

A Story for Isabella

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By JB Allyn in collaboration with Diane H. Engelman, Ph.D.

A girl turns handsprings across the lawn until she is out-of-breath and slightly dizzy. She laughs and flops back onto the grass, staring up at the sky, some wispy clouds, and the tree branches curving above her head. It is early evening, before the sun begins its steady slide into night. She likes to be outside at this time – the trees, flowers, and bushes seem to welcome her. It is always easier to sit down and do her homework after she’s had a little time outside among the beautiful flowers and bright greenery.

She jumps up and hurries to a rose bush – how sweet the roses smell. Near the base of the tall rosebush is a bed of calla lilies. She kneels and puts her nose to the white cup formed by the lily’s graceful folds. It doesn’t have a sweet scent like the rose - it smells more like a *vegetable* than a flower. But it’s also very pretty, so she decides to pick one for her mother. As she tugs at the base of the two-foot long stalk, she hears a muffled cry.

“Hey!” says a tiny voice. “What do you think you’re doing?”

The girl stops and looks from side to side and behind her. Seeing no one, she shrugs and returns to the lily stalk.

“Stop that!” This time the voice is louder and definitely comes from in front of her. She stares at the base of the stalk, then slowly moves her eyes up to the flower.

Peeking inside, she sees a tiny figure, two or three inches high, clinging tightly to the long, yellow center of the lily. The figure tilts her face upward at the girl and yells again, “You’d better stop that or you’ll be sorry.”

The girl giggles. What could that tiny figure do that she should be afraid of?

The fairy now stands in the opening of the flower, her face glowing and her hands balled into fists. “OK,” she says, “that does it.” She turns and breaks the tip off the lily’s yellow center and throws it hard at the girl.

“Ow,” she says, as it bounces off her nose. She rubs it and yellow flower dust comes off on her finger. “Why did you do that?”

“Because you’re trying to steal my house! It’s not nice to take other people’s things.”

“Well, it’s not nice to throw stuff at people either!” The girl is now angry, too.

“Young ladies, might I interrupt?” comes a soft voice. Behind the clump of calla lilies stands a beautiful creature about three feet tall, the height of the tallest lily. Her long blond hair is so fine that it floats gently around her shoulders and arms like dandelion fluff. She wears a long gown of soft green that blends in with the greenery around her.

On tiny wings, the fairy whirrs over to the newcomer and hovers in front of her face. “Did you see what she was trying to do?” demands the fairy.

She reminds the girl of an angry hummingbird that confronted her cat one day.

“Yes, Lily - and I also saw you break off part of your home and throw it at her. Not very welcoming behavior.”

“But...”

“You know there are better ways to let someone know you are upset than by throwing things or yelling.”

“I know,” says the fairy. “But when I get excited or mad, I forget.”

The blond being smiles and shakes her head, then turns to the girl and says, “Now we must welcome you properly. I am Radella – my name means ‘elfin counselor’.”

“You’re an elf?”

“Not just any old elf,” says the fairy, still hovering. “Radella is the *queen* of the elves. So she makes the best counselor.”

Radella smiles and says, “And this is Lily. She’s a nature spirit of the calla lily. It’s very unusual behavior for a nature spirit to harm the home she lives in, as she just did. Sometimes she does whatever pops into her head without thinking if it’s a good idea or not – but we’re working on helping her handle that better. Right, Lily?”

Lily settles back onto her flower, crosses her arms, and gives one sharp nod in agreement.

The girl sits on the grass to be at eye level with Radella, who moves to her as she continues talking. “You see, Lily has many wonderful creative abilities and we don’t want her to lose those. She is, after all, the reason the calla lilies grow and thrive. She wants to keep doing all her special things - and the rest of us nature spirits want her to - so she just needs to do them in a way that doesn’t upset the balance of nature. Do you know what I mean by that?”

“I think so,” answers the girl. “Sometimes I get frustrated by something I’m trying to do and I act a little like Lily.”

“So you understand that sometimes it’s hard for Lily, as it is for you.”

The girl nods.

“And you, too, are creative and special, in your own way, aren’t you?” asks Radella. “I’ll bet there are things you do really well – like sports. I saw those wonderful handsprings you did across the lawn.”

The girl smiles shyly. “I love gymnastics and I swim and run, too.” She frowns a bit and ducks her head. “But I don’t think I’m as good at sports as... other people I know.”

“You don’t have to be like other people. We are each one-of-a-kind – our brains, our interests, and our thoughts are unique, and we have the right to find our own way of being in the world. What else do you enjoy? Art? Reading?”

“Art – painting and sculpting. I don’t like to read as much – but I do like stories about girl heroes. I imagine that I’m in those stories – I’m the heroine and do cool things.”

“Well,” says Radella, with a smile, “talking with an elf and a fairy in your own yard certainly sounds to me like a cool thing.”

“I guess.”

“You don’t sound very excited.”

“It’s fun - but not exciting.”

At that moment a large crow swoops down, and before anyone can blink, he grabs Lily out of the flower and flies up to an overhanging branch. The fairy hangs by one wing from his beak, yelling and swinging her tiny fists.

The elf queen raises one hand into the air and, suddenly, other nature spirits come swarming – hundreds of tiny fairies pop out of the flowers, dozens of elves scurry from behind bushes, and roly-poly gnomes struggle out of holes at the base of the trees. Those with wings fly round and round the base of the tree, while the ones on the ground try to get organized to climb it.

The crow watches them, waiting until they get closer before he flies away with Lily.

No one except Radella notices the young girl run toward the tree and spring into the air, grasping the branch where the crow sits as if it were the highest bar on gymnastic uneven bars. The force of her weight pulls the branch down and flips the crow into the air. The crow squawks and Lily’s light figure drops out of his beak and floats gently downward.

“Elf Queen! Catch her!” shouts the girl, dropping to the ground

Radella cups her hands and holds them out, just as Lily drops into them. Plop!

“She was mine – I caught her fair and square!” fumes the crow, circling in the air over their heads.

“Shame on you for trying to eat fairies,” says the girl, standing with hands on hips. “Why, without them, we wouldn’t have flowers or trees or any of this beautiful greenery. Now you just go away and leave them alone.” She waves one hand to dismiss him and, with one final, loud squawk, he flies away.

Immediately, the girl is surrounded by cheering nature spirits. Gnomes hug her ankles, elves pat her hands and arms, and fairies’ wings kiss her shoulders and the top of her head.

“You no longer have to imagine being a heroine,” says Radella, smiling. “You are one.”

“Thanks for saving me,” says Lily, landing on the girl’s outstretched hand. “I guess we can be friends – just don’t try and take my house again.”

“I promise,” the girl says, laughing.

The fairy smiles and flies back to her flower-house.

An adult human voice cuts through the laughter, calling the girl in to do her homework.

The girl turns, but then stops and asks Radella, “How long have you lived in the garden?”

“Since it was first planted.”

“Why didn’t I ever see any of you before?”

Radella smiles. “Sometimes you have to be at a special place in your life before you can start seeing and understanding certain things. You’ve now reached that place.”

The girl thinks for a moment, then asks, “Can I bring my parents to meet you?”

Radella pauses, then says, “We would be honored to meet them, but... sometimes grown-ups are *too* grown up to see us. They’ve grown past that special place in their own lives and some no longer believe in the nature spirits. So, don’t be too disappointed if they can’t see us.”

The girl thinks a moment, then says, “No, they *will* be able to see you. They are not too grown up. They understand.”

“Good,” says the elf queen. “Come back soon.”

As the girl bounds into her house, the nature spirits wave goodbye and dusk draws across the garden.

Sources:

As described by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, a metaphor can help us better understand a thing or situation by comparing it to something else (as in “The road was a ribbon of moonlight.”) A metaphor can trigger visual imagery and understanding, which a concrete description may not.

In this metaphorical story, mental health, cognitive, and educational messages were based on results from the assessment with Diane H. Engelman. *The Gift of ADHD*, by Lara Honos-Webb, and *The Attention Deficit Disorders Intervention Manual*, by Stephen B. McCarney provided additional information. The story was inspired by descriptions of nature spirits in *The Magic of Findhorn*, by Paul Hawken, chapters 6 and 7. Meaning of names came from the *Character Naming Sourcebook*, by Sherrilyn Kenyon.

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