

STORY

LAURA B. GINSBERG



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THE DAILY MEETINGS OF THE META PHORIC MINDS

INSIDE
THE BOHO
GODDESS
SEWING
CIRCLE
SALON

A DOOR OPENS.



— Salutations, I'm Imagination, and welcome to The Collective, she says with an extensive and musical modulation of sound and a shimmering smile that swings wide and open like the enormous and heavy door. With half-closed eyes, raised arms, and a flowing dress that brushes the creamy marble floor, she stands still just long enough for me to admire her. Her bare feet and kindness invite me in, and everything within me immediately relaxes.

— Aren't you adorable for bringing something for us on your first day here. That's just so lovely of you. I'll take that and make sure it makes its way to the kitchen. What is it, exactly?

— Oh, it's a purple-berry cobbler: blueberries and strawberries and other berries that mix together to form this luscious dark purple fruitiness.

She smiles, and I catch the charms of a luminous scent that reminds me of lavender and wind chimes, perhaps a hint of mint. Her eyes are delicate and calm as she sweeps me off to the side of the grand entrance toward a room dense with dark wood cabinets where a charming auburn-haired girl has taken apart some sort of locking mechanism — pieces scattered everywhere — and jostles through a box of aged skeleton keys.

— This is Integrity, and she'll take anything you want to leave here with her and put it in a safe place until you're ready to leave. Cell phones, troubles, anger, heavy purses, doubt, books, just anything that might weigh you down while you're here.

I hug my spiral notebook and pen but awkwardly start shedding everything else, stacking my concrete collection of self on the knee-height table just inside the door of the room.

— Take your time, says Integrity. — Would you like a bag or box container for your things?



— Sure, I say, without assurance. — If that’s OK, and you have one handy.

— Absolutely. And from somewhere unseen she pulls out a gilded cloth box that is the absolute perfect size and just so happens to have smaller pockets and pouches for each one of the smaller items.

I turn back toward Imagination, and my cobbler is no longer in her hands, but she holds a tray perfectly populated with the makings of tea, slightly splashing and clinking as we walk toward a door leading to an outside patio outlined with curving columns of cement and surrounded by a rose garden, bespectacled with blooms in a resplendent variety of colors. We choose a table and chairs toward the edge in the shade. I’m so caught up in the surroundings that my brain isn’t fully capturing what she’s asking me.

— Do you prefer a dark tea or a light tea? Fruity or herbal? Sweetened or un? Lemon?

— Light, I guess. Unsweetened, please. And I'll pass on the lemon for now.

I watch as she scoops heaping piles of loose tea with a ceramic white spoon into a mesh bag and pulls tight the string that traps the dried concoction into a ball. She gently places the tea into a glass pitcher and lets the collection seep and drown the flavor.

— I'll just leave this over here in the sun for a bit. Sun tea is the best tea, in my opinion, she says floating toward the banister.

— Wow, I haven't thought about sun tea in years, I tell her as summertime flavors rush through my existence.

— I thought it would be best to explain what you'll experience here today, before I let you lose yourself on the grounds and in the rooms.

I survey the austere windows, playful woods, a hunting house, the pristine horse stables, a glorious expanse of grass, a prim garden, and I can sometimes see the form of a person, hear the songs of birds, and feel the careful carresses of breezes.

— This feels like a bohemian fairy tale.

— So, all of this belongs to Inspiration, and she and I have been lifelong friends. And I do live here now. She inherited this place from her family, and of course I would spend all of my time here as a kid, since my mother was one of the servants and we lived in town. But we would always talk about how sad it was that so few people got to enjoy her wonderful estate. And how wonderful it would be if anyone could wander through the library and read the books there. If anyone could spend time in the studio and paint or spend time in the greenhouse and the stables, other than servants. So a few months after her mother died, we were having a party to try to cheer her up, and I was talking about my great-great grandmother and how the women in the family would gather every day at the largest house and pool talents together and make breakfast and lunch for the men as they went out into the world to work in the factories and mines. The women would sew together and cook together and garden together, and then they would disperse in the evenings back to their homes to gather again the next day and help each other. That whole, it takes a village idea, when it actually did take a village. And I thought Inspiration was going to knock me over with the excitement of her idea to open up her house and grounds to the creatives of the world.





I look down to find a cup of tea in a porcelain cup in front of me. I hadn't even noticed when Imagination had gotten up to retrieve the sun tea from across the patio. And a sliced orange and a warm scone are sprawled out on a saucer very close to my right hand. Where had that come from?

— So we started with a few of the boldest and friendliest artists in the area, the writers and painters and musicians who were willing to share their expertise and ideas, and we have been slowly adding souls to the collection to make sure we didn't overwhelm the essence of what we're trying to do here.

I lift the delicate cup of tea to my lips, and it is somehow the perfect temperature. Warmth and white peony. Perhaps sweetened with citrus. Strawberry? — Well, what do you have here, exactly? And how did I get an invitation?

— Ah yes. Let's walk the grounds and take a tour, shall we? We'll start outside and end at the library, since I'm guessing you're in the mood to write today, am I right?

— Sounds wonderful, I say and press down with a deep breath my knot of nervousness about fitting in with a collection of such talented inhabitants.



[[[DESCRIPTIONS OF WARM AND LUSHLY STEAMY GREENHOUSE, ENCHANTED WOODS, MAGICAL STABLES, AND MANSION AS WELL AS INTRODUCTIONS OF CHARACTERS SUCH AS COURAGE, CONTENTMENT, ENTHUSIASM, AND GENEROSITY. TRIMMED FOR LENGTH.]]]

Walking into the Library, we find a boisterous gathering sipping on mimosas and arguing the intricacies of editing for brevity. Inspiration is clearly the anchor and oracle of the group, with a round and golden demeanor and short hair. Her silver words float and echo through the book spines, and there is a certain comfortable quality in the angles of the joints in her hands and elbow and wrist and jawline. Her laughter carries deeper interpretations as it blurs into the collective laughter in the room. We find an open space on the rug near a stack of garnet-colored pillows, all velvety and formless. I manage to angle my hips and lounge on the ground, and Imagination sits cross-legged. Around us are people scribbling and flipping through books and notebooks, clacking and teaching on laptops and tablets, and tapping and twirling pens and pencils. Stories are forming in the skies of their eyes, and the light of Inspiration's guidance is revealing the shadows of conflict. I fear making a noise as I try to shuffle to a more comfortable position.



**[[[DESCRIPTIONS
OF THE
CONVERSATION
ABOUT JUST
SHOWING UP TO BE
A WRITER AND
OTHER
LUMINESCENT
LESSONS THAT
WRITERS NEED TO
HEAR ABOUT
CREATIVITY.
INSPIRATION
OFFERS TO HELP
THE NARRATOR
WRITE IN THE
SALON THE NEXT
DAY, AND THE
CONVERSATION
COVERS THE
CONCEPTIONS OF
CREATIVITY, SUCH
AS GROUP
CREATIVITY AND
THE CALMNESS
REQUIRED.
TRIMMED FOR
LENGTH.]]]**



Integrity already has my belongings ready for me when I appear at the door. I load myself down with the implications and complications that will shelter me once I leave this softly perfumed environment, hopefully carrying with me the vulnerability and instinctual freedom I have witnessed. I stare at the large wooden door that leads into this place, not really wanting to leave this embodiment of comfort, but I remember the words of Inspiration and know that creativity is about choices, and I have some decision making to do. Because tomorrow will be my day to write with Inspiration.



REFLECTION

The "ensemble of metaphors" just started chatting with some of my other writing, and this emerged. This could be a short introduction to a much larger work of little stories with the narrator moving from room to room, day in and day out, and learning across the various types of creative outlets. She would eventually learn to trust her own self and create something magnificent. As I welcomed more "characters" into the idea of the story, I found that each one added a different creative layer to the potential of what this could be.