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THEFT OF HEAVEN

by

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ACT I: MOMOKI THE MARMOSET WATCHES THE WORLD FORMING

PROLOGUE: WHEREIN THE WORLD IS FORMED; MOTHARUS QUESTIONS

THE WAY OF THINGS; TWILA IS RESCUED BY MOMOKI AND GOGI;

MOMOKI'S FALL

CHAPTER 1

In the Time of Mist, when the gentle hand of The Cosmos was slowly caressing all things into being, there was a mountain that lived in the sky, the mountain named Taliesin. Upon Taliesin lived Momoki the Marmoset, the mountain's sole guardian. His fur was gray, soft and flowed liked the wild fields of grass on Taliesin. His tail was ringed with black stripes. While his face was brown, out of each temple grew long splaying tufts of white fur.

Within the angled fields, atop the craggy stones and through the forever bearing apple and cherry blossom orchards did Momoki play. He ate the delicious golden and green apples as he would bask in the sun's warm rays. He slept in the wide, open fields and tended to the gardens. Each day for Momoki was filled with work, duty, play and contentment.

On one occasion Momoki dug a root from the ground and, using a stone as a tool, carved for himself a long, bent pipe for which to smoke and enjoy the pleasant tobaccos that grew high on Taliesin's sides. It became habit for Momoki to find himself, after a day's work and play and his last meal, sitting on the side of the mountain enjoying a bowl full of freshly picked tobacco, warming himself in the sun and reflecting, ruminating upon all the beauty taking shape far below him.

Once, after a long day of gardening, full of supper fruits, Momoki ascended to Taliesin's highest peak with his pipe and tobacco and had a long, fine, soothing smoke. As he watched the hands of the Cosmos work the world into form he thought, "How nice it would be to visit these new realms The Cosmos are making before me." He puffed at his root pipe. He watched the misty hand of The Cosmos molding through his thick, rolling smoke.

Rarely did The Cosmos visit Taliesin for they trusted Momoki, but when next there came a small mist to the mountain to gently water the lush gardens and orchards there Momoki cried out, "O Cosmos! My life here is serene, but the lands you make far below are so beautiful. Will ever there be a time I could visit these other lands?"

No answer was given. The light rains merely passed over Momoki and disappeared. He was not surprised nor did Momoki truly expect an answer for, he knew, The Cosmos did not answer to any creature, but rather all creatures must answer to The Cosmos.

Momoki went about his way, tending the gardens and orchards and smoking his pipe and eating the delicious apples, but some of his delight in these activities had been lost. He was not sad, but he was not joyed, either.

Eventually The Cosmos reached an end to their work, though truly their work is never ended, but the world below Taliesin came close to being fully formed and it filled with creatures of every kind, coming alive with activity and movement. Momoki watched it all from his perch, smiling and quietly desiring.

As the world below filled so did Taliesin. Insects of every variety came to feast and play in the gardens and fields with Momoki. Birds filled the skies and perched with him and made their nests high atop the mountain. Momoki once again was overwhelmed with joy and excitement for his tasks and for meeting new friends. He made friends with burrowing bugs, cackling crows, buzzing bees and industrious ants he would stop only to give him a quick "Hello!" before scurrying off to find more things to do, which suited Momoki fine for that's all he wanted. He found the new cricks and cracks, cries and chatterings of a teeming Taliesin combine into a the Sweet Song of Nature. It pleased Momoki to find himself amidst glorious bustlings and, for a time, he forgot his troubles and the world far below.

Momoki's greatest, closest friend was Gogi the Grasshopper who did not enjoy smoking as Momoki did, however he did savor the taste of the fine tobaccos of Taliesin so instead chewed upon their leaves.

Day after day, after their meals were done and work fulfilled, Momoki and Gogi would sit atop Taliesin smoking and chewing, spitting and puffing and chatting the time away.

"How did you come to Taliesin?" asked Momoki.

Gogi was a timid creature for he was a small creature. In his nervous way, wringing his tiny hands as he spoke, he said, "I-in the world far below," he said, "a friend of a cousin of mine once spoke of a tale they'd heard from their friend's uncle or some such, who was a gander I think... yes, yes, I-I think he was a goose."

Momoki looked to the skies, "Which one? Many geese fly by here."

"Oh," said Gogi nervously, for he could not remember the cousin's friend's friend's uncle's species quite, but did not want to fully admit to that, "W-well, maybe it was a goose? Or a bluejay? Or maybe it was a cat. No, no... that would make no sense. They had to have been a bird."

"Go on with your story," Momoki urged with a smile.

"Y-yes, yes. The story. Well, this bird told a tale about the gorgeous gardens of Taliesin. He loved the sight of the gardens so much that he would fly over them all the time."

Momoki looked up as a gaggle of geese flew overhead. "I wonder of one of them his him," he said.

Gogi shrugged, feeling foolish for not having remembered the details. "I-I didn't know them myself," he explained. "I simply heard the tale. I-I guess I was too overwhelmed by the thoughts of Taliesin to care about some of the details. All I know is that he was the uncle of a friend of a friend of a cousin of mine... I-I think." Gogi was now thinking over the details and second-guessing himself.

Momoki saw his friend perplexed and coaxed him to continue his tale, "His tale is what brought you here?"

"It is. Many called the tale of a mountain that lived in the sky preposterous, silly even. But it all sounded so wonderfully pretty to me," Gogi's voice took a romantic tone, "I wanted so badly to see Taliesin with my own eyes. I chased every rumor for two years to discover this mountain's location. When at last I found it, I-I had the problem of trying to reach it. I-I didn't want to fly on the back of a bird for fear the bird would eat m-me."

"Then how did you get here?" asked Momoki.

"I jumped," Gogi answered simply.

Momoki's eyes grew wide with wonder. Smoke from his pipe swirled before his face. He spoke, "how can someone so small jump so high? Not even the mountains of the land far below reach this high. Many of the clouds, even, do not dare this height!"

"It is v-very high," Gogi said. "And I-I tried many, many times before I made it. In fact, on the last jump that brought me here I-I prayed to Parnopius for my safety for I knew if I m-missed Taliesin there would be no surviving such a great fall. I-I don't think any creature could survive such a fall. Even an immortal such as yourself, Momoki."

"I can only imagine," Momoki puffed at his pipe.

Gogi sighed in relief, "But somehow I made it and I was able to grab hold of the underside of Taliesin. I was so afraid I refused to jump the rest of the way to the gardens. I instead walked. It took me three days!"

"That's quite a tale," Momoki said.

"I've all the fear I've ever needed in that jump. I've had all the adventure I can handle in my lifetime."

Together they laughed. They sat together staring at the world far below for a moment. Then Momoki asked, "What is the world below Taliesin like?"

Gogi thought a moment, for once he made it to Taliesin he hadn't thought much about the world below. "Much like Taliesin, I suppose. Both are filled with life. Some of it as beautiful as what's to be found here on Taliesin, too. Thought the view here is greater by far."

Momoki leaned on his elbow and looked at Gogi. "There was a time when the world was not so full."

"Oh?"

Momoki nodded. "In fact, I remember a time when the world barely *was*."

"*Was* what?"

"*Was*. I witnessed its creation by the hands of The Cosmos."

This astounded Gogi. "Have you been here since the beginning?"

Momoki again nodded. "Since the beginning."

Gogi thought on this. "How adventurous your life must have been thus far. *W*-was it frightening?"

Momoki smiled. "No," he said. "It was actually quite beautiful." Thinking on this, Momoki's heart filled with peace with his station in the universe, though still his mind wandered into wonderment.

The two friends sat in the soft wild grass on the side of the mountain, smoking and chewing, chewing and smoking and telling tales and laughing.

CHAPTER 2

On went the lives of Momoki and friend Gogi for a long while. So much did Gogi appreciate Momoki's friendship and so much did he love Taliesin, he felt he should mark the day of his first full year living on the floating mountain with a gift to his friend. "But what shall I give him?" he asked himself.

For many days Gogi strained with thought. Then, one day while drinking from a small pond, a tiny worm fell from a cherry blossom nearby and landed squarely on Gogi's back. So scared was Gogi by the sudden impact that he scampered away without looking. Curiosity, however, took hold of him as he turned to look back. There where he was standing was a beautiful, sparkling white worm. Cautiously, slowly Gogi returned, nervously calling out, "A-are you hurt?"

The worm arched and spoke back at him in a heavenly feminine voice so soothing it sounded like distant chimes on the wind. The sound chased away all fear from Gogi, usually a timid creature due to his small stature. "I am well," said the silk worm. "Thank you for saving me." The silk worm crawled towards Gogi.

Gogi asked, "S-saved you? How did I save you?"

"By breaking my fall," chimed the silk worm.

"Oh," Gogi didn't want to admit to not intending to break her fall for fear he may appear foolish. "As long as you're safe," Gogi said.

The silk worm approached. "I am Szu Ri, the Silk Worm of Taliesin. Is there any way I can repay you for your kindness."

Ashamed at the undeserved attention and ashamed to admit the truth, Gogi shook his head, "No, no."

But Szu Ri took Gogi by his hand, leaving a small, glowing warmth there and a bit of silk. "If ever you need a favor, come see your friend Szu Ri in the Cherry Blossom by the Pond," she said.

Gogi merely nodded.

"I must head out. It will take me a long time to get back in that tree."

Again Gogi merely nodded.

He watched her go and as he did he felt a certain satisfaction in knowing he was not the only creature on Taliesin that was so small.

He looked at his hand and the silk there, the welcoming warmth Szu Ri had left. The silk was beautiful. It felt like a cloud encasing his hand. He looked up, chasing after the silk worm.

"Szu Ri! Szu Ri!" he called.

She stopped and turned. "Yes, friend?"

"This silk," he looked at his hand then at her. "Can you make it in any color?"

She nodded. "Any color."

"Would you be able to make a gift for my friend of your silk? He is a marmoset and quite larger than you or I. Is it possible?"

"How wonderful," she said. "I offer a favor and you take it on behalf of a friend. Of course I will make you a gift to give to your friend. What kind of gift would you like me to make?"

Gogi stammered a bit. "I'm unsure."

"Tell me about him."

As Gogi spent time talking with Szu Ri, sharing with her his friendship with Momoki and his adventure jumping to Taliesin, their conversation leading eventually into smaller chatting, Gogi discovered he was making a new friend

"I like you, Szu Ri," Gogi said.

Szu Ri giggled, "I like you, too, though you've yet to tell me your name."

This horrified Gogi. "Oh, oh, oh! I am so v-very sorry! I am Gogi, the Grasshopper." Gogi blushed in his shamed.

Szu Ri laughed. "Do not blush, Gogi. It does not suit you. And you've nothing to be ashamed of. We've not needed our names until now."

Together they laughed and decided upon a proper gift for Momoki.

When the gift was completed by Szu Ri and given to Gogi, the little grasshopper scurried off hurriedly to his friend's side instantly. "Momoki! Momoki!" he cried, climbing the tallest peak of Taliesin with the gift in tow. there he found Momoki smoking his long, bent pipe after a day's work and enjoying the sun, laying in the wild, cool grass.

"Momoki! Momoki! Momoki!" Gogi cried over and over again as he ran to Momoki's side.

Momoki sat up. "What is it, Gogi?" he chuckled at his friend's enthusiasm.

"I've a gift for you!" Gogi presented it to Momoki.

Momoki lifted the gift from the grass. It was a headdress made of silk and looking much like a paper fan. It was lightweight and red except for the very center where it rested upon the head it was gold and the whole thing shone like the sun.

"Do you like it? Do you like it?" Gogi asked.

Momoki smiled and donned the headdress. It tilted some into the fur tufts at the sides of his head and blended there to give him the appearance of having a full lion's mane. At the center was a silk cherry blossom that hung from the main portion of the headdress down to rest upon Momoki's forehead. "It's beautiful," he told Gogi.

Gogi smiled and laughed and clapped. "I was so worried you may not like it! Do you see the colors? I asked her to make it look like the sun since we're always laying up here in the sun together."

Momoki kept smiling at his friend as he asked, "But why, Gogi? Why such a wonderful present?"

Gogi hesitated a bit. "I-I've been here a year now... and you're the best friend a grasshopper could ever hope for."

Momoki, moved almost to tears, leaned over towards Gogi and said, "Thank you, friend. And welcome to Taliesin."

Gogi smiled, "Thank you, Momoki. I feel at home here. And safe."

"And forever shall you be, as long as your old friend Momoki is charged with Taliesin's care. Now," Momoki leaned back on an elbow and puffed at his pipe, "tell me of this girl you've met... this woman that made this gift for me."

Gogi blushed.

"Come, come! We're friends. Share with me," Momoki said.

Gogi laughed in delight. "Oh! She's wonderful!"

CHAPTER 3

Above the clouds, above Taliesin, is the Realm of Heaven reserved for Gods and Immortals and Gifted Ones and their friends should they wish to live there. There is always room in the Realm of Heaven, however the gods themselves are not always so welcoming.

As the misty hands of The Cosmos caressed the Realm of Heaven they manifested into Stork, a beautiful white bird, whose sole duty was to watch over the Realm of Heaven for all time. She flies constantly, rarely landing to rest or eat, but on occasion she flies low to the world to observe the mortal creatures there and smile at them.

One day while flying low she met Drae, a mortal man. She smiled and he waved and smiled back. How thrilled she was to make such contact with the world below the Realm of Heaven! She felt a warm smile and a wave was the greatest gift she could ever receive.

She made it habit to visit Drae, flying around him and chattering as he worked his wetlands for food. He would talk with her, sing to her, tell stories and jokes and laugh. Finally she worked the courage to land and talk with him without bothersome flight.

In time Drae and Stork fell in love. They commemorated their love with child, a son, whom they called Motharus, a demi-god. He was born with human body of golden brown skin and a kestrel head. Great white wings grew from his back. It was decided that Motharus would stay with his father as Stork patrolled the Realm of Heaven each day, though on occasion he would fly to visit his mother in the Realm of Heaven.

“This must be the highest point in all of creation,” he once said, awestruck at the beauty he witnessed while on one visit.

“No,” Stork corrected, “The sun is the highest point of all.”

“I must see the sun!” Motharus said. He flew higher and higher, his wings outstretched and flapping. As he grew closer to the sun, his feathers soaked in its rays and became colored, brilliant with red and tinged with blues from sky along the edge. His head, too, became sun-dyed in the same manner. Try as he might, however, Motharus simply could not reach the sun. Tired from his journey, he returned to his mother’s side.

“Oh!” she gasped. “You are so beautiful! What a wonderful gift the sun and sky have given you.”

Drae loved his son dearly. He would often sing to Motharus as Stork took care of her duties in the Realm of Heaven. He also taught him how to read the lands and find food so he could survive should he ever wish to travel to other lands.

Time passed. Stork continued tending to the Realm of Heaven. Drae grew old and Motharus grew strong and large.

The time came at last when Drae grew sick, feeble and unable to work his fields. Motharus and Stork naturally grew concerned. On his deathbed, Drae said to Stork, “Thank you. You gave me reason to live I lived for you and our son. I love you” and he died.

Drae's death pained Motharus greatly. "Why," he asked his mother, "did father die?"

"Because he was mortal, my son. His life is not permanent as ours are."

"Why do we live and not father?"

Stork shook her head. "That is a question for The Cosmos."

"The Cosmos be damned!" cursed Motharus.

"Son... no. Do not curse The Cosmos. It is the way of things. If you attempt alteration of things, harm will come to you."

"Wisdoms have no weight in such moments. Loss is loss and today I lost my father."

Stork allowed her son time to grieve. She watched over the Realm of Heaven, but her thoughts were always on Motharus.

Motharus raged. He flew higher and higher in another attempt to reach the sun, but he could not fly that high. "It must be The Cosmos that keep me from the sun! As they keep me from my father!"

He looked out across the world and in the far distance saw the hands of The Cosmos finalizing the world. "The Cosmos be damned!" he cursed again. He flew as fast as he could towards the end of the world. Once there he threw punch after punch, kick after feeble kick at the misty hands. His attacks flowed through the mist, causing no

harm. The Cosmos continued their task undaunted for The Cosmos answer to no creature, but all creatures must answer to The Cosmos.

“Ignore me, will you?” Motharus attacked and attacked but could do nothing. He punched and kicked, kicked and punched until he was so exhausted he fell from the sky in the lands far below.