

## ***LILY THE LOTUS. Nov. 2003***

Once upon a time, in a far away pond lived a little seed named Lily. She was shy and timid, but enjoyed playing with all of her friends. Lily, however, had become unhappy, as she had heard others speak of a wondrous land above the surface of the pond in which she lived. It was said that in this world a magnificent light shone upon all creatures and skies of turquoise blue stretched to every horizon.

Lily longed to see the beauty of this light, but just could not rise above the depths and murky waters of the pond. Her friends sometimes teased her. "There's Lily again, dreaming as usual." They forever told her to give up her dreams of the other world. "This is your home Lily," they said. "Why must you seek elsewhere?" They simply could not understand her. Freddy the Fish, the naughtiest of all, roared with laughter and told many of the other fish to tease Lily and to call her names. Although he was unkind to Lily, she was patient with him as he had lost his father only months ago to the line of a fisherman. She also understood that not everyone in life shares the same dream. Lily's heart still longed for something more.

One day while Lily was daydreaming, old Mr. Reed suddenly appeared. "Hello Lily," he said. Tears suddenly came to her eyes. "Why, you are crying my dear. May I ask what is the matter?" Lily lifted her face to Mr. Reed, known as the oldest and the wisest of all in the pond. Her tears continued as Lily shared her sadness with Mr. Reed. "Lily my dear," said Mr. Reed. "Life has given you a heart well beyond your years. It is calling you to greater things, and though your eyes may not see it, your heart seeks further than the depths of your watery home. I must be on my way now, but I will see you again on my return."

Soon after, Freddy the Fish rushed by and Lily could see that he was quite angry. He deliberately began stirring up the sand at the bottom of the pond, making the water even murkier than usual. As he was busily digging into the mud, he suddenly caught his tail between the rocks. He wriggled and splashed, yet no matter how he tried, he just couldn't free himself. Freddy cried out. "Help, help!" Lily heard his call. "Help me," he repeated. It seemed as if there was no one around. As Lily turned, she could see her friend Thomas the Tortoise

in the distance. “Thomas,” she cried. He swam over to see what was happening. “Thomas, I am glad to see you,” she said. “Freddy is caught between the rocks and I didn’t know if anyone would hear me.” Thomas, a faithful friend, but a tortoise of few words, immediately went over to Freddy to see if he could help. He got behind Freddy and pushed with all his might. Using his hard shell, he lifted some of the rock until Freddy was able to break free. “Thank you so much Thomas,” said Freddy. “If it wasn’t for you and Lily, I might have been there all night.” “Don’t mention it,” said Thomas. “I am only happy to have been able to lend a hand. However, I think you might owe someone else an apology. You really haven’t been very kind to Lily.”

Thomas was right. Freddy swam over to Lily and apologised for his behaviour. “I am so sorry Lily! Even though I have laughed at you and called you names, you have never talked back to me and today you have helped to save my life. How can I ever repay you?” Lily looked into Freddy’s eyes and knew that he was telling the truth. “Freddy, I always believed that you had a good heart, and now you have proven this to me. Can we be friends?” “If you can ever forgive me Lily, I would be happy to be your friend,” Freddy said with a smile.

As the mud settled to the bottom of the pond it also began to wash away from Freddy’s scales. Lily suddenly noticed something about him. “Freddy, I never realised before that under your muddy appearance you are actually a splendid goldfish. You have revealed your true colours at last.” Lily could hardly believe her eyes. Freddy, embarrassed now, thanked Lily and quickly said goodbye. He swam away, knowing that Lily had brought a little kindness to his heart! Sometime later, Mr. Reed returned. Lily shared with him what had happened. Mr. Reed was very pleased. “Lily, because you have offered your heart to help another to better themselves and to see the truth, you too will be granted the same opportunity.”

“Lily, may I share a secret with you?” whispered Mr. Reed. “Oh yes, please do!” she cried. “Though I might be the oldest here, I am far from the wisest. A reed can indeed see the world above the water of the pond, and what a beautiful world it is! There are so many interesting things to see. I might be tall, but having lived through many seasons, I can truly say the wisest of all is the lotus flower.”

Lily was surprised and looked up to Mr. Reed's kind and gentle face. "I don't understand Mr. Reed!" she said. "You are young Lily, but I believe it is time for you to raise yourself high, stretch yourself wide so you may blossom into whom you are destined to become."

She slowly lifted herself until finally her eyes emerged from the murky waters into the brilliance of the new world above. Lily's heart cried with joy! "At last I can see the colour of the sky, all the beauty I have seen only in my dreams. Here, Mr. Reed, is the light for which I have longed for!" He could sense her joy within his own heart, too! He leaned down to Lily, and spoke. "Never again will your eyes be clouded by the waters of this pond. By the purity of your nature you have been granted the gift of a new life." Mr. Reed moved a little closer and whispered, "Lily, now you have seen the land above, this world of light, but you have overlooked the most important thing of all." Lily listened to his kind words. "Mr. Reed, I can see so many wonderful things now. What else could there be?" she said. With a soft smile he replied "It is not what you have seen of this new world, but indeed the beauty of whom you have grown into, the sweetest, most beautiful flower in the pond."

Lily turned to look at herself. She had unfolded into the splendour of a lotus flower, and as she looked further she could see all the other lotus flowers that had also raised themselves from the depths of the pond. Her dream to see beyond the waters had finally come true. "The beauty which has ripened within you is also that which you now see outside of yourself and will see even beyond the horizon," said Mr. Reed. Lily at last understood. She looked down and for the first time saw the true nature of the waters below. The pond was a place where she could learn to raise her own heart and mind into a land of greater things! All, in fact, was but a reflection of what was inside her. Now she had truly found the eyes, or rather, the heart to see a boundless and most beautiful sky, awakening now as if to a new day unfolding at first light.

Lily now wanted to share her happiness with everyone living in the pond so they too could be offered the opportunity to seek the beautiful world waiting to shine within their own hearts!

**The Beginning...**