

The Adventures of Gilda

From her Home in the Forest to the Life of a Princess

About the Elves

Here I must tell you everything that I know about the elves in this story. You see I am very blessed; I have, just like Gilda, the princess in this story, seen the elves and even spoken to one of them. Namely, their old, old leader, Ogranpa. I know, funny name, but they all have funny names. You soon get used to them and then think no more of it.

Because I was so lucky to be able to see the elves, I was able to describe them to Nick who drew all the pictures in this book. From my descriptions of them, he could draw them. Therefore, you are also able to see what these otherwise invisible elves look like.

It all came about one day. I was taking a walk in a forest that I had never been in before. I do this often, find new places where to walk, and as usual I end up away from the beaten path. You see, I like to walk places I think no other humans have been yet. I feel like an explorer, discovering new territories, so to speak.

Where I was walking that day was among tall old beech trees. It was not dark and spooky, but rather an open forest with lots of sunshine coming through the canopy of the tree branches' foliage. But this forest was not only a forest with tall trees, there were open swampy areas where a lot of dense cedar trees grew, and where the ground is usually covered with lots of soft green and brown mosses. As a matter of fact, one of these wet areas was just ahead of me on my walk.

You now have the picture of where I was walking. I was walking in my own thoughts, enjoying nature in the beautiful sunshine, not at all realizing that I was just moments away from the discovery of my life and the beginning of this story about Gilda. A true story, at least I was told it is a real tale. I for one believe it is, but you can judge for yourselves.

The time is early summer, the grass among the trees was still fresh green, but by now tall enough to cover my shoes. Then, just before I was going to take my next step, I heard this tiny, but clear voice.

"Please, stranger, do not put your foot here."

That was what I heard. I got so perplexed by hearing this voice that I took what looked like a dance step, and my foot landed in a different place than where I had originally intended. And then I heard the voice again.

"Thanks, stranger. You saved my life."

I looked down at the grass by my feet, and I could hardly believe what I saw. There was a tiny figure. A little person stood there. A little old person, that is. He had a long bushy gray beard, and his face showed, what little one could see, a lot of crinkles. He looked old.

It looked like he had got himself caught in something. He was standing up, but not much of him was showing. At first, I did not see why, but bending down and getting closer to this little person, I saw he was standing in a hole.

"Boy, you got yourself trapped good. How the heck did you manage that?" I had now knelt down beside him. "May I try to lift you up? But first, tell me who you are. More so, what are you? Are you an elf? I have never seen anyone like you before." I was firing off one question after the other; I could scarcely believe what I was seeing.

"Thanks, stranger. I know what a shock it must have been for you to see me, but I thought because you did not step on me, and possibly saved my life, I would show myself to you. Yes, I am an elf, and ordinarily, we elves are invisible to you humans, but we do exist, and yes, please help me out of this hole and on my feet again."

I then very, very gently, making sure not to hurt his little body, lifted him out of the hole. He now stood in front of me. I don't have to describe him to you since there is a drawing of him in this book, but I can tell you he stood about two feet tall and yes, he looked old, but he sure could still move because when he was out of the hole, he did quite a little dance.

"Thanks, stranger, I had to see if everything still works, that's why my little dance; and yes, I believe it does. We elves must be so careful not to fall into these holes made by either ground squirrels or gophers; we sometimes fall right in. Stranger, why don't we sit over there on that fallen tree and have a little talk. I am sure you have a few questions, and I'd like to thank you again for your good deed." I thought that was a splendid idea, and together we walked over to the fallen tree where the little elf crawled up, and we both sat down.

"Stranger, what is your name? I need to know so I can thank you properly, and when I get back to my village, which incidentally is over there by those cedars, I can tell everyone who it was that saved me. So stranger, what is your name?"

"No secret little man, but I also need to know yours. My name is Ole, and I am a storyteller. What be your name then? And please tell me how old you are, I am a bit curious."

"My name is Ogranpa. How old am I, well let's see, I am not quite sure anymore. I stopped counting after the second 100, so let's just say I am quite old."

"You said your village is over there in the cedars. Are there many of you?"

"Yes, we live among the cedars. They give us a lot of protection, and the mosses are what we use to build our houses. Very cozy they are. But you are a storyteller you say. Let me tell you a true story which will explain a lot about us elves . . . if you have the time that is?"

"Oh, yes I have the time. Please go ahead."

"Well then, the story is about a girl with the name Gilda, who lived close to here. Here is her story.

Many years ago, in a faraway Kingdom . . ." And so on . . .

Here then is the story just as it was told to me by Ogranpa, almost word for word. Please read on; I hope you like it.

Ole Madsen