

# ELENTARI

A COSMIC FAIRYTALE



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## A NOTE TO THE READER

Dear Beloved,

Every word of this story is true.

Except for the parts I made up. I only did that to to make it easier to read.

Magic is real. Magic flows inside you even now, bubbling and laughing and powerful. It is animating every particle of your being.

Open to your unique magic and it will fill you up and carry you to places you would barely dare to dream up. It will always steer you true.

I love you.

Melanie

From The Lake

## PROLOGUE



*T*ime: a few minutes ago. In human time.

DAYLIGHT MADE it easy for The Star to hide, so he usually watched over Neli during the day. Her small but strong form captivated his attention as she was moving ever so slowly under the trees towards the pond's edge. He'd never bothered with humans before, but had been studying them a bit since Neli's life began, bringing his attention to this small planet.

The youngest humans tended to be his favorite. Their laughter was as close to StarSpeak as humans ever got. Despite The Star's difficulty in discerning human time increments, (*so tiny! so fast!*) he felt Neli was perhaps seven now. It was a relief that he was able to continue to follow her progress in this new form. He had been very worried about that.

The branches of the trees hung very low and heavy with leaves and moss dripping off them here and there. A carpet mixed of many types of moss and lichen carried Neli closer and closer to the pond. He noted how silently and steadily she advanced. Her face was so abso-

lutely focused on something just ahead that she didn't appear to even notice the dragonfly humming over her head.

At the pond's edge, she slowed even further and came to a halt about six inches into the water from its edge. He saw her feet and ankles quickly covered in water and felt the way they then sunk into the muck under the water. He shivered at the delightful squirminess of the mud and muck as it smushed around and in between her toes.

Neli was stock still, waiting it seemed, while focused intently on some water plants floating on the surface in front of her. He saw her arm slowly extend, ever so slowly, and he realized her heart and spirit rhythms had altered. He did not recognize at first the feel of this new nonhuman rhythm. Suddenly her hand darted forward and then rose quickly in the air in front of her and in it she held a giant bullfrog! Its muscular legs dangled down from its plump wet body, glistening in more shades of green and yellow than she could count.

He could feel Neli's pure joy radiating through her whole being as she turned the frog to look at its face. The frog dangled placidly and seemed to be looking back at her. After a few human and many more frog heartbeats, Neli raised the empty palm of her other hand up and settled the frog on top of it. She stood perfectly still. The Star could feel her internal rhythms matching perfectly to the frog's. He had seen this before many times, but never with other humans. He noticed how her dark curly hair seemed to suddenly have glints of silver throughout it, like starlight embedded into hair somehow. Some silent understanding seemed to pass between the frog and Neli, and then suddenly he was in the air! In one giant, glorious leap that seemed almost lazy in its ease, the frog catapulted off Neli's palm, flew through the air, and dove into the water. Tiny waves rippled out in rings beyond where he had gone in.

Neli whooped a holler of joy and began to jump up and down, but discovered suddenly her feet and sandals were stuck in the mud and so instead of a big leap up, she abruptly went face first into the water herself!

She came up laughing and spitting water out of her mouth and

clambered to the edge of the pond and for a moment just lay there, victorious, basking in the sunlight on a springy and soft moss blanket.

After a bit, with a sigh, she realized one of her sandals had stayed stuck in the mud. She didn't care, but she knew if she came home without it, she stood a good chance of a beating. At a minimum she could expect a cold night alone, locked up, with only stale bread and gross tasting unfiltered water for dinner.

After a few minutes of wrestling with the mud and small water plants' roots and vines, she had the shoe. After rinsing it, its mate, and herself off as best as possible, she began trudging back up the hill to the house in the distance.

The sun was setting. The golden end of the daylight, like honey, was about to shift into the earliest hints of twilight. She needed to be home before that or else.

The Star heard her whistling away, obviously enjoying her memory of the magnificent bullfrog. He sent her a wave of love and saw the slight ripple of movement through her body as it enveloped her. She hooted in extreme joy, did a little hop, and then a cartwheel, and lightly danced up the hill to home, her curls bouncing along with her.

# BOOK 1

## CHAPTER 1



*T*ime: three or four years later. In human time.

THE MORNING of the day that everything went cuckoo started out like every other day. Neli's alarm went off around 5:30 AM. It was a loud and unpleasant alarm, provided by her parents to ensure she would get up on time to get the coffee and breakfast started for them.

Even though they were her parents, Neli had been instructed for as long as she could remember to call them by their full names. Gertrude and Guy didn't believe in coddling children. Guy called Gertrude "Gertie," but Neli, having tried this once, immediately learned to never do it again.

Haughty and contemptuous, Gertrude tended to go through the day with a small sneer naturally fixed on her face as if to suggest she was barely tolerating being forced to interact with other, lower beings. And everybody was a lower being to Gertrude. Even Guy, who clearly was placed above the rest of what she referred to as "the unwashed masses," was primarily alive, it seemed, to support and care for Gertrude.

Neli didn't know any other families, but had been allowed to read any books she wanted and had a rather large library of them. Based on her readings, she sometimes wondered how it had even been possible for her to be the child of such people. It was even odd that she would have a library to begin with, as Gertrude and Guy didn't read books. Ever. Neli had taught herself to read.

On this morning though, Neli made her way downstairs, winding down the narrow and steep back stairway that connected her small bedroom to the rest of the house by the kitchen and began the daily rituals of making coffee to the exact specifications of her parents and laying out their breakfasts from the morning food delivery.

As she worked, she absently squirreled away an egg, a slice of bread, and an orange to have later for her own breakfast. Some days there were raspberries in the delivery, Neli's favorite, but today she was almost as glad to see the oranges. She had taken over the back of a drawer to stash her secret treats, but never really worried about it since Gertrude and Guy never came in here anyway. That was her job.

She had breakfast and coffee all properly laid out for her parents just on time as Gertrude sailed into the room with Guy close behind.

They had just settled in, their giant screens up and running, suspended over the table to show them what had happened in their "feeds" overnight. Neli didn't understand what her parents did and wasn't allowed access to the screens which were grayed out whenever she looked at them, but knew it was very hard and difficult, that they were very good at it, which is why they were so rich. She didn't really understand what it meant to be rich, but Gertrude liked to brag about it a lot so she assumed it was true.

A firm knock at the front door suddenly echoed down the hall, interrupting Gertrude mid bite. With a frown she nodded to Guy and he went to answer the door.

Upon opening it, the most incredible person Neli had ever seen sailed through and was somehow suddenly in the dining room! She was very tall, the tallest person Neli had ever seen, even taller than Guy, who Neli knew to be 5'10" barefoot but he put lifts in his shoes



making him nearly 6 feet. So this was a woman taller than 6 feet!! Neli's mouth hung open in astonishment.

The woman had long flowing white/blonde hair that streamed back from her forehead and face above and behind her head and down her back to below her shoulders. Neli was very aware of hair-care products as it was often her job to arrange Gertrude's products and styling tools in advance of her stylist daily visit each day after breakfast. But she couldn't understand how this woman's hair could possibly be doing what it was. It seemed to be gently floating versus laying down along her scalp and even across her shoulders and back in glossy waves.

The woman smiled at Neli, looking her directly in the eyes as she did so, and Neli saw her eyes were equally mysterious and marvelous. The color was blue but with some small gray, almost silvery bits and pale green specks, it was hard to discern exactly. Neli noticed that around the edge of her iris, where the color met her whites, she had a slightly darker ring of a deep rich blue-green that looked not entirely unlike a similar ring around the irises in Neli's eyes.

Before she could probe this observation any further in her mind, the woman turned to Gertrude and Guy who were also gaping in shock, Gertrude clearly building up a head of steam in advance of outrage. Before Gertrude could say anything, however, the woman announced, "my name is Meemyr and I've come for Neli."

To Neli, "Hello dear. Your library and belongings are being moved by others already. Are there any small items you want with you for the journey?"

Neli automatically shook her head no (*journey?*), mouth wide open in shock.

"What on earth are you talking about!?" demanded Gertrude in an angry but icy and firm tone. Neli knew this tone meant trouble.

"Neli is our daughter and will most certainly go nowhere with a stranger! Guy, call the police immediately."

Guy reached for his phone. Neli noticed an odd look come over his face as if he had suddenly thought of something else that was very

important but couldn't figure it out exactly. At his distanced and slightly dazed expression, Gertrude hit him on the back of his head, but this only caused him to slowly shake his head absently.

Gertrude turned to the woman, to Meemyr, "now look here, Mimi,..." And found herself preempted.

"My name is Meemyr, not Mimi." She pronounced it a second time, "MEE – MEER," and went on to say, "I have been sent by The Trustee to take over Neli's education, as planned."

At the mention of The Trustee, both her parents faces turned white. Gertrude's seemed actually even a faint bit green.

"The Trustee has provided instructions for you both regarding the next phase of Neli's upbringing. It's all in here and in accordance with your initial instructions," as she placed a large rigid envelope on the table in front of Neli's parents, "but the gist of it is this: Neli is to come with me today and will not likely return here again. You will continue to be her parents in name only for now and you will sign this document transferring all guardianship responsibilities and powers to me. Your payments from The Trustee will cease (*payments?* thought Neli, *what is she talking about?*), but you will be allowed to keep all that you have been given previously and any revenue you have made via such funds. You will cease living in this location today. A duplicate house has been made for you in \_\_\_\_\_" and named a place Neli knew was a very desirable place in their minds. Gertrude and Guy's eyes were wide open in wonder and Gertrude now had a similarly dazed look about her as Guy.

"Your things are being packed now and will all be moved in and in place by the end of day."

They looked around and became aware of a number of men all in black t-shirts and jeans streaming in and moving throughout the house opening and forming boxes and already wrapping up valuables such as Gertrude's many white and blue ceramic vases and figurines that dotted the mantle and the walls.

"You will take the helicopter arriving shortly," and indeed they could all hear the distant *thwack thwack thwack* thumping of the blades drawing near by the second.

“You will be called upon as needed in the future for Neli and you will make it your number one priority. I or The Trustee will send instructions as relevant.”

And with that, she dismissed Gertrude and Guy and turned to Neli.

“Neli, dear, I am so excited for this day to be here at last!”

Neli, transfixed by Meemyr, managed to stammer out “but why is this happening? I don’t understand.”

“Why, it’s your 11th birthday of course, it has always been planned thusly. This you know.”

“But I’m only 10,” said Neli as if this was the key stumbling block to this whole bizarre turn of events.

Neli only knew when her birthday was when her parents told her. Her birthday present was usually a day free of chores in which she was allowed to wander the grounds as she liked. Usually, she spent the day far down the hill past the meadow at the pond amongst the trees and moss and frogs. She turned to look at her parents and saw them looking questioningly at each other.

Meemyr caught Neli’s attention with a firm, no-nonsense, “of course it’s your birthday TODAY. Haven’t these people kept you up-to-date on the Trustee’s plans?” With narrowed eyes she glared at Gertrude and Guy who shrunk in fear, maybe even a bit in terror. Neli had never seen Gertrude afraid of anything! She found herself a bit thrilled by it, an uncomfortable feeling which she immediately tried to tamp down as guilt followed it.

“Never mind,” said Meemyr, “Neli and I will get it all sorted. Come, sweet one, let’s go.”

Taking Neli by the hand, Meemyr turned, her pale blue cloak shimmering around her as she did, (Neli had never seen such fabric and Gertrude had all the best fabrics) and they headed for the door.

As they went down the steps, Neli’s hand feeling so wonderful and comforted and safe in Meemyr’s warm, soft yet strong hand, Meemyr looked down at her and said “I wouldn’t waste any guilt on these people, Neli.” Neli gaped up at her, had she read her mind? “They clearly haven’t earned it. I’ll fill in some gaps for you on the way.”

Neli looked around, perhaps there was another helicopter, but no, now she saw down at the edge of the circular drive, pointing out towards the long driveway a shining small car, pale blue like Meemyr's cloak, with a sparkle in the glossy color. White rims for the tires. The door seemed to open magically. Neli hopped in the passenger side into the most comfortable seat she had ever been in her life! An embracing cloud of creamy egg white smooth material like leather enveloped her, but Neli somehow knew it wasn't real leather, thank goodness, she wouldn't want to sit on dead animal. Meemyr leaned over to show her how the seatbelt worked. Neli had never been in any car other than the delivery driver's truck and that was just a flat hard bench with no seatbelt for passengers.

Neli had barely a moment to wonder why she felt no worry or fear about leaving with this stranger, who somehow managed to not feel like a stranger at all. In fact, Neli seemed to feel closer to her and more comfortable than she ever had with her parents.

But then they were off! She felt rather than heard a faint vibration beneath her and suddenly they were whizzing silently and effortlessly down the long driveway out to the road. Neli craned her neck to look out the rear window, watching the only home she'd ever known recede rapidly into the distance. She felt very little other than a sadness about leaving her sanctuary at the frog pond.

As if reading her mind, a habit that was clearly a new thing to get used to along with everything else, Meemyr said, without turning her face away from the front, "never fear, Neli, dear. The frog pond will always be available for you anytime you need it. It's the whole reason we are keeping this property." No further explanation of how this would be possible since they were leaving was offered.

Neli turned away from the window and resettled herself looking ahead. She turned to look at Meemyr, who had a new gleam in her eye and a faint smile about her face as she zoomed rapidly out into the road without pausing for slowing. Once on the main road, she made some minor movements with her hand and feet and they were away!

The top of the car had begun opening and Neli felt the wind rush in and over her hair, pushing it back in big bundles of dark curls such

that her hair was streaming up and back in a giant halo behind and over her. Neli had never felt so wonderful in her whole life! The Star, watching from above, hidden by the daylight, glimmered merrily with delight. Neli burst out laughing and sent a joyous whoop into the air. Whatever was coming next, she couldn't wait!

## CHAPTER 2



After a few minutes of the sheer exhilaration and wind in her hair, Neli turned to inspect Meemyr more closely. Her features were firm and graceful like those of an ancient statue similar to ones Neli had seen in her books. They were strong features, a proud forehead, prominent nose, firm jaw, notable cheekbones. Neli was really closely examining Meemyr's eyelashes which initially appeared a sort of blonde like her hair but the more she looked at them, the more they seem to actually be sparkling and was that actually silver? And were they glowing – when Meemyr turned her face briefly to Neli,

“I really don't understand why those awful people didn't tell you it is your 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.”

“Usually they do, though” said Neli, “in fact, usually my parents let me spend the whole day anywhere on the grounds I like. I usually go down to the frog pond. It's my favorite.”

Meemyr's left eyebrow had raised up in a mixture of doubt and exasperation. “They're not your parents, child, whatever gave you that idea!?”

Neli didn't think she could take anymore massive revelations, but this one was truly beyond the scope of her own imagination.

“What? What do you mean?”

She spluttered, “of course they’re my parents. Who else would they be?”

But she felt some odd tug in her chest area, a tiny glowing ember of an unfamiliar feeling which, once having taken hold, began to spread. It was a little like the feeling she had just before she synced with a bullfrog, but not really the same. There was truth in this idea. And relief. Meemyr seemed to track this acceptance in Neli.

Still bewildered though, Neli tried to squeak out a reasonable reply. “Okay but how did I get there then? WHAT’S GOING ON?!” she wailed at the end.

Meemyr’s face flooded with concern and a little edge of anger. Or maybe it was just the sudden shadow from a cloud covering the sun, Neli thought. Wait – the sky had been pure blue just a few minutes ago...

Meemyr cut off that thought with her response.

“Neli, Gertrude and Guy are not your parents. They are the caregivers selected by the Trustee to protect you for your first decade of life here.”

“But who’s the Trustee?”

“You really know nothing? Did they teach you nothing? What about your lessons?”

“Lessons? You mean like school? I’ve never had any school, but I did read about it in some of my books.”

“No tutors!?! There was supposed to be tutors!”

“No, nothing like that.”

“Oh well, we are quite behind schedule then.”

*(schedule, schedule for what?* thought Neli)

“We’ll have to work hard to catch up.”

To herself, “I hope we haven’t missed any critical early openings of your Seven Arts...”

Turning to Neli, “Your true parents would have done anything to be with you, to have seen you grow into this amazing girl and support you for the journey ahead. But they cannot join us here on Earth as things currently stand.”

Figures, thought Neli, her true parents were dead. Well, better to be an orphan than to be related to Gertrude and Guy!