

## Mini-Story: Protector of the woods (Elf Woman TFTG Merge)

By FoxFaceStories

### Protector of the Woods

Peter's parents always believed that Shalia was just an imaginary friend of his, but he knew better. His family lived out in the woods, with a forest just behind their nature-filled home. When he was just five years old and wide-eyed, the young boy played often in the forest by himself. He was an only child, and his parents were happy for him to frolick and play so long as he returned for his meals. He would tell them all sorts of exciting tales of adventure, of monsters he'd slayed and princesses he'd met. And they would just laugh at these amusing tales, encouraging his creativity, and spurring him to draw what he could of them.

But one day he met *her*. The elf girl.

Peter had ventured farther into the forest than he ever normally had, daring himself to go further and discover more. Just as he began to get a bit nervous, and his stomach a bit grumbly, he overheard a delightful tune: it was someone singing. Intrigued, he pushed his way through the branches until he reached a gloriously beautiful glen, with a running stream of sussurating water, and a shining patch of sun descending down upon its lone occupant.

She was an elf. He recognised it immediately. No human wore dresses of flowers and weaved branches, nor had skin so clear and beautiful, or in such a woody brown colour. She was about his age, and had long ears that curved upwards several inches proudly. Her hair was black, but seemed to shimmer slightly, as if filled with starlight. And she was dancing and singing without a care in the world: until she saw him.

"Who are you!?" she suddenly asked, drawing forth a bow.

Peter didn't know what to say. "I'm - I'm Peter. Are you an elf?"

"Of course I'm an elf, aren't you?"

"N-no. I'm . . . I'm just a human."

The elf girl paused. Her grip on the bow wasn't very secure. She lowered it, and looked at him with amazement. "Humans shouldn't be able to see us," she said. "You shouldn't even be able to find this place. How did you find this place?"

Peter was often an honest child. "I heard your singing, and followed it. It sounded really wonderful. It's the best singing I ever heard."

The elf girl blushed. She was not only the best singer Peter had ever heard, but the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen as well. It was as if she was from another world, a better and more beautiful one.

"That's really sweet," she said, smiling sheepishly. "You're the first human I've ever met. I thought they all hated forests and destroyed them. But if you can see me, it means you're connected to nature in some deep way."

Peter nodded eagerly. "Some humans are bad like that, but I love nature! I love exploring it, and seeing amazing animals, and having adventures."

"You like adventures too? Like the stories?"

He grinned. "Absolutely! I love pretending I'm a valiant knight fighting evil dragons and protecting the forest!"

"Me too! My job is to guard the forest when I'm older. There is always an elf to be its protector . . . but it makes me nervous. Would - would you like to play with me? I can show you amazing things no other human has seen."

Peter was ecstatic, and more than happy to take this wondrous elf girl up on her offer.

"I'm Peter," he said.

"Shalia," she responded.

She shook his hand, and for just a moment a connection formed between them. Neither had any idea at the time, but in their two like natures, a soul bond had been created. A powerful magic that marked two individuals as sharing two halves of the same soul. It would be a bond that would carry them far.

From that day, the two of them played together constantly. Peter's mom and dad just assumed Shalia was made up, though his stories and drawings of her were more elaborate than any other. The two of them explored the forests, talked to animals - which Shalia could understand - and played pretend. It was clear the elf girl was lonely in her role, as she was the only elf of the forest, and this was apparently the way of her people: one was always left behind to be a region's protector, and to learn a place's nature across their long life. She was so glad to have Peter as a friend, and the soul bond between them only grew, to the point that being without the other almost felt 'off', somehow.

Unfortunately, things changed. One day, unexpectedly, Peter's father received a job offer he simply couldn't refuse. The times were changing, and they could no longer afford their home where it was: they needed to move. Peter was utterly distraught.

"But Shalia! What will I tell Shalia?"

"Shalia can come with us dear - but you know she's not real. She's imaginary. You're getting a bit too old for this."

He tried to explain it to the elf-girl herself, but she simply couldn't understand.

"Why can't you stay here with me?" she pleaded. "We could protect the forest together? I know humans don't live long, but we have a connection - I've felt the magic, haven't you?"

Peter had, though he couldn't define it. But there was nothing he could do. He simply hugged his friend, tears falling onto her nature-woven dress as he sobbed.

"You're the best friend I ever had," he told her.

And then, despite her trying to clutch to him, he withdrew, still sobbing. He had to go, and all he could do was promise to see Shalia again, and reunite their friendship. For the two of them, the parting was like losing half of themselves. It was more true than they knew.

In the years that followed, Peter found city life difficult. He yearned to return to the forest, but it was two states over, and he had his own life to focus on. As he grew up, he maintained his interest in art, pursuing it into college life. By the age of twenty, he was convinced that Shalia was just a figment of his imagination, just as his parents had said. By the age of thirty, when he worked as a professional artist and graphic designer, he could barely remember the dream-like time he'd had in those days of childhood. They slipped from his memory almost magically, leeched away by virtue of his own missing half. Eventually, Shalia the elf-girl was just a thing that appeared to him in dreams, summoned forth in vibrant moments of unconsciousness, and then slowly forgotten across the course of the day.

Forgotten, that was except in Peter's art. Somehow, the spirit of Shalia, his other half, lingered in his drawings and paintings and artwork. Many of his most successful pieces features her in some way, or were inspired subconsciously by her, or simply had her nestled away in some corner in places only the most observant could spot. He couldn't escape her, and her presence only became more powerful when his parents passed away, and he found out that they'd recently repurchased the old family home they'd sold so long ago. By that time, Peter was in his late forties, having never had a successful relationship. Every woman he had met just seemed . . . not to fit. Like there was part of him missing that he couldn't bring to the table. It was the same as city life: he was often hiking, visiting local forests, or simply perusing nature of artistic inspiration.

And now, finally, he had a sign of some sort. A chance to revisit his past, and understand this strange fey figure who kept slipping into his work.

The old home was a lot more rundown, and would need a great deal of work. Surprisingly, the woods had expanded somewhat, reclaiming parts that had been deforested when he'd been young. Peter had planned to just stay for a short time, get a look at the the place, and maybe go

for a short walk. He didn't have the strength he used to, after all, nor the jubilation. But instead, he found himself drawn further and further into the forest. It was like unlocking a series of memories from some old chest, ones that had been safely stored away but then forgotten as they'd been shifted to the attic. Those memories returned downstairs presently as he moved through the winding paths of the verdant environment.

"So familiar," he said to himself. "I feel like . . . like there's something *more* here. Something I've forgotten."

Suddenly, singing. Peter stopped, astonished. It was a grown woman's voice, soft and high and sweet and *powerful*, beautiful beyond all measure, and yet containing a sort of ragged desperation to it. A hurt. The man felt impelled to investigate. His soul ached, burning in some deep pain that he couldn't understand; a pain outside of himself. He pushed through the foliage, foliage he had passed through long ago, and stumbled forth into a peaceful glen that he knew in his heart he had visited when he was so much younger. He gasped, memories flooding back to him, knowledge that had faded in the human world but was finally strengthened in this place. Resting against a moss-covered log was a woman who was not human. She had skin like bark, albeit soft, and willowy features that were unnaturally beautiful. Her hair was black but twinkled with starlight, and her ears were pointed and long. This was no elven girl, but an elven *woman* now. She didn't look a day over twenty.

And she was bleeding out, clutching her side in pain.

"Shalia," he said, his voice barely a whisper.

"Peter," she grunted, her voice beautiful even in agony. "I thought you had forgotten me. It's been so long."

He rushed to her side, dropping everything to inspect the wound. It looked bad. "I had. I don't know how, but I forgot you, until I returned. I forgot you in everything except my art and my dreams, and my soul."

She smiled faintly up at him, raising a hand to caress his cheek. "We have a connection. I felt it always, even as you were far away. For you to remember even that much shows that we have a bond."

"Don't talk, you're injured! I'll get some help."

Shalia coughed wetly and shook her head. "It's too late, my friend. My only friend. I was trying to be the protector of the woods. Some men were hunting here, not even for food or clothing but for the pure sport. I stopped them, turned them away with illusions, but one fired an evil weapon, and I have not been able to heal it. I'm sorry."

Tears welled in Peter's eyes. He had come so far, lost so much, missed this woman so dearly without ever truly knowing why until his memories returned. And now she was about to be

cruelly snatched away by a twist of fate. No wonder he had felt such a calling to return, if this was how she was.

"There m-must be something I can do," he said. "Please. I've been lost for so long, Shalia. I wasn't there for you, and I could have been. Please, don't leave."

She placed her hand in his, her breath drawing down. A spark of connection flourished between them, the soul bond igniting. For a moment, she recovered, his life force drawing into her. But then she retracted her hand.

"No," she said. "I can't-"

"You can," Peter replied, realising what had taken place. He didn't know how, but he *knew*, in that moment, what had to be done. For so many years he had meandered, feeling like half a person. In that single moment of connection that had just passed between them, he had instead felt complete. Whole. Meant to be. He took her hand again, closed his eyes, and focused.

"It's going to be okay," he said. "We're going to be okay."

The connection reformed, and this time both of the pair allowed it to flourish and grow. It consumed them, the light of their connection expanding until they were humanoid shapes of living light. Memories, knowledge, experience, they all flowed together like the stream beside them. Shalia's wounds healed, and Peter's age receded. They were no longer corporeal, but something so much more, and both felt a willingness - a need - to draw together. Slowly, the pair shifted, still holding hands, and pressed their lips upon one another's. For just a moment, they shared something that went beyond romance to the very core of understanding.

And then they merged entirely.

The two became one, bodies pressing together and realigning. Peter and Shalia's essences flowed together, two forks of a river uniting. They were the same in that moment, their half-souls becoming one living soul. Peter was astonished at how complete he felt, and Shalia also - he could feel that astonishment and that *wonder*. It was like a real life fairytale come true, just like the ones they used to act out as children. Their spirits joined, followed by their bodies: Shalia's shoulders expanded further, while Peter's shrunk down until they were in alignment. Their hair flowed, gaining some of the red of Peter's own, but maintaining an ethereal speckle to it as well. Peter's manhood flowed away, smoothed over to become a soft womanhood. The same was true of his chest, which mingled with Shalia's and developed her breasts slightly larger. Their frame became less willowy, a little taller, with broader muscle and stronger legs. But it was an elven woman's body, with even prouder ears, and handsome, ethereally beautiful features. The power that flowed through them was immense and satisfying, and the pair finally became complete now that they were one.

The effect ended, and the light dissipated. The figure stood, neither Peter nor Shalia, but someone new who was more than the two of them together. Their wounds were gone, and in the stream they could see that one eye was blue, and the other emerald, a mix of the pair they

had been. For just a few moments, Peter's consciousness found being a woman strange, especially an elven woman destined to live for a thousand years.

But then she rejoiced, as did the parts of Shalia within her. They would never be alone again, now that they were together forever. As a new elven woman formed of two connected souls, they would be stronger, smarter, kinder, and wiser, and would do all they could do defend the forest from dangers, and preserve the beauty of the place they both had called home.

The new elf looked over her body, caressing her gorgeous new form, enjoying the sight of her larger breasts, and delighting in her reddened hair. It was so different, and yet so familiar, and yet so new and daring all at once. She couldn't wait to explore the land and herself in the days, months, and years to come.

"But what shall I call myself?" she asked.

She wasn't yet sure, but she knew she had plenty of time to decide. Lifetimes, in fact.

**The End**