The Man Who Stepped Into Yesterday

Phish

INTRODUCTIONWilsonWilsonWilsonWilsonWilsonOnce upon a time there was a mountain that rose out of a vast green forest. And in the forest there were birds and lakes and rocks and trees and rivers. The forest was also inhabited by a small group of people called the lizards. The lizards were a simple people and they had lived in the forest undisturbed for thousands of years in utter peace and tranquillity. Once a year when spring came, and the first blossoms began to show, thelizards would gather at the base of the mountain, to give thanks for all that they had. They thanked the birds and they thanked the lakes and they thanked the rocks and the trees and the rivers; but most importantly, they thanked Icculus.Icculus lived at the top of the mountain, or at least everyone thought so, for no one had actually ever seen him. But they knew he existed, because they had the Helping Friendly Book. Icculus had given the Helping Friendly Book to the Lizards thousands of years earlier as a gift. It contained all of the knowledge inherent in the universe, and hadenabled the Lizards to exist in harmony with nature for years. And so they lived; until one day a traveler arrived in Gamehendge. His name was Wilson and he quickly became intrigued by the Lizards way of life. He asked if he could stay on and live in the forest; and the Lizards, who had never seen an outsider, were happy to oblige.Wilson lived with the Lizards for a few years, studying the ways of the Helping Friendly Book, and all was well. Until one morning when they awoke and the book was gone. Wilson explained that he had hidden the book, knowing that the Lizards had become dependent on it for survival. He declared himself king and enslaved the innocentpeople of Gamehendge. He cut down the trees and built a city, which he called Prussia. And in the center of the city he built a castle, and locked in the highest tower of the castle lay the Helping Friendly Book out of the reach of the Lizards forever. But our story begins at a different time, not in Gamehendge, but on a suburban street in Long Island, and our hero is no king sitting in a castle, he is a retired colonel shaving in his bathroom.Colonel Forbin looked square in the mirror and dragged the blade across his cold creamed skin. He saw the tired little folds of flesh that lay in a heap beneath his eyes. Fifty-two years of obedient self-restraint, of hiding his tension behind a serene veil of composure. For fifty-two years he had piled it all on the back burner, and for fifty-two years it had boiled, frothing over in a turbulent storm inside of him. It had escaped through his eyes, reacting with the cigarette smoke and the fluorescent lights and slowly accumulating into a sagging mass. He ran his dripping palm across the stubble on the nape of his neck and thought again about the door. He had discovered the door some months back on one of his ritualistic morning walks with his dog McGrupp. It had started out as a typical stroll with McGrupp bounding joyously ahead of the preoccupied colonel. As they reached the apex of the hill, he saw it and he knew it had always been there, and felt foolish for overlooking the door for so long. At first, he tried to ignore it, but he soon found that it was impossible, and slowly his newly acquired knowledge transformed his dreary life into a prison from which there was only one escape. And on this morning, Colonel Forbin stepped through the door...

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