

## The Peculiar People in a Peculiar Town

Alistair Yarrow was a peculiar man, with his hunched-over posture and a long beard. He never dressed nicely, always in old clothes that he had never replaced and barely cared to repair when they inevitably tore. It was well-known around the quaint little lake town that the man was an oddity. His house was also rather different from the others in town, it looked as though it had been built around a tree. It had gnarled and twisted corners and a rather peculiar appearance of wrapping around the large old oak tree that, rather oddly, resembled the old man. Being over a millennium old himself, he did beat the old tree in age considerably which filled him with a sense of triumph that he couldn't quite explain. For he also found himself to be quite an oddity. In his former years, the man had been quite ordinary, or as much as he could, but in his later years he had grown to be cynical, just what he had sworn to avoid. One thing that did make him particularly cynical and full of disdain was young people. Especially but not limited to the ones who were full of wonder and joy. Ones much like the one that had found herself plopped on the couch in his gnarled old house. Farrah Redwood. She had always tormented the man since she was just a baby barely able to walk, always stumbling and crawling her way into his garden or his home. The girl, now almost nineteen herself, had always enjoyed wandering onto his property and finding the new intricacies and mysteries that it held. And, she was a fellow oddity to the town always dressing in bright, vivid, and rather peculiar outfits. Not to mention her eyes that didn't share the same color and her vibrant red hair that looked as though her head had been set ablaze. It may have been sheer misfortune on the part of the town to have acquired one peculiarity but to have two rather strange oddities living within its wall made the town an oddity as well. And that was simply a fact. Nothing was quite right here, sometimes when you were

simply walking home the ground would twist into a deep hole that would send anyone unfortunate enough to be at that place at that time, falling deep into the ground only for the poor soul to be spit out halfway across town. On other occasions, people had been known to mysteriously start flying up into the sky. Or, Farrah's favorite peculiarity, disappearing and reappearing items. Farrah had once seen a hairbrush that had disappeared from her vanity one morning appear hours later falling onto the head of the poor boy who worked at the bakery down the road.

Now, on this day Farrah had been quite adventurous and had wandered not only through Alistair Yarrow's garden but, into the woods that surrounded his property. She walked and walked with no particular direction of where she wished to go that day and yet she continued, following the little brook that she had found early on. She watched as little animals such as voxyls—little creatures that looked almost like a rabbit mixed with a fox, but with deer-like antlers growing from their heads—rushed around and drank from the brook. She eventually found herself at the doorstep of an old cabin deep in Alistair Yarrow's woods faced with a question, open the door or turn back and return home. She looked over the cabin for a moment, analyzing the dark water-stained wood that wove together to create the structure, and she was rather confused not by the lack of windows but by the fact that the cabin had no apparent door, just a small gold door knob where the rest of the door should have been. After pondering her new perplexity for a moment, Farrah gripped the small golden doorknob and twisted it, a door now forming and quickly swinging itself open all on its own. Farrah stumbled into the peculiar cabin, tripping over the less-than-welcoming door mat that rather strangely yelled at her for stepping on it, scolding the poor girl for not looking where she was walking, and then getting up and walking out of the cabin. The cabin smelled musty and old, not too dissimilar from the smell that Alistair

himself had. It was dark inside the two-room building that was lit only by the fireplace and various candles around the main room that had lit the second the door had opened. The main room appeared to be a simple sitting room, nothing fancy and certainly nothing peculiar. The second room, however, was peculiar. Each wall was covered with nothing but shelves of jars sitting delicately on each row of shelving. This would normally not be strange but inside these jars were what looked to be little things, beings, and creatures caught and stored in the jars. Some appeared to dislike life in the jars, others were people going about their lives blissfully ignoring the rather strange situation they had found themselves in. One of them had what appeared to be a person inside, pacing back and forth and back and forth across the diameter of the little jar that they were stuck inside. It was about this time that Alistair had become privy to the intruder and was, surprisingly quickly for his age, making his way to his cabin.

“Don’t touch those!” He shouted at Farrah just as she unscrewed the lid on the jar she had been observing. Inside there was a swirling mass of colors that looked like someone had trapped a particularly bad storm that swirled with colorful lightning. Upon opening it a gust of wind blew out from the jar followed shortly by the colorful mass. It latched onto Farrah swirling around her and pulling at the essence and makeup of her being. The deep blues and vivid purples hooked onto her skin and rippled through her veins, shaking the room with a thunderous roar. And, as quickly as it came the mass disappeared, sucked back into its jar by Alistair who hurriedly slammed the jar back into place.

“What was that?” The small girl squeaked, hurriedly tucking her hands behind her back and watching as the old man inspected the rest of the jars to ensure that nothing else had been opened or touched by the inquisitive girl.

“Gods above, why must you be such a nuisance? Follow me and not a word, you have caused me enough of a headache today and I do not wish to add to it or any further ailments you might cause.” Farrah remained silent this time, unable to come up with a quick quip like she normally would, instead she followed the old man quietly and without complaint but found it rather strange that she had trouble keeping up with him. The pair returned to Alistair’s house where Farrah now found herself, plopped on his couch as he was in the other room fiddling with a tea kettle and his old stove.

“A good day for a walk, is it not?”

“It would be if I hadn’t had to deal with you. How many times must I remind you not to snoop about my property?” Mr. Yarrow hissed from the other room only half focused on the tea he was making.

“I should think another thousand more times. And why must you be so rude to me?” Farrah pouted from the couch, “I never broke anything and honestly, I didn’t even touch anything other than what I did touch.”

“And yet you were still where you were not welcome or invited toying with something you know nothing of. Not to mention you have thoroughly disturbed my tea time.” Farrah went quiet for a moment.

“What was that thing?” The tea kettle screamed as the tea quickly prepared itself. Alistair poured two cups into old mugs that had chips in the paint and one of the two was missing a handle.

“Something you should simply move on and forget. No use dwelling on things that don’t and have never concerned you.” Alistair handed the shaken girl a cup of tea and headed out of the room, “Once you finish your tea leave the cup in the kitchen and return home. No use staying

here and causing me more trouble.” For once the girl did what she was asked, quickly finishing her tea, placing the old mug in the kitchen, and then leaving.

Unfortunately, this story does not have a quite fantastic ending, but a rather bland one. But regardless, when a story is started there must be an end. Farrah continued to return to the man’s property after that but never returned to the cabin in the woods. She never got an answer to what she had seen in the strange cabin. But, dear reader, I do have an answer for those of you who wish to know. It all comes down to the old man and his lineage. Despite his age and his crooked knees and faulty hip, Alistair Yarrow is something quite different from the rest of the town. Not different in his strange ways or, like Farrah, his appearance. But rather, it comes to his lineage and his rather extensive heritage. The poor man was born into a family of keepers—people who are raised to protect a certain place from peculiarities until they finally move on and are replaced by another. Except Alistair was not particularly good at his job, and he had never cared for it. Unless a particularly dangerous peculiarity arose that threatened the safety of his quaint little town he would simply ignore the peculiarity and continue with his life. In the case of a dangerous eccentricity appearing he would then trap it in one of his jars and keep it locked away in his strange little cabin in his strange woods for the rest of...well forever or at least until someone was to come in and unscrew the lid on one or maybe all of the jars. But luckily, no one would do that. And now that brings us to the end of our tale that was neither epic nor bland but rather a peculiarity all of its own.