Lessons
by karrenia_rune

Summary

The Mock Turtle wishes to learn how to fly; the Gryphon wants to learn how to swim; with rather interesting results.

Notes

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Disclaimer: The characters and the world which they inhabit are the original creations of Lewis Carroll or whoever owns his estate now; they are not mine.

"Lessons at the Lakeshore " by karrenia

‘Can one go against the way one is made, even for a brief span of time?’ The Gryphon looked down and down in what felt like an endless drop but in actuality was merely about twice the length of his own body and gulped.

Looking down this way from the height of his perch on the rock ledge overlooking the swiftly rushing water below made his head spin.

The feathered crest upon his head had flattened out and he abruptly turned his attention to righting it once more.

The flukes of his olive green flippers made hardly a sound as he glided across the pool, leaving a trail
The Mock Turtle had known the Gryphon for a good length of time now, and figured that if anyone could claim to be sensitive to the mercurial moods, then that person was himself.

‘After all,’ he thought in the back of his mind, ‘the poor creature can hardly be blamed for having mood swings, he’s, drat it! What’s that term again? Wait, it will come to me in a minute... Oh yes, a composite creature. That was it.’

He drew closer to the shoreline and with some effort pulled himself out onto land once more.

“Greetings and salutations!” cried the Gryphon at the sight of his friend and suddenly erupted in a fit of sneezing. At last, he recovered, blushing furiously and then began to shuffle his forepaws into the ground of the outcropping upon which he stood.

“Bless you! replied the Mock Turtle and by the way, it is good to see you, too.”

“Thank you,” replied the Gryphon, having recovered a bit from his bout of sneezing and the spreading heat of an embarrassed flush that had spread across his face.

“To be honest, my friend, the Mock Turtle said, “I had not expected you this early, I should be the one embarrassed, I didn’t even put out a spot of tea and scones.”

“No matter, no matter, replied the Gryphon, “We’ve been friends for far too long for such oversight to matter. Bear it no mind, bridge under the water and all that rubbish!” “Very well, gushed the Mock Turtle promptly and with a certain vigor, “consider it forgotten. But then what brought you out,” he paused and gestured with a flipper at the expanse of shoreline and then to the ranks upon ranks of weeping willows dipping their green leafy heads so low into the water.

I wish I knew, at least for certain, replied the Gryphon. “But lately, I’ve been troubled, troubled by thoughts that I could be more than the sum,” trailing off the Gryphon sprung up and turning around came down the slope to the shoreline and settled down once more.

Through this interval the Mock Turtle had a sudden sense that he should give his friend time readjust himself not just physically but also mentally.

“Pardon me, growled the Gryphon. “I really do not know what came over me. “But I feel I must say this, and perhaps you are the only one who would truly understand.”

“I’m all ears, replied the Mock Turtle,” just like the White Rabbit.”

The Gryphon’s lips split into a half-smile and he replied. “Yes, well. That does lead to what I wanted to talk about. You see, I have been sitting up there on that outcropping staring down into the water, and wondering what it would be like, if I could, well….swim.”

“Swim?” replied the Mock Turtle.

“Yes. Do you believe it a foolish hope?”

“Not at all. The Mock Turtle, “We are, each and everyone exactly as we are made, but I have always believed that within that narrow definition there is ample room for… well, trying to be something more.”

“Truly?” exclaimed the Gryphon.
“Truly,” replied the Mock Turtle with equal enthusiasm. Taking a sudden appraising glance at the magnificent spread of feathered plumage that as this precise moment lay flat and folded over along the Gryphon’s back experienced an acute yearning of his own: wondering what it felt like to fly. It is a foolish wish, even as he thought of it.

The Mock Turtle swallowed past a sudden lump in his own throat.

“Well, if you are game we can try teaching you how to swim. What do you say to that?”

“Excellent! Wonderful! Capital idea!” The Gryphon had gotten to his paws once more, carried away with excitement and then stopped and asked, “but how?”

"I have heard that lions and dogs and such are capable of swimming when the mood takes them, so I figure that you can learn, too.” replied the Mock Turtle.

He got up and waddled toward the water and plunged in. “Follow me.”

The Gryphon did as he was told, wondering even as he did so if it was true as the other had claimed that lions and other felines were capable of swimming and he would not end up sinking to the bottom of the lake like a stone.

At first, his movements in attempting to imitate the other’s fluid strokes were flimsy and flailing, but once he got a general idea, things went much more smoothly.

His tail got became entangled with clumps of roots and other greenery in the lake’s bottom, and it took the work of several moments to untangle him, but that hardly served to spoil his enjoyment of the lessons.

For his part, the Mock Turtle proved to be both a patient and extremely careful instructor and the lessons continued.

At several hours both old friends were exhausted the general ache spreading through their bodies was warm but not uncomfortably so.

“Thank you!” the Gryphon said.

The Mock Turtle glanced over at him and said, "You did remarkably well, and it was like I was learning, or in this case, relearning how to swim all over again.”

The Gryphon nodded as he the gentle swaying and lapping of the waves played on his flank, and he realized suddenly that his friend had not had to indulge his whimsy to find out what it was like to be able to swim. He had done so, in the name of kindness and their friendship, and that was all that really mattered in the end. “I,... I thank you, my friend.”

“You already did,” replied the Mock Turtle and smiled, with the slightest motion from one his flippers flicked water into his face. “So, let it go, already.”

The Gryphon smiled in response and followed his friend’s advice.

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