

The Summer Solstice Dance

The little river nymph stumbles over young berry vines. She is dangerously close to being late. Can you even imagine! Being late to the Summer Solstice Dance... It is out of the question. She gets up despite her aching knees and brushes the wet soil over her skirt. The smell of petrichor hangs in the air as fireflies dance to the sounds of the Wind whistling his merry song of June. "What a beautiful night!" sings an old frog as the little nymph hurries past the old Oak. The spirit of the Oak has long left its worldly body to attend the dance. She quickens her steps and feels her body relax when she finally spots the endless crowd of spirits, satyrs, nymphs, pixies, animals and phantoms alike. She hurriedly joins the gathering and allows herself to try and breathe calmly through her bang-bang-banging chest. The moonlight shines bright across the night sky accentuating the silver threads of stars. Every single child of Day and Night gathered in the clearing of the forest knows when the time comes. For only a single moment, everything ceases, even the Fates stop weaving. And they know the next moment will be of joy, and life, and virility.

As predicted, the first moment after the end of Spring gradually surrounds the forest, its habitants and their half of the Earth as the last trickles of Fall leave the other half. The forest hums with energy. The little nymph can feel every drop of the river shivering with delight. Everything just takes a minute to appreciate and welcome Summer into their souls and homes. They were waiting for this moment from the instant the last Cemre fell from the sky. The first cry of the night comes from a young cherry as he pours his heart out in an ecstatic melody. Ululations follow one after another as the Dance begins. The little nymph lets the rhythm of the Dance engulf her. When she feels the ever-familiar pull, her eyes start searching for her counterpart. In mere seconds her sapphire gaze touches the azure irises of a friendly rain nymph. They embrace and the sky excitedly crackles with lightning. The smell of petrichor rises as they dance together.

Not very far from the young nymphs and pixies dancing carefree, The old Oak sits silently although content. She has seen too much, lost her naivety to time. Many moons, many dances ago when she was but a sapling, she was as wild and unaware as them. But she has seen enough Solstices to notice the slight differences over the years. She can recall how fresh the air was, how bright the cherries, how blue the river nymphs were mere decades ago. She was still a youngling when she asked her late great-grandfather why he looked so somber at such a happy occurrence. She remembers his words exactly, "My little acorn, do not worry yourself. Enjoy the Summer now. There will be a time when you'll sit like I do, and watch other younglings dance with mirth. Then you'll remember me and understand". She remembers wanting to argue, wanting to insist that 'No, she is no acorn! She is already a sapling.' And how can she possibly understand him years later if he doesn't explain? 'And she will never, ever sit down and sulk during a Summer Solstice Dance! No way...' She understands now. The great burden of centuries of knowledge sits heavily on her tall branches. She smiles to her grandson swaying to the click-clacks of satyr hooves. She wishes for many dances like this for centuries to come, for every being little and grand. She wishes her

fears of darkness, cold, and tarnish over their home are just that, unbridled fears of an old Oak Tree. A collective outcry of joy brings her out of her thoughts, and she chuckles at the dancing crowd even though she knows every fair from fair will decline, and this transient summer will fade one day.

As the ground tumbles and rumbles with occupants of the forest's dance, a boy not over six wakes from his slumber. He is warm with sleep. So when his bare feet touch the ground, he shivers slightly. His Mama said summer starts tonight, the cold should not persist for long. He still carries the honey-sweet remnants of a dream. A dream where he danced all night with squirrels and bunnies, and colorful fairies... A dream where an old tree made him promise he will take care of the little acorn he picked from the forest ground that morning. His eyes sparkle with juvenile enthusiasm. The boy hurriedly checks the pockets of his trousers worn out by hours of play. He feels the shiny shell of the nut with his fingertips. He is relieved he did not lose it. He ran and jumped and rolled after picking it. The old tree in his dream told him to care for the acorn, to love it like a sibling. He has an older sister who takes care of him. He understands the sentiment. But how can he care for the acorn? It is nothing like a boy! He decides that Mama must know how. She is the best at caring. The boy yawns, his eyes teary with tire. "I will care for you" he whispers to the acorn in his puffy little hands and tucks it in one of his trouser's pockets safely. He returns to his bed eyes half-closed and dozes off to the pitter-patter sounds of rain falling to the soil.

Mere miles away from the sleeping boy, a sunflower awaits the end of the shortest night. The Moon will retire in a couple hours and he can finally count the steps to the Sun once again. He is fatally in love, he knows. The Sun has many lovers. He will never belong solely to a measly sunflower. The sunflower knows, however, he does not care. He is content with his love. And tomorrow, he will be as close as ever to his lover. He awaits patiently, listening to the sounds of the Summer Solstice Dance. The morning will come and he will watch his lover shine over his subjects, regarding them with his warm embrace once again.

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