

Belladonna's lilting way she hummed and the sway of her purple hair as she watered the plants in the forest stunned him silent. Violet belladonna petals decorated her hair, and she wore a green dress fashioned from leaves, hemp, and bits of cotton.

He watched as she searched under branches and in logs for something until she saw a young girl hiding behind a bush with fragrant white flowers, a magnolia bush.

Belladonna reached out to the frightened nymph. "It's okay. There are no humans here. How are you today?" Belladonna crouched down towards the shy nymph so that they were at eye level.

She smiled, "It's okay. I'm just here to help. I'm a nymph too, see?" Belladonna opened her hand and a purple plant sprouted in the center of her palm. In her other hand, she held out a small cup of water. "This is for your plant." The young nymph peeked out from its hiding place just long enough to snatch the small bowl of water and poured some onto his plant. The bush gulped the water greedily.

Nightshade decided he wanted to venture closer. He wanted to talk to her, but she might get defensive seeing an outside nymph here. He knew this wasn't his forest, but when he heard of her helping other nymphs even though she wasn't the forest's caretaker, he had to see it for himself, and he wasn't disappointed.

He moved out from behind the tree and held out a purple iris, her favorite flower if the rumors were true. Nightshade cleared his throat and said, "I heard there was a nymph here whose kindness knew no bounds. Would that be you?" He tucked a stray lock of black hair behind his ear and he hid his face behind the flower as heat rose to his cheeks. *That sounded cheesy. What am I doing?*

Belladonna spun around with an annoyed look on her face, but her frown softened as she took it in. *He brought my favorite flower? They're beautiful.* Her thought was so loud it bounced into his mind.

He smiled. "Funny. I was about to say the same about you. You look lovely in that dress."

She rolled her eyes at him and put her hands on her hips. "But you should know I don't take kindly to unexpected visitors. Neither do most nymphs around her. Space is tight especially with the human's factories popping up everywhere and this isn't your forest. What do you want?"

He ran his fingers through his hair and sighed. "That's what I'm here to talk about. Do you have any plans to stop the human's destruction? I'm at a loss. I had suggested hurting them to scare them away, but that would just be stooping to their level. I notice your forest looks mostly unscathed. How?"

Belladonna laughed and sat down on a nearby rock. She crossed one leg over the other. "It's hardly my forest. I'm only *her* stand-in. Plus, I barely know you. I'm not going to give up my secrets *that* easily.