

Lucy stared down into the tiny pond, her reflection distorted by the ripples caused by her tears.

This was her pond. She always came here when she needed to get away. She could talk here. Her reflection in the water always listened, and never interrupted her, or talked down to her, or told her to shut up.

“Papa left again last night,” she began. Then she stopped. She couldn’t see her reflection anymore. The ripples were stilling, but the water was murky.

Lucy reached down and stirred the water with her hand. Then she waited.

As the water settled, she saw a face again. But not her face. Even before the features came into focus, she could make out dark hair, rather than her own blonde.

A few seconds later, a boy’s face stared up at her through the water. He didn’t look at all surprised to see her.

“Who are you?” she asked.

He didn’t answer, just tilted his head slightly.

“Can you hear me?”

He nodded.

“Can you tell me your name?”

He shook his head.

“Oh,” she said. “I’m Lucy.”

He nodded again.

“Will... Will you stay?”

He nodded.

And stay he did. For the next month, every time Lucy went to her pond, she spoke to the boy instead of her own reflection. And he listened better than her reflection did, because he would nod, or shake his head, or smile, or frown, all without her prompting.

He never spoke, so of course he never told her his name. So she started calling him Calder. At first she only called him that in her thoughts. But one day she said it aloud. He looked surprised, then amused.

Lucy blushed. “I’m sorry,” she stammered. “But I don’t know your real name. Can I call you Calder?”

Still amused, Calder nodded.

A few minutes later, Lucy stopped mid-sentence and frowned. Was that ice building up around the edges of the pond? In July, with the sun shining?

She reached out and touched it. Yes, it was ice.

Calder gave her a curious look. Lucy carefully broke off a piece of ice and held it where he could see it. His eyes widened. But then he got a look on his face that told Lucy he knew what was going on. For the first time, she wished he could actually speak to her.

As soon as Lucy left that evening, Calder went to find Neva. As he expected, he didn't have to go far to find the ice fairy. "What was that?" he demanded.

Also as expected, she knew exactly what he meant. "You know exactly what that was," she shot back. "Who is she? Why do you keep spending time with her?"

"That's none of your business." A few other fairies in the glade were looking at them, so Calder lowered his voice. "Nothing I do is any of your business. So lay off." He turned away.

"She's a human," Neva hissed after him. "What could you get from a human that you can't get from me?"

Calder stopped, his jaw clenching. But he couldn't let her get to him. Neva was nothing to him. Not anymore. So he walked away.

The next day, as Lucy talked to Calder, ice appeared at the edge of the pond again. It crept further into the pond than it had the day before, and when Lucy broke off another piece to show Calder, it didn't come away as easily.

This time, when Calder saw the ice, he looked angry.

Lucy sighed. "I wish you could tell me what's going on."

Calder nodded. And for the first time, his mouth moved as if he was trying to talk to her. But no sound came from the water.

Lucy wasn't able to go down to her pond the next day, or the day after. The day she finally got away again, she ran at least half the way.

As she approached the pond, she slowed down. Something felt wrong. The birds were silent, and there was a distinct chill in the air.

She passed the last of the undergrowth, and the pond came into view.

It was completely frozen over.

Lucy gasped and dropped to her knees.

Was she just imagining it? She touched the surface.

No, it was solid ice. The sunlight reflected off it, bright enough to hurt her eyes. But she couldn't see her own reflection. And she couldn't see Calder.

She tried to break the ice. She stomped on it. She pounded it with sticks. She found the largest rock she could carry and threw it onto the ice at the edge of the pond, and when that didn't work, she picked it up again and threw it onto the ice at the center of the pond. The rock merely skidded across the frozen surface until it bumped the bank on the far side of the pond.

Lucy came back to the pond every day for the next week. And every day she tried again and again to break through. But nothing worked. In spite of the hot weather, the pond remained frozen.

And Lucy wept, mourning the loss of her only confidant. Her only friend. She didn't even know if Calder was alive or dead, free or trapped in the ice.

She tried talking to the ice, the way she had to the water. But the ice was cold, unforgiving, expressionless. So, gradually, her visits to the frozen pond became fewer and farther apart. And, finally, she stopped coming altogether.