

Memory of Magnificence

In a land where anything was possible, a young woman stood absently in her yard thinking that that just wasn't so. She'd heard about the incredible new happenings on the national news that morning but just could not believe that it was true.

*Magic?* She thought. *There's no way that could be anything but gimmicks and trickery.*

Gimmicks and trickery indeed. However, these "gimmicks" were fueled by power that was just unimaginable for Eliza. And the "trickery" bled from a source of true miraculous phenomenon that Eliza had never been exposed to. So, yes, the trickery and gimmicks ruled the magical realm, but who's to say that the magic isn't real? Eliza herself didn't know how real it would be until that one, fateful Spring day when she met *him*.

"Him" actually went by the name of Magundalous, which Eliza found absolutely unacceptable. It sounded too close to the word "magnificence" for her liking, which was something that Magundalous certainly was not. After his first introduction, she decided that that was not the name she would be using for him. She decided that it would just have to be "Mag", because any other form of shortening just sounded ridiculous. Calling him "Dalous" would give the image that he was a dull man, which he certainly was not. And renaming him "Gunda" sounded too much like an accented form of the name "Gunther", so "Mag" it would have to be.

The day she met Mag, Eliza was out in her front yard watering her daffodils, wishing that they would just take care of themselves like all the other flowers. The lilies that Janice next door watched over knew how to get up and just get their own drink of water. And the sunflowers across the street which belonged to Meredith could stretch taller and taller and go into clouds to absorb their moisture. And on top of all that, both of their flowers stayed alive all year round, and her flowers only appeared in the Spring. The daffodils, the blasted daffodils that Eliza's mother just

loved, were about as useful and self-preserving as a wet piece of paper.

In her huff about having to take care of something other than herself, Eliza had failed to notice a tall man with a long cloak billowing behind him approaching her yard from behind. When he spoke in his smooth and almost slippery voice, Eliza nearly dropped her watering can out of fright.

“Excuse me,” he ventured delicately. “Would you happen to be Eliza Coolidge?”

She turned around with a start. “I am,” she answered curiously. “And who is asking?”

The man opened his arms wide as though he was presenting a grand show of marvelous people, however he was the only one being presented. “My name is Magundalous. I am the watcher of time and the head of the Arguntus School for Magic.”

After deciding that Magundalous’s name just wouldn’t do, Eliza questioned, “School for magic? There isn’t any such thing as magic. That is just silly stories that the media has come up with to keep us on our toes. Magic does not exist, why would there be an entire school dedicated to teaching something that isn’t real?”

Mag looked at her as though she had acquired two extra heads. He scoffed. “Magic doesn’t exist. How could you ever think that?” Before Eliza had a chance to give her answer, the man continued. “Don’t you see those sunflowers stretching all the way to the sky? Don’t you see the lilies climbing out of their dirt homes to quench their thirst? Magic is all around us, it’s just no one has known the truth of it until now.”

Eliza attempted to interject, but Mag went on with his speech without pause. “Arguntus has been around for ages. Witches, wizards, and warlocks have lived in secret, while controlling the word around the normals for all of creation. The flowers were not always so self-sufficient. All used to be like your daffodils here. Just meant to look pretty and rely on others.” Eliza now didn’t

know what to say.

“You, Eliza, poor Eliza, have been forced to live among the normals for most of your life because of your mother. She didn’t tell you who you are, Eliza. You are a witch, descent from one of the most powerful lines ever known. Now, I need you to come with me to Arguntus because there is much to learn and not nearly enough time. Now that the normals know of the magical, they will find our safe haven and attempt to break in to learn more, the way they do. We need all the help we can muster in order to make it so that doesn’t happen.” Mag clasped his hands in front of himself. His long, ginger beard almost reached to where they rested.

Eliza was taken aback. This insane man spoke as though magic was real, but not only real, all around them. She considered the flowers. She never thought them to be anything strange. The other flowers were always more special than her daffodils. Her mother always told her that that was just the way it was. How could she believe this Magundalous over her own mother?

“I will not go with you,” she decided. “How am I supposed to know whether this is all an elaborate lie or not?”

“A lie?” Mag questioned. “Why would I take the trouble to lie to you? There would be no point, no point whatsoever in my doing so. Now, please, you really do need to come with me.”

“I’m sorry,” Eliza persisted. “But I am not going to do that.”

Mag sighed. “I really was rather hoping that I would not have to do this.” He reached forward and grabbed Eliza by the arm.

Before she knew what was happening, she felt a pull in the pit of her stomach and found that she was suddenly somewhere else entirely. Eliza looked around her new surroundings, still holding her watering can with a tight grasp, and saw that she was in a long dark hallway lit only by flaming torches lining the stone walls. The high arched doorways that were on either side of

her held small plaques at the top stating either “Amphibian Wing” or “Reptile Wing.”

“Are we in a zoo?” Eliza asked Mag, who was standing next to her, once she finally found her voice which had been hidden with the sudden relocation.

“Of course we are not in a zoo. What in heavens name would cause you to think that?” He then looked back and forth between the signs that Eliza had noticed. “Oh. Of course. No. Amphibians and reptiles are creatures that hold almost as much magic as you and I. All the wings of this school are named after powerful creatures.”

Eliza nodded, still entirely shocked by her abrupt change of scenery. She found her voice once more and asked, “So, this is the school you mentioned before?”

“Indeed,” Mag answered. “Follow me. We must start your training right away. We want no risk of death now do we?”

“Well, of course not,” Eliza replied. “But whose death are we risking? My own or someone else’s?”

“Your own of course. If too much magic is attempted too quickly, you very well might implode.”

“I guess that’s good to know.” Eliza felt as though she was in a dream. They talked about magic constantly on the television, but her being magical? There could be absolutely no way. She must have fainted while watering her flowers and hit her head on something hard. That’s what was causing the hallucinations. That’s all this was. That and nothing more.

However, Eliza had begun to doubt her hallucination theory when she and Mag strode down the hallway leading the way to the Amphibian Wing. He took her into a room that was decorated with dramatic drapes and splattered with small and significant stains that very likely were the result of burning.

What Eliza didn't notice right away was pointed out by Mag with a dramatic gesture of his right hand. "This, my young dear, is Henry. He will be the one to train you in the true art of magic." Mag looked down at Eliza who was still grasping the watering can in her right hand. "I'll take that." He snatched it away from her and it disappeared in a puff of purple smoke.

A tall man with dark and wispy hair stepped away from a desk that was littered with papers and parchment that seemed as though they could belong from any era but the one they were currently a part of. He held out his hand to Eliza, and as she took it in her own, he introduced himself. "As Magundalous stated, my name is Henry."

"I'm Eliza," she said, observing the man who wore clothes that did not match his young and sculpted face. "How are you today?"

Henry smiled a light grin that seemed to carry none of the weight the world tried to force down. He answered, "Very well. And yourself?"

"Good," Eliza answered politely, before reconsidering her statement. "Well, actually, a bit befuddled."

Henry nodded empathetically. "Very reasonable for your current situation. As I understand, you are the girl who was deprived of her true nature for all her life?"

"I guess that's one way to put it," Eliza responded.

"Well, it will all become clear to you as soon as we begin our lessons." Henry then directed his gray eyes to Mag, whom Eliza had honestly completely forgotten the presence of. "Would it be alright if we went ahead and began the lessons?"

"Well," Mag answered, "I do believe that sooner has a great advantage on later." He paused and took one more sweep around the room with his eyes that glowed slightly purple. "I must be off. I have a few more Misfortunes to find." And with that, he sauntered out of the room with his

burgundy cloak trailing behind him.

Eliza looked to Henry. “What are Misfortunes?” she inquired.

Henry sighed. “Misfortunes are what Magundalous insists on calling the magical people who have not been raised with magic. A rather awful name for you all, if you ask me.”

“Yes,” Eliza said, knowing there was reason to her negative impression of Mag. “I would certainly say I have to agree.”

The two were silent for a moment’s time. Eliza listened to the silence that seemed to travel through the building in thick streams a silk. It was a smooth silence at the same time it was fragile, as though it could be broken at any instant.

And in the next instant, Henry broke the daring quietness. “Well, the first thing I would like to focus on is actually finding your powers. Have you ever displayed any instances of any sort of power throughout your lifetime?”

Eliza thought for a moment. “I would have to say no. I don’t believe I have.”

Henry pursed his lips. “Well, that’s alright. I think I can make this work. Stand in that corner over there.” Henry gestured to a dark corner on the other side of the room.

Eliza took her place next to a spider web that she desperately attempted not to notice. “So, what do I do now?” she asked.

Henry approached her, but stayed slightly beyond an arm’s length distance. “I need you to close your eyes,” he instructed. “Focus on finding your power.”

Eliza did as she was told, deciding that accepting this strange reality was something that she really must do in order to eventually escape it. A minute passed with her eyes closed and her breaths steady. When nothing out of the ordinary happened, she reopened her eyes.

“Are you sure you have the right person? Maybe Mag found the wrong Misfortune,” Eliza

offered.

“Mag?” asked Henry with furrowed eyebrows.

Eliza looked down in the direction of her sandals feeling embarrassed that she let the nickname slip from her lips. “Oh, yes,” she responded quietly. “It’s what I’ve decided to call Magundalous.”

“Do you find his name too precocious as well?” Henry asked with a kind smile on his face. “I’ve never thought it quite fit his character. So, between us, it will be Mag from now on. Sound like a good arrangement to you?”

Eliza raised her eyes to meet his. “Yes, that sounds perfect.”

Henry looked at her for a moment before saying, “Right, about Mag bringing the wrong person. I can test that right now, though I can honestly say that I rather hope you are the correct one.”

Henry approached Eliza until they were mere inches from each other. “I’m going to place my hands on your head if that’s alright?”

“Yes, that’s just fine,” Eliza answered.

Henry placed both his hands gently on the temples of Eliza’s head. He closed his eyes so Eliza figured she’d better do the same. Suddenly, Eliza felt a presence in her mind that normally wasn’t there. There was no pain, however there was a slight tickling sensation that spread throughout her self. When Henry removed his hands, she felt the presence remove itself as well.

“You certainly have power in there, Eliza,” Henry confirmed. “Now we need to locate it.” He stepped away again and proceeded to instruct her once more. “Try closing your eyes again. Try to remember that your power does not reside in your mind, it’s in your entire body. Every inch of your being holds the power to truly make you a splendid witch.”

Again, Eliza did as she was instructed. She attempted to do as Henry told and found that this time she sensed a slight tingling in her fingertips. She focused on this tingle and felt it spread throughout her entire body. Soon, she was practically glowing with the power.

She opened her eyes to see Henry staring at her, showing that he was thoroughly impressed. He could see the power that now encompassed her.

“Give me your best effort and attempt to channel the magic into your hands. Once you focus it there, use it.”

Eliza concentrated on the power again and felt it drain from her chest and move into her palms. The power in her legs crawled up and found its place in her fingers. Eliza held her hands out in front of herself. She didn't know what she was trying to do with it, but soon the magic shot from her hands in a bright blue light and made its way to the tapestry on the opposite wall. Excitement filled Eliza until she saw what she had done. The tapestry was up in flames.

“Oh!” Eliza exclaimed. “How do I make it stop?”

Henry just snapped his fingers and the flames ceased, leaving only a miniscule scorch mark behind in their place. “We can work on control later,” he stated. “For now, it is just good that we know you understand how to summon the magic. However, we are going to attempt to keep away from the fire, at least for the time being. The next subjects we will focus on are transfiguration and potions. That can wait until later, though.” Henry retrieved his tweed jacket from off the back of the desk chair and slipped it on. “We should eat before the food disappears.”

If this were the life that Eliza was normally accustomed to, she would assume that by “disappear” Henry simply meant that it would get taken away. However, in this new world she was shown, she believed that he meant the food would undertake a literal disappearance.

When Henry and Eliza arrive in the dining hall to a very interesting meal of quale and



mashed potatoes, Mag was there to meet them with a grand smile.

“Ah, Eliza,” he said. “Training go well, I suppose?”

Eliza, unsure of how to answer this question, looked to Henry who placed a hand lightly on her shoulder and nodded. “I suppose so,” she answered.

“Yes,” Henry said. “We are already making immense progress. I know that Eliza will be able to use her power for greatness as soon as she masters it, which won’t take too, too long.”

“Good,” Mag said. “Very good. Now, Eliza, there is a question that I’ve been meaning to ask you. Your hair, is it naturally blonde or dyed that color?”

Eliza found the question a bit rude but proceeded to answer it anyways. “For the most part, it is my natural color.”

And their odd conversation ended with that. Magundalous pranced away to go speak to the other Misfortunes.

After dinner, Henry and Eliza returned to the study to partake in more magic lessons. As Henry previously stated, they would be working on transfiguration.

“We’re going to attempt something simple first to help you grasp the concept. I need you to concentrate on these blades of grass and turn them into daffodils. Just focus and imagine what you want them to be. Remember to find your power and focus it to your hands.”

Eliza looked at the grass that was set in the midst of piles upon piles of books on a small brown table that’s legs elevated it to right below her chest. Once again when focusing on her power, she felt the tingling sensation spread throughout her body. She gathered the power in her hands.

*Daffodils*, she thought as she gazed at the blades of bright green grass growing from the

small terracotta pot in front of her. *Daffodils. Daffodils. Daffodils.*

Eliza held her hand out and touched the grass with her fingertips. She saw the blue light transfer from her hands unto the grass. It grew before her eyes and changed into lovely yellow daffodils, just like the ones that grew modestly in her front yard.

She looked to Henry feeling very excited about what she had just done. “I did it!” she exclaimed with pure enthusiasm.

“You did!” Henry beamed, clearly just as excited as Eliza. He clapped her on the shoulder to signal a job well done.

After the grass, they continued to move on to a more vast selection of transfigurable objects. Soon, Eliza was changing rats to teacups and chairs into buildings (they had to move outside to the school grounds for the latter). The school grounds consisted of vast rolling hills and stepping stone pathways that could lead anyone almost anywhere. The school grounds never seemed to end. And the strangest thing was, that even with the beyond full dining hall she had seen on her first night, Eliza and Henry were alone together almost no matter where they went. And Eliza didn’t mind this one bit.

By Eliza’s fifth day at Argutus, she could already change a simple book into a magnificent dragon with glowing green scales and fiery breath. The dragon was absolutely splendid to look at, but due to the dangerous atmosphere it created, it had to be transfigured back into the simple book.

After the fifth day, Henry and Eliza began to work on potions. He taught her how to make sleeping potions and memory potions and growing potions and so much more. Eliza thoroughly enjoyed the making of the potions because they all had their own unique scent and appearance. The sleeping potion was a deep purple and it released a soft pine smell that relaxed her so much she had to sit down. The memory potion was a murky white and smelled of melted white chocolate,

warm and smooth. The growing potion held a forest green tint and had a salty smell that Eliza didn't particularly like.

Throughout all her training, Henry was there to assist her with any problems or questions she came across. By the end of her first week at the school, Eliza was finding that for once, she rather enjoyed the company of another person. And in this case, that person was Henry, the best wizard she had ever known, not that she had many to compare him to. She knew his kind heart and his deep eyes held all the good power in this magical realm. She wanted to be with the good he produced forever.

One night she asked him, "Are we going to learn charms and spells soon?"

Henry regarded her with kind amusement. "We can if you would really like to, but to be perfectly honest, Mag is the only one who uses them. Spells and charms are really only for showy flair, not so much power. True power comes from your soul, not your fancy words."

Because of Henry, Eliza understood that the magical world was not absurd gimmicks and cruel trickery. It was amazing.

Late one night, Eliza heard a knock sound on the door of her bedchambers. She rose from her bed cautiously to see who was waiting on the opposite side. She tiptoed across the stone floors with her bare feet and grasped the cold, metal handle. With a creak, the door opened and Eliza saw Henry standing behind it.

"Sorry to disturb you so late," Henry said with an apologetic smile. "There's something that I would very much like to show you."

"Well, alright," Eliza said, instantly relaxed upon sight of Henry. She looked to his hands to see if there was anything clutched between them but they were void of any interesting objects.

“Where is it?”

Henry held out his hand to her and said, “Come with me and I’ll show you.”

Eliza took his hand and held it firmly. Henry took her down the steep stairwell and out the front doors of the school into the green grounds. Still holding his hand, Eliza looked at him expectantly. She didn’t see anything out of the ordinary on the land, so she was unsure of where to look.

“Look up,” Henry told her as though he read her mind. She did just that and saw millions of bright streaks falling throughout the sky. “They’re shooting stars,” Henry explained. “Beautiful, don’t you think?”

Eliza was in awe of the beauty of the stars. They were amazing. With her hand still in Henry’s, Eliza moved his arm so it was wrapped around her shoulders. She leaned into his chest and watched the lights swirl around the sky creating beautiful patterns before falling away from her sight. The two stayed in that position watching the stars until they ceased lighting up the sky.

The next day, they moved away from potions and moved into dueling techniques.

“Alright, Eliza,” Henry instructed as he gestured to a small, pearl colored ball. “I’m going to throw this ball at you and you are going to block it with magic, understand?”

“I do,” Eliza said.

She held up her hands with her palms facing outward in preparation. She gathered up all her power and was immensely ready for whatever Henry threw at her. Henry picked up the small ball from the side table and tossed it in her direction. With a force field around herself, she blocked the ball effortlessly. After a few more attempts of this, the ball soon changed to magic. Henry would throw an orb of power at her and she would block it and sometimes even cause it to move

back in his direction. They continued with this practice for days until Mag came in and told them it was almost time.

“Time for what, exactly,” Eliza asked Henry after Mag left them alone in the room.

Henry was quiet for a moment as though he was unsure of how to answer. He had never not known what to say in response to her inquires before so this struck Eliza as quite odd behavior.

“Henry, what is it?”

Henry was quiet still. “I...” he ventured. “I was hoping that it wouldn’t come so soon. It’s almost time to make all the normals forget about magic. It should have no harm on them, however there is the possibility that...” he trailed off leaving his sentence unfinished.

“Possibility of what?” Eliza pushed.

“There’s a slight possibility that you may forget as well. You are a witch, a very powerful one at that, however you have been exposed to the normal world throughout your entire life. The potion may cause you, and many of the other Misfortunes to forget what they’ve learned here. Forget the people that they’ve met here.”

Eliza covered her mouth. She didn’t want to forget. Two weeks ago she didn’t know that she wanted this, she didn’t know that she could have this, but now that she had been exposed she never wanted to give the magic up. She didn’t want to give Henry up. And by the way Henry was looking at her with his light eyes and his sad smile, she could tell that he felt the same way.

“You might not forget,” Henry said in an attempt to counteract her sorrow. “You certainly have enough power.”

“Well,” Eliza said as she took a step forward making it so that she and Henry were mere inches apart. “In case I do.”

Placing her hand gently on the side of Henry’s face, Eliza stood on her tiptoes to kiss him.

Henry returned the kiss by touching his hands carefully to her back and expressing without any words needed that he wouldn't let her forget him. He would be with her forever.

They pulled away and Henry said that they had better go meet Mag and the others on the grounds. When they exited the grand building, Eliza saw more people than she had ever imagined. They were standing with locked hands facing the opposite way of the school, wrapping around it, forming a large circle. Henry and Eliza joined the others. In the linked line of people, Eliza's left hand held onto Henry's right and her right hand held onto the left of a little girl standing beside her. Each witch, wizard, and warlock was given a vial of memory potion that hung around their necks by an attached string.

Mag spoke in a voice that they did not hear through their ears, rather they heard him in their minds. "Focus on the vial," he said. "Make it float and cause it to go up to the sky."

All the interlocked people did as they were told. Thousands of vials were lifted up to the sky with no physical beings touching them. They went up and up until Eliza couldn't see them anymore. Then, it began to rain. The memory potion poured over the entire world.

Eliza released the little girl's hand and wrapped herself around Henry who held her in his arms. She felt the rain slide down her cheek.

*I won't forget. I won't forget. I won't forget.*

Eliza awoke in her bed with her head beating against her skull. She rubbed her eyes. She felt as though she had woken from a marvelous dream, but couldn't remember a single detail about it. There was something in her mind that she couldn't quite grasp. Eliza gave up on attempting to find the impossible and crawled from her bed to begin another day. This normal routine that she had held her entire life continued for the rest of the week.

One morning, while pouring herself a hearty bowl of cereal, Eliza heard a knock on her front door.

*Now, who could that be?* She questioned. It was far too early for anyone to casually be stopping by.

Eliza opened the door to see a tall man with dark, wispy hair and a young face that didn't match the age of the clothes he wore.

"Henry," she breathed.

His eyes lit up with pure joy. "You remember me?" he asked incredulously. He took a step forward.

Eliza thought for a small moment's time. "Well, no. I don't. I actually have no idea who you are. I don't even know how I knew your name. It is Henry, correct?" She took a step back.

His eyes fell. "Yes. It is." He stepped back as well.

Eliza felt saddened. "I'm really sorry that I don't know who you are. I feel as though I should, but there is just nothing there."

"It's quite alright," Henry said meekly. "However, I would have to disagree with you about nothing being there. You remembered my name, so that means all the memories are locked deep inside that wonderful mind of yours and I just need to help you find them." He stepped forward cautiously. "I know this is a ridiculous thing to ask of you, but do you trust me?"

Without thinking, Eliza answered, "Yes. I don't know why, but yes."

"Excellent." Henry got closer to her. "I'm going to place my hands on your head, if that's alright?"

Eliza nodded her head. "Yes, quite alright."

Henry reached his hands forward, lightly placing each hand on both her temples. Suddenly,

Eliza felt a tickling sensation in her mind and a presence in there that was other than her own. Henry's eyes were closed and he seemed to be concentrating very hard. After what felt like an eternity, he smiled triumphantly.

"I found them," he muttered.

He removed his hands from her head and his presence from her mind. At first nothing happened. Then, all of the sudden, memories came flooding into her consciousness. Everything from her two weeks at Arguntus was back and hopefully there to stay.

"Henry?" Eliza said tenderly.

"Eliza, do you remember me?"

A smiled filled her face because she did. She leaped forward and wrapped her arms around him, so excited to be back in his arms. "Can we go back to Arguntus now?" She whispered in his ear, feeling happier than she had ever felt in her life.

"Of course."

Eliza, the young woman who was living in a world where anything was possible finally believed that that was so.