

Garden of Youth

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Dusk. Probably her favorite time of day. Just when Mother Sun calls back it's children of light and welcomes in Father Night. She walks in the garden, alone. The blooming spring grass should tickle her gentle feet, but it doesn't. She moves along it with such grace that the green blades seem to bend and part just for her. The dirty soil doesn't dare taint her toes. And there isn't a rock or a twig in sight.

If not the Earth beneath her, what's on her mind? Has she had a good day? Has her heart been broken recently? No. Maybe nostalgia is dancing in her nerves. No. Is it the intimidating blue sky above her golden sea of hair that's making her wonder? No, something else. She walks on.

Her figure stands in stark contrast to all the green around her. The peachy color of her skin is just right, an endless touch of tan and limitless warmth for all who are fortunate enough to be touched by it. Has it always held so much energy inside of it? The years have not made her any less vibrant. She is a jubilant jewel against the lime stalks that grace the walls of the garden. Moving ever so slowly, looking, thinking; what's on her mind?

Hands resting at her sides, they occasionally sway freely. Her movement isn't indulgent, pretentious, or for anyone. It's simply natural. The carefree grace with which she walks is breathtaking. There is no desperate strive for freedom, no longing for any type of symbolic independence, nothing holding her from behind, nothing halting her up ahead. She could run, but she doesn't. She could walk faster, yet she maintains a constant speed. She could just stop and ask why? Why keep moving? But she doesn't. She just feels her path and follows it.

Finally she comes to a tender pause on the right side of the garden. Something must have caught her eye. A yellow flower looks up at her beautiful face. It greets her like the sun did earlier in the day, but unlike the yellow giant up above it does not rescind at this time. It doesn't fear her, it just draws her in. The glimmer in her eyes simply can't be described. A sensual finger reaches down and meets the yellow petals. It's a vivid shade of warmth that compliments her skin. Her fingers softly brush over it and almost seem to pet the stalk. To anyone else it's just a common weed but to her it's the orchid of life.

Suddenly she grasps the stalk, the pretty nails disappearing in the palm of her hand. She jerks up but it has no give. Why doesn't she tear it out by the root? Why is she trying to preserve beauty in what she's essentially trying to kill? What's on her mind? The flower bends and bends but does not succumb to being a throwaway human trophy. It does not want to be temporary. Neither does she. She lets go and the weed bounces back to stillness. The petals of it are bent now. She begins to straighten them out, asking each one for forgiveness. She works slowly. Her eyes open just a little wider and she leans in to meet her yellow friend. They are face to face. Whispering something, her eyelids glide shut.

Was it a whisper? Or did she blow on it? What does she see now that those glittering jade-colored gems of hers are behind those long eyelashes? What's on her mind? Maybe she sees the pool. The summer is coming soon after all. She probably loves

to swim. The liquid feels natural, surrounding her young curves and embracing her gentle figure. Who can deny the hug of the flow? She'll glide through it making waves through the pool, the lake, the ocean, and the world.

A tear escapes her right eye. What? What is there possibly to cry about? The silly flower? It's just a simple weed. In a day or two there'll be a dozen more just like it. No need to be sad. She can find another one, bigger and with even longer petals. Another tear follows in the path of the first one. A lingering pool of pain trembles at the bottom of her cheek before falling and making a shallow pond on her right arm. Her eyes open. She wipes away her tears. She's been lying down on the ground but now she tries to rise. When she gets to her knees, she stops and sits back. A slight breeze runs through the garden. The yellow weed trembles a goodbye to her.

Her face soon rises to meet the sky. The soft stretches paint themselves into her mind: a thousand clouds all endlessly brittle and thin surround the setting sun. She could try to pick out all of the astonishing colors she sees, but she just looks up, almost blankly. She's taking it all in. That's it. That's what's on her mind. No need to ask questions, just breathe in the world. But there is another light in her eyes. It isn't the flower, the reflections from the watery tears, or even the sun. Something deeper, something more... something I just can't understand.

Her mother slides open the glass door and says, "Alice! Come on in honey, dinner's ready." She springs to life and a jubilant smile finds its rightful place on her little face. I watch as my youngest daughter runs inside for supper. I gaze back out over the garden and I still can't figure it out.