairies from those with their birthplace in the forest, donning raven black hair. Hoping to impress her teacher, she pointed to a fairy with bluish white hair, placing her in the reed beds at the edge of the big lake, but got a lecture about this species instead.

As some young boys in front of her were chasing butterflies, unknowingly they were cornering a few fairies too. Instinctively she lay a hand on one of the boys' shoulders and turned his attention towards a small deer walking through the dense undergrowth. With a cry of joy they all forgot about the butterflies and stared into the brown and green tangle of wood and leaves, hoping to catch sight of it.

Passing the boys they reached a big tree with few leaves hanging over the path. As it had just starting to rain, they decided to use it as shelter even though it was not big enough for the both of them. A soft whisper in the foliage made the tree move, sheltering them completely from the rain. Her trainer pointed towards the tree trunk, where the little fairies she rescued were fluttering around the tree persuading it to move his branches. In this way thanking her for rescuing them.

The short but intense shower diminished and one by one the little fairies came out in the open, from underneath the big five pointed leaves they were using as umbrella. A few even floated down towards her. One very boldly landed on her shoulder. She was wearing a dress, from tiny fresh leaves, shaped around her fragile body, showing off her elegant form. So close by, she thought she could see golden stripes of paint, on her cheeks forming an elemental image of the sun.

She blinked and it was gone. Felt a sudden sting on her cheek as the fairy gave her a quick kiss, letting her, for a very short time, see the world as the fairies do. Lost for words she looked at her teacher and found out this was not standard procedure at an inauguration test.

The sun burst through the clouds reflecting on the silver and golden wings of the fairies, who ascended into the canopy, chasing the butterflies, again taking up their endless job on the many little pink, bell shaped, flowers high up in the tree.

Traffic was growing again and before they left, they bowed to the huge tree, to the amazement of passing common folk. She didn't care, knew her place in the world. Waited some more after letting the flow lead them to some other mystic place in the park.

When they left the last of the pink flowering trees behind, she felt a slight change in magic. Looked around and saw they were just in between a huge old wide oak and a towering pine. Two sentinels watching over their part of the park. She shifted left and right, pretending to pierce the dark green void left open by the foliage, but imprinted the two distinct kinds of magic instead.

The view shifted when they walked on. The towering pine loved the attention of its kin and made this part of the park inhospitable to the undergrowth, by interlocking their branches, leaving no light to sprinkle through down to the forest floor. The lack of flowers however did not mean it had a shortage of visitors. Small animals used the touching branches as super highway and everyone stared at them in amazement, watching them live their life.

Her teacher steered her on, towards the lake already visible through the masses of pine trunks. Had seen her interact with the fairies and only wanted to know how she would influence the world on the edge of the lake.

Small white butterflies danced around the many patches of white and yellow flowers spread around the grass borders of the lake, while their blue cousins frequented the red ones. Here too they saw fairies, darting over the grassland, enjoying the open space to show off their skill in flying. Leaving puffs of smoke after a difficult maneuver, for extra show. She saw them on the lake edge gathering dry sand, holding two handfuls, just to clap their hands to get the designed effect. The common folk stared at it, seeing butterflies dancing through the air. They said that if you stared real close you could see the butterflies shed excess pollen gathered during their banquet on the park flowers.

Pushed on by her teacher, they arrived at a sandy beach, boarded a paddleboat he had hired and scaled the reed beds along the lake. From time to time she looked over the edge of the boat and saw the fish doing a similar dance, over the rocky lake bottom, as the butterflies. Small water nymphs climbed in the reed to see who was in the boat. She smiled at their clumsy attempts. Saw one fall, stretching a web like piece of skin along her legs, giving them a tail like shape, when she held them close to each other to dart through the water.

She began to see the difference between actual fish and the water nymphs, began to attract them and soon after she lay on the front of the boat, hand in the water, playing with them. Getting a tug on her finger and launching the little nymph a few centimeters in the air, seeing her do a somersaulting dive back into the water. Got a bite from a jealous one who had to skip a turn, resulting her to get her hand quickly out of the water, catapulting the nymph high up in the sky. Smiling all over she sat down again, knowing too well all nymphs would want to try this now.

Their boat had drifted to the only island in the lake, where an ancient tree stood lonely, his canopy taking away all sunlight from the barren piece of dirt above the water. His lower branches licking away at the cool fresh water of the lake. She was honored to be taken to meet this wise among wise. Humbled to hear she was very gifted, but needed guidance still. Guidance she may attract from the school of magic.

She was in!

The end