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a short story, little chews

“The Pixie by the Pond” by Matias Travieso-Diaz

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*The Pixies, they who change not, nor grow old or die.
The Pixies, though they love us, behold us pass away,
And are not sad for flowers they gathered yesterday*
Nora Chesson, *The Pixies*

Brian just finished his Junior year at Stanford University, where he was pursuing a course of studies at the Archaeology Center. He was doing well academically, and his father, a wealthy industrialist, rewarded him with a one-month trip to the United Kingdom, where he could tour the innumerable archeological sites in England and Scotland. To mark the end of his vacation, Brian decided to go to the Land's End area, the extreme southwest tip of the island.

After an exhausting train ride from London, Brian arrived at Penzance, the main city in the Penwith peninsula of Cornwall. He found the boarding house where he made reservations, checked in, and retired to his room, intending to go to bed right away since it was almost midnight. However, the town – and all of Cornwall – was in the midst of an end-of-summer heat wave, and his room was not air-conditioned. After tossing in bed for many uncomfortable minutes, Brian decided to go for a stroll in the nearby Morrab Gardens, a local attraction featuring an extensive collection of subtropical plants that was unique in the country.

He was wearing sneakers and, walking on the grass, soundlessly approached the centerpiece of the garden: a large cast-iron circular fountain with a pedestal featuring dolphins and cherubs riding tortoises.

As he drew nearer, he noticed a female figure sitting on the ground at the edge of the fountain, intently watching the fish that swam in the murky waters and throwing tiny pebbles at them. She resembled a young girl — barely an adolescent – and was dressed in green rags, and had translucent butterfly wings. She had short bluish hair, a heart-shaped face with a smattering of freckles, upward-slanted green eyes, and pointed ears.

As she noticed Brian's presence, her expression changed from surprise to outright delight. She jumped up, pirouetted, and bowed her head in a welcoming gesture.

Brian realized that the creature uttered no sounds, but her thoughts registered in his mind in an unending stream: *"Greetings, human! Welcome to my pond! I like your red hair! My name is Elowen; what are you called, and where do you hail from?"*

Brian was astonished at the barrage but managed to retort in his mind: *"I am called Brian and have come from across the wide waters. But what are you?"*

The answer came as a slightly sarcastic thought: *"Your kind calls us pobel vean or pixies, and look down on us because we are smaller than you. But we are actually Mother Nature's favorite children."*

That claim was dropped as a matter of fact, in an earnest manner that Brian found charming. He approached the pixie and, standing next to her, challenged her playfully: *"And what makes you her favorite?"*

The answer came quick as an arrow: *"We love all living things, and they all love us back. We are nimble and graceful, and most everyone thinks we are pretty. Don't you?"*

Brian found himself attracted to this Elowen, who was indeed very pretty and exuded charm, but he feigned to remain unconvinced: *"I am still not sure you are even real. For all I know, you are a mirage, a phantom created by my overtired mind."*

Elowen twisted her mouth in a sign of displeasure. *"Not real, you say? Come and touch me, and you will see how wrong you are!"*

Brian hesitated a moment and then pressed his fingers against the pixie's chest. The sensation that followed was unlike anything he had ever experienced. Elowen's flesh was indescribably soft and yielding, and his touch elicited an electric pulse that traveled up and down Brian's spine and excited every cell of his body. He felt like he would never want to let go of this divine creature that so appealed to him.

"Ahhhh..." he heard himself whisper. And then, unbidden, his mind uttered an urgent request: *"May I hold you? Please let me hold you!"*

Smiling, Elowen made an inviting gesture, and Brian held her by the waist and brought her close to him. They caressed, and he pressed his lips against those of the heavily breathing pixie.

At that moment, a thousand whispers resonated throughout the garden. *"It is my pixie friends. They don't approve,"* dismissed Elowen.

"Where are they?" questioned Brian, not letting go. *"They are all around us. We live underground beneath stone circles, barrows, and menhirs, all over this land."*

"What business is it of them whatever we do?" protested Brian.

"Mingling bodies with humans is frowned upon by most of us," explained Elowen. "Not me," she added.

Before Brian could respond, there was a very loud crash, the sky lit up with unnatural brightness, and the smell of approaching rain filled Brian's nostrils.

"I must go," urged Elowen and freed herself from Brian's embrace.

"Wait, don't go!" shouted Brian; then, resignedly, he pleaded: *"Can I see you again? Please!"*

Four words resonated in his mind as Elowen disappeared: *"Tomorrow, here, same time."*

When he returned to the boarding house, Brian was soaked to the bone and shivering from fatigue and spent energy.

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The following morning, Brian visited the Penzance public library and asked for reference materials on pixies. To his surprise, there was a sizable collection of treatises and other works dealing with the subject, but most of them contained fantastic tales or folk accounts. The only useful source was an 1889 handwritten listing, prepared by a local parson, of pixie sightings in Cornwall. It referred to two instances in which a local man (a farmer in one case, a traveling salesman in another) had coupled with a female pixie and sired a dwarfish halfling, but no information was provided on how the union had taken place or what had become of the offspring. An affair with Elowen was not impossible but seemed unlikely.

Brian was so consumed by his investigation that he ate nothing throughout the day. He was famished and on edge when he entered the Morrab Gardens shortly after sunset and sat on a wooden bench near the fountain. The weather was again oppressively hot and humid, and rain was anticipated. The glimmer from nearby buildings provided scant illumination to the scene, adding to Brian's anxiety. At

last, when he was starting to lose hope, a small shape materialized by the edge of the fountain.

Brian rushed to meet Elowen's familiar figure. The pixie's face was contorted by worry; before he had time to greet her, she advised: *"There was a meeting of our clan. They declared our relationship unnatural, and I was ordered to stop seeing you, else we both would be severely punished. You must go and never try to see me again."* She was sobbing, and as her tears fell to the ground, they became drops of clear glass that reflected the pallid light of the moon.

"I don't care what happens to me," he protested feverishly. *"I just want to be with you!"* He embraced her elfin body, and she received him, no longer protesting. They fell on the grass and remained there, united, for the longest time. At the end, Elowen freed herself from his grasp and, quick as lightning, rose and vanished into the night.

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Brian returned to Stanford, completed his course of studies, and became a professional archeologist. A few years later, he moved permanently to England and spent the rest of his life working on the prehistoric sites of the country, particularly those in Devon and Cornwall. He specialized in the study of underground sites, as he diligently looked for signs of pixie settlements. Alas, he never found any.

Days before his sixty-fifth birthday, he suffered a heart attack and was confined to a hospital in Bristol. He never married, so the few people who came to see him were professional acquaintances and a couple of friends from London. He was unconscious when his last visitor arrived. He was a man in his forties, wearing a shabby green topcoat and britches. He was of small stature, almost a dwarf. He had longish ears, a ruddy complexion, and curly red hair that resembled Brian's. The visitor stood by the hospital bed and whispered into Brian's mind: *"Hello, father. It is good to finally meet you. Mother sends her love."*

Brian was too weak to answer, but a smile forced its way into his wan face. *"Hello, my son! Happy to meet you!"* He sighed and then expired.

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