

## Wings for Walking

Among the roots of the trees and between the rays of the sun, where you never look, there is a world, much like your own, where fairies dwell. They separate themselves into two parts: half live in the roots, the other half between the rays of the sun. They each make things grow-- the things that we see-- and one side without the other, could not grow but one tree.

In one specific tree, in a root facing east, lived a fairy named Saffie in one small groove. From her place in root, she'd tend the water flow and ensure the tree always had enough drink to grow. But from her small root, she'd look at the sky and, between each ray of light, she'd watch other fairies fly. She knew could fly- she had wings just like them- but she knew if she flew, she'd never see her root again.

Without Saffie there to help the tree quench its thirst it would wither away and become part of the dirt. Saffie would return to a root, brittle and frail. She'd never forgive herself for the tree's growing stale.

She knew she belonged on the ground, in the dirt. She knew if she left, the whole tree would be hurt. So she'd look at the sky, where she would never be. She'd look. Only look. But at least she could see.

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One day Evie, who's lip was ever stuck in a pout, saw Saffie gazing up at the sun. She adjusted the shawl she always wore around her shoulders and made her way down to Saffie's small groove.

“You’ll never get there, ya know?” her words steamed in the air.

“I know,” Saffie whispered, “but don’t you ever wonder,” she smiled, “what it would be like to fly.”

“How do you even know you’d fly?”

“I suppose I’d-”

“You’d fall right out of the sky.”

“Have you ever flown?”

“Or worse,” she inhaled, gasping Saffie’s attention into her lungs, holding it there.

Saffie leaned in, out of her groove.

“They’d mock you up there.” Evie spit.

Saffie jumped up, nearly out of her groove, and looked right at Evie, standing above.

“No they wouldn’t!” Saffie cried, her face toward the sun. She was sure they were beautiful. The image in her head just couldn’t be wrong. They always smile, she thought.

“They would smile.” She proclaimed, with an upturned chin.

“So what if they smile? They’ll never smile at you. We belong down here, Saffie, and we’ll stay where we’re meant to.”

Saffie flinched at the change, but dwelled on her inquiry, “Have you seen them smile?”

“You’re wings have a spot.”

Evie’s voice did not shutter, but Saffie’s spirit did so times ten. Sudden panic washed through her. She stumbled out of her groove. She looked down to a puddle, seeking refuge in its reflection. She must inspect her wings.

Were they truly unsuitable? Could she really not fly?

Saffie's image rippled as Evie stepped in the water, distorting the image it held. She hadn't seen it for long before the image was gone, but Saffie had seen the dirt. She was covered from head to toe.

"You'll never go up there."

Saffie's face feel.

*You'll never go up there.* Each word weighed heavier than its predecessor.

The words hovered in the air like a raindrop sits on the edge of a leaf, waiting to fall to the ground. One more push, and it'd drip right off.

"You'll never-"

"I know." Saffie's breathe pushed her back, away from the puddle and it truths.

Evie began to leave, her task complete. Saffie's eyes looked toward the ground.

"Why do you suppose they gave us wings at all?" Saffie's voice trembled with the smallest pinch of hope.

Evie stopped. Her lips parted to answer, but no sound came from her. The silence was painted by whispers. Other fairies peeked out of their grooves and pulled up their eyes to see the commotion. Evie could feel their gaze burning and the whispers tickled her stomach, but still Saffie's question lingered, pleading an answer. Evie rolled back and inhaled through clenched teeth.

"So little dirt fairies like you know it's not your wings that keep you from flying. It's you."

The other fairies retreated into their grooves. Saffie did not look up again. Because she did not look up, Saffie did not see: as Evie walked away, her shawl slipped off her shoulder and revealed a beautifully cracked wing.

## Author's Note

The most complex kind of people to me have always been people who are outrightly unkind, seemingly for the purpose of being unkind. I have never understood their actions to have a motive, so I have always assumed there is some unseen motive. I have assumed such behaviors to be accompanied by very complex emotions and thoughts. In exploring how to develop and communicate character, I thought this would be a fun way to test it. I mainly aimed to use the “bumping” (to use James Wood’s phrase) of the character into its world to communicate her.

I didn’t want to write it in first person because I thought if I gave the reader the characters’ thoughts directly I would overlook the use of dialogue. I wanted to focus mostly on developing Evie because there is not much of her.

Also, just as a side note, this story was weird to write because for some reason I kept trying to write it in verse. I had not began with the intention of writing in verse, but the first section of the story-- before Evie interrupts-- naturally seemed to be suited to verse.