

Impossible Love
By: Adaline Griffiths

It was an impossible love. If they touched-she would burn and he would disappear in a cloud of smoke. It was hopeless.

It was made even more difficult by the fact that the soldier made of flames didn't know that the Lily Maiden existed-at least as far as she knew. She used to watch him march across the yard on his patrol, while she herself danced across her pedestal of water.

Night after night she watched his glow. Night after night she resisted from calling out. If nothing else it was against the rules. If she made contact, or even attempted to do so-she would be expelled from her fairy troupe. It had been hundreds of years since a fairy had disobeyed the rules so drastically. The consequences that had befallen the fairy were not to be spoken of.

Finally, Lily could take it no longer. So what, if her life ended? It would happen one way or the other. If she didn't speak her heart, she would destroy herself from inside out. One night, when her fairy companions were off duty, she broke the First rule.

Lily clambered off her stand and landed neatly on the grass. He was eight feet away. Lily flitted closer. Seven. Her heart rose in her throat. Five. Would he notice her at all? Three. He was two feet away when he caught her gaze. For a few precious seconds, they were alone in the world, the faint sound of a cricket's chorus in the background. Then the soldier shook his head and quickly looked around the yard. No one. He stepped closer to Lily and bowed. Lily gasped, her starry eyes widening with surprise. He wanted to dance with *her*. In all her wildest dreams, she had not imagined such a happy outcome. Lily curtsied in response and kicked up her heels. Lily and the Soldier floated across the dew-veiled grass, never touching but whirling around one another. They danced until sunlight kissed the sky. Lily curtsied, out of breath. She stared into the Soldier's coal eyes, and then turned and fled.

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The next night another fairy was nearby, so Lily couldn't visit her soldier, and was confined to her pedestal. But the night after that, she once again climbed down. She once again approached her soldier, and once again they whirled among the jungle of the garden. This night the soldier came closer. And when Lily looked into his eyes she could tell. He cared about her, as she cared about him. Lily wished she could stay with her Soldier forever. But once again daybreak came, and Lily was forced to leave. No matter how much she yearned to stay, their love would be meaningless if she was a breathless statue.

Night after night, whenever she could, Lily would break away to meet her soldier and dance, careful never to touch. Night after night she would return to her post, and he to his. Lily would dance in the day for the people, and dance in the night for her Soldier. Until one night, when her Soldier didn't leave her. It had been harder to meet with each other as the snowy months were coming. Fairies and soldiers alike were preparing for the hard months. Lily and the Soldier cherished each minute they had together. So, this night, eager for every moment together, her Soldier escorted her to pillar. Lily sashayed by his side and for a moment forgot who they were-what they were. Lily turned and rested her hand on her Soldier's arm.

"Goodnight, my love-" She started to say, but they split apart. Lily's hand burned, and she held it to her chest wincing. But her pain was nothing to that of her love's. The Soldier howled in agony, and lurched across the grass. Slowly, his arm, where Lily's hand had rested, started to dissipate. Lily screamed as the Soldier faded into nothingness. Lily stumbled forward, but it was too late. One last groan escaped from her Soldier's lips before he disappeared into a cloud of smoke.

Lily knelt where the Soldier had last stood and wept, holding her injured arm close. She didn't care who saw her, she didn't care the consequences. All she knew was that she was in

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pain, more than she had ever been before. It wasn't long before dawn broke the sky. Lily and her soldier had waited as long as possible before splitting ways.

“Lily Maiden?” She heard the Queen of the Fairy Troupe call out. Lily didn't move. It didn't matter anymore. What was there to fight for? Her love was gone, as was her strength, her will. She felt hands lift her up from the grass, but her eyes didn't leave the slightly indented plot.

“Lily Maiden.” She heard again, and this time she tore her gaze away. “You know the consequences of what you have done. This is a most serious offense. Do you have any defense?” Lily shook her head. The Queen looked at her companions uneasily. No fairy had ever been punished in any amount without an ounce of resistance. “Are you sure?”

Lily croaked. “Just do it.” Lily heard a gasp from one of her friends, but she didn't care. Emptiness filled inside her, her thoughts, her emotions numbed. She felt the fairies lead her up to her pedestal, and she went along willingly.

Lily stood on the surface of the water, where so many days she had spent longing for her love. She lifted herself into an arabesque but kept her head down. Her eyes searched for the small patch of grass where he had last stood. Coolness spread over Lily, and she knew the process of freezing had begun. Soon, she too would be nothing. Wherever her love was, she would be joining him. Slowly, she started to black out. But her gaze never left that spot, where she had last seen her impossible love.

The End