



Regiena Heringa

Remembering the Celebration

Since the pink dawn the bees had been busy rubbing the quiet morning light into the damp clover. The sweet fragrance of autumn wrapped the world in peace.

Slowly, from the eastern sky a small space craft, reflecting the rising sun, fluttered down like a oak leaf and settled delicately between ancient willows and a clear stream. Silently, two young people—a man and a woman—stepped out of the star vehicle, smiled, and with the utmost reverence placed their perfectly formed feet upon the earth.

The tall and handsome man sent his thought to his companion: *It's been a while since we last visited here, hasn't it Tannaël?*

Tannaël answered silently: *For me it has been a long while but weren't you here more recently to offer help, Seemer?*

Ah yes, recalled Seemer with a nostalgic nod of his fine head, *helping the villagers to see things differently. (See the story Seemer and the Gift of Transformation.)*

Tannaël, her thick, red hair falling over her shoulders, bent down to touch a small frog that gazed up adoringly into her deep green eyes. She touched its crooked legs and instantly they were restored to perfect health. Squawking with joy and gratitude, the frog bounded away to find his reflection in the stream. Tannaël laughed with delight and turned back to Seemer. *Let's discover how the people are now living.*

With a purposeful step and dressed in the natural colour and style of the region, they set off toward the inhabited parts of the meadowlands.

It was harvest time and villagers were preparing for the noon feast. Great gleaming wooden tables, sprinkled with the gold dust of fragrant flowers, were set outside in shady areas. Instruments were being tuned, cooks were humming and the sweet and savoury smells of baking bread were swirling through the air. This was a solemn yet joyful time when the

villagers thanked the earth for its generosity and remembered the goodness of those companions who no longer lived in the land.

Away in a stone corner sat young Nillay, heavy tears dripping from her long, sad face. Her fingers, strangely bent by a recent illness, were clutched tightly in her lap, hidden underneath a woollen shawl. Frustrated at not being able to play her sansarra, a small harp known in the region for its particularly clear sound, Nillay's heart grew tight and filled with jealousy as she watched others happily and skillfully playing their instruments.

"I hate music," whispered Nillay with a thick and terrible tongue and pushed her back further into the cold, cracked stone of the village wall.

"Hello Nillay."

Lifting her head ever so slightly, Nillay saw a beautiful couple standing close—too close—to her. Through wet lashes she noticed red hair, green eyes and a very handsome, brown-skinned young gentleman. How could they know her name? Intrigue slowly pushed through her bad temper.

"Why are you so unhappy?" inquired the fairy woman, (at least that is what Nillay thought she was).

Nillay turned away quickly and clawed at her twisted fingers under her woven shawl. "I can't play my sansarra," she mumbled through a veil of resentment and self pity.

"Yes, I can see that," the lady replied kindly.

Nillay's intrigue increased. *How can this person know about my fingers? Can she see through my shawl?*

"Perhaps I can help you," offered the green-eyed woman as she bent down to take Nillay's hands from under her covering and placed them in her own.

A comfortable warmth like the feel of a sleeping baby kitten, slowly seeped through Nillay, a warmth that she hadn't felt for many, many moons. Astonished, she looked at her hands

through the sunny fingers of her new-found friend and discovered that her own fingers were almost straight again! Almost! But not quite.

The happiness that had begun to travel through Nillay's mind and heart quickly stopped and slid into a hole of disappointment. No, her hands were not good enough to play the sansarra.

"That is true." Tannaël answered her thought out loud. "Your fingers are not quite healed yet to play your harp, but I wonder, can you sing?"

"Sing?!" Nillay bit into the word hard as if it were wood. "I never learned how to sing." She pulled her hands away and pushed her back further into the cold, stone wall.

"Why don't you try? You are far from the crowd and we, your friends, are the only ones who will hear you," encouraged Tannaël, lifting up a smile to Seemer.

And so it was that Nillay began to sing in a small voice and discovered that a new world of music opened up to her. Like the exquisite piercing of the first bloom through the last of the snow, Nillay's clear, voice sang out stronger and stronger making the festive autumn air tingle. She walked up to the great tables where hot bread was being served. Her sweet song so astonished the bakers that they couldn't keep their eyes off Nillay and bumped into each others with hot plates. Other villagers surrounded her with admiration, their hearts beating in rhythm to her marvellous melodies.

"It's a miracle!" Nillay said in wonderment. "This lovely fairy lady and her companion helped me." She looked around quickly, wanting to introduce her new friends. But they had vanished.

Back at the stream and the willows, Seemer smiled at Tannaël, *I suppose Nillay's fingers will heal later.*

It is very likely, she grinned back, once she has made a sunny place within herself of appreciation and gratitude. Somehow, I don't think that will take very long.

With a caring last look at the flower-and-bee meadowlands, both quietly entered the ship and charted a course to a nearby star.

That afternoon Nillay led the villagers into breathtaking songs praising the beauty of Creation. Later in the evening, after Nillay and the other happily exhausted inhabitants had gone home to close their eyes for a deep blue sleep, a few lingering villagers whispered around the dwindling fire, "What a beautiful voice she has, our Nillay. Just think! Had she never stopped playing the sansarra, she would never have discovered her new gift."

Nillay never forgot her encounter with her mysterious friends and often expressed her gratitude towards them for helping her. Finally, at the end of the seasonal rains, she completed her first song-poem, *Heranner Appono*, which in the ancient tongue means, *Remembering the Celebration*. One fine evening she sang it around the fire in her crystalline voice as she gently stroked the delicate threads of her beloved sansarra. The villagers smiled and nodded to each other. Listening to Nillay's fine music stirred them more deeply than the greatest festival in the land.