

Bellus Terra is a magical place filled with flowers and stones, moss and toadstools, and many things hidden within. To a human's eye this would look like nothing more than a garden with normal garden things growing there, because that's what *they* want it to be.

"*They*" are the tiny creatures that keep this place alive with work and magic and hope for always.

"*They*" are the fairies, the pixies, the insects, and animals that work hand in hand to keep flowers blooming and seeds sprouting, to keep grasses growing and plants alive.

This is what they do!

This is why they are!

The Keepers, the Helpers, the Ones that give life to the garden!

From high into the sky where the canopy of a large beautiful maple tree opens and down its thick base where plants grow in unison, this place is known to these creatures as Bellus Terra. It is mostly a quiet part of the garden where usually the passing of a dog or a cat is more common than a person. However, there are some days when a young child would find itself at the base of that tree looking so closely for some sign of life. Hoping that they would be the first to spot a fairy or two dancing among the flowers, if not fairies then perhaps a butterfly or a praying mantis might be awesome to see. Possibly to catch a dragonfly and then to let it go again! This is a wish that almost all children have had, at least a time or two! If they only knew about the Terrafays, the Serofays and the faylings of the garden 'Bellus Terra' they would undoubtedly visit more often.

Come take a closer look at their world!

Tammy Woodrow

Bellus Terra

PINE LAKE BOOKS
West Guilford

First printing

Dedication

To both of my beautiful, inspiring daughters and my supportive, handsome husband.

Special Thanks

Two very special Thank-yous: to a great and insightful friend, Kimberley Ashworth and a wonderful soul with a sustaining nature, Natali Filippone.

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1. That First Meeting



WITH THE LAST few fiery red streaks of the setting sun shooting across the sky, the normally peaceful Terrafays prepared for their attack.

“Quick my friends and neighbours! For survival! For the future of Bellus Terra! Take to the air!” commanded Ritro as

he too lifted from the ground where the fairies had been hiding.

As soon as the Terrafays cleared the thick foliage of the plants, a loud and menacing sound filled their ears. An eerie buzzing that echoed all around them, confusing the attackers as to its origin, was heard only moments before a large swarm of mosquito descended upon them. Groups of the biting, stinging, flying insects separated the fighting Terrafays and downed them one at a time. Those Terrafay that landed trying to escape the aerial battle, ran for cover and weapons of defence, but found themselves falling into hidden pits along the ground that were quickly covered with stick doors.

The evil rumbling laughter of the Terrafay's target tightly enveloped the fairies as much as the dirt walls of the deep pits did. The bitten Terrafays fell to the ground and were quickly pulled and dropped without care onto their already trapped friends and neighbours. The attack seemed to last forever, but before the sun's light was done reflecting off the summer's cloud-filled sky, all was over.

All hope of success faded in the minds of the captured Terrafays as surely as the day faded into night.

* * *

As the heavy dew settled across the quiet garden, causing many flowers and grasses to droop with its weight, the tiny inhabitants began to arouse. Stretching and yawning, little Lobelia of the fairy house of Cardinal rubbed the back of her hands across her still tightly closed eyes. *I'm not ready to wake up yet*, she thought. *This morning has come too quickly.*

"Come Lobelia, it's time to get up so we can gather some of the dew," her Serofay mother called up to her room.

Surrounded by lush and brilliant petals of red and swaying high in the sky, Lobelia dressed. She quickly grabbed her red frock and pulled it over her head full of crazy auburn curls, and then she tugged on a pair of gold leggings and

wrapped her belt around her tiny waist. She gathered some of her belongings and secured them tightly to her belt for safekeeping and was ready to leave.

Usually after collecting some of the sweet fresh dew from the grasses below she would follow her daily routine of eating a meal with her dad and then running to Yucca, the Wise Elf's, morning lessons and tales. He always had exciting stories to tell, even if all of them turned into a moral lesson.

Grabbing hold of the weighted rope, Lobelia climbed into her basket nest given to her by Archie, the hummingbird, after his family had moved out of it. She began lowering it to the ground where only her mother and younger sister waited this morning. As with many other perfect mornings she would close her eyes and let the morning sun warm her cheeks before finding the end of her rope. The first time she lowered herself while enjoying her blind warm kisses she landed with a heavy thud on the ground and a sore bottom for days, fortunately it only took her and her father a minute to fix the problem and a large knot was tied into her rope so that she had two full arm lengths before she would hit ground.

"Come on Snail," called Dina over her shoulder. "I'm so hungry I could eat a slug this morning!"

"Ohh! Perish the thought, Sweetheart. We'll gather the dew quickly and I am sure I can find something more appealing than that for breakfast," laughed the fayling girl's mother, Dulcis.

Carrying their tiny pails of acorn caps tied to branches, the girls made their way to blade after blade, tipping them over enough so that the dewdrops would roll into them. When all six of the caps were full they headed back to their home and emptied the sweet water into the pitcher in the kitchen.

Sitting at the table the girls waited for their mom to dole out their breakfast.

“When can I go with Bella?” whined Dina to her mom, while watching her older sister sketched something in her petal pad.

“When you are as tall as that patch of `hens and chicks’ then you can go off and listen to Yucca and play with your friends, but until then you need to stay with me. Don’t worry, the time will fly by.”

“But, Mom that will take forever.” Dina turned to Lobelia and said with a huff, “What are you writing anyways?”

“Nothing that exciting, Dina. Just some questions for Yucca to answer.” Trying to appease her little sister, Lobelia put her pad away and asked, “So what are you planning on doing today? Climbing some nearby boxwood? Or just hiding in the lavender bush?”

With a twinkle in her eyes Dina replied quietly, “Well actually, if you must know, I was planning on gathering some of the lavender buds to give to Mom as a present. She always says how much she loves their smell!”

“She will love that,” Lobelia whispered back.

“And what about you, you gonna spend another day with Echinops?” Dina teased.

“Only if I have to, he is so much of a pain sometimes. I wish I had a blueberry for every time he finds himself in trouble because then I would never go hungry again!” Lobelia laughed about her best friend.

As the two girls giggled at the table their mom arrived with something to eat. Coming from the cold storage she placed some meaty black sunflower seeds on the table along with some of the last wild strawberries that the girls had picked weeks earlier. Usually Dulcis had more of a stock of the sweet red berries but this year they didn’t find as many. Fortunately, the girls really enjoyed their sunflower seeds and didn’t seem to notice that the helping of seeds was more than berries.

Digging into their plates the girls finished their breakfast in record fast time.

“Well I’m off, Mom! See you later Sis,” Lobelia called as she quickly stood from the table and made her way through the front door of the little house.

“That was fast!” Dina laughed. “Um, Mom are there anymore strawberries?” she pleaded.

As she walked away Lobelia looked back over her shoulder and admired the home that her family had made. The base was filled with thick green arching leaves that were tipped in a burgundy hue and the tall stems of the Cardinal flower were strong, all topped with the most vibrant and enchanting colour of red you could find in a flower bloom.

Following along the pebbled path Lobelia made her way towards the Great Maple tree where she knew she would find Yucca surrounded by other faylings listening to the daily tale. Only she didn’t know that she was being followed.

Just above her and whishing along clumsily was Nepeta. He had been following her since she left her house in such a hurry. It wouldn’t take a sightseer to foretell that Lobelia would be walking this path this morning, for she did so every morning. Nor would it take a sightseer to know that she would be rushing along without the slightest knowledge that she was being followed. She was always so consumed with thoughts of what she might learn each day that all she did was dreamily move along the path with feet that were like homing pigeons moving towards their destined site.

Stumbling only once this morning she made her way across the patch of lemon thyme and breathed heavily while picking handfuls of the tiny leaves and stuffing them into her pockets. *I will put these under my pillow tonight*, she thought.

Nepeta could maintain his distance no longer and when he felt that Lobelia would be the least bit frightened by his

sudden appearance he dove downwards and landed right in front of her!

“Yikes! You sneaky fella! How long have you been following me this morning?” she laughed.

Nepeta moved his right hand, which was in the shape of a circle, from his mouth to his right ear which Lobelia knew to mean “home”.

“Oh you rascal, I wish that I could fly so soundlessly, in fact I just wish that I could fly!”

Flapping his arms like a bird and then punching one fist into the center of the other hand, Nepeta grabbed his stomach in silent fits of laughter.

“You take that back Nepeta, I would not crash if I could fly!” laughed Lobelia. “Come on, we’re going to be late.” She grabbed his shoulder and pushed him ahead of her.

Taking off again Nepeta glided through the thick green blades of the day lilies. Walking along, Lobelia couldn’t help but remember the day she met Nepeta as she bent down to step under a fallen twiggy branch.

He was sitting on the bending blade of a dark purple blooming iris with his hands folded across his tiny chest. *What a sour look he has on his face!* She giggled to herself.

Not wanting to disturb the angry looking pixie she had decided to go around the plant but didn’t realize that there was a big hole on the far side of the plant where a skunk had been digging for plump grubs. Of course she was a lot smaller then and had fallen into the hole, not being able to climb back out and without her wings yet, unable to fly out either.

“Hello, um, can you help me?” she had called a few times towards the other side of the iris. “Hey you, pixie, please I need your help!” she had tried again.

After a couple of minutes and just when she was thinking that he must have left, this little purple haired pixie boy flew around the corner and landed on the ground above her.