

"You Are Magic"

CW: initial programming

TW: drugs, gaslighting, harm to animals

The Colonel

2-4 years old

We spend another day at daddy's work, playing with Mr. Rogers. I don't know how long it's been since the last time we were here or if it was after we first met him or not (aka our timeline is scrambled here). I know my momma has suddenly liked showing us the Mr. Rogers show when it's playing on TV, getting excited about Imagination Station every time it's on screen. The girl doesn't understand why this show gets added to the Disney movies and Looney Toons, but she likes it. I think it's weird that the two Mr. Rogers don't match.

Momma and daddy take us to the railroad tracks when we're hurting and sore. We get to watch trains going by and pretend we're on there, going somewhere else, somewhere safe. (To this day, the sound of trains on tracks calms me down way faster than many other things can.)

Today, we're playing a different game with Mr. Rogers. It's like playing pretend, which we're good at, but we have to stay in character for each playset. The big room from before has been divided into smaller ones by the fake walls you see in stores and churches. Each smaller room looks a little different.

There are more children here today, and we each wait our turn in the corner with the train playset. There are more toys here too, so some of us play with trains and some with a plastic kitchen and some with cars. Some play together, but I'm quiet and try to play alone. The other ones leave me

alone anyway. I think they've been here before while I'm new. They're older than me too, maybe six or seven.

When it's my turn, Mr. A comes to get me. He tells me he brought me some friends to play with us today and that I'm not to be afraid of them. He fills the air with more words until we get to the first small room. Then, he crouches in front of me and holds my shoulders.

He tells me that today, I'm going to be tested to see how magic I am. When I seem unsure, he laughs and tells me a secret. Magic is real, but it's hard to do sometimes. He says I already do magic when I pretend, and he wants to see how magic I am.

He tells me that for these tests, sometimes his friends will have to be mean and scary, but I should remember that I'm not to be afraid. They're only doing mean and scary things for my own good: to see how magic I am.

Then, he tells me that I need to do whatever his friends say. That doing what they say is very, very important. I will fail and won't be magic if I don't do what they say, and he'll be so disappointed and said. When I'm done with the tests, he'll be in the last room (Imagination Station for us), and he (Mr. Rogers, again for us) will ask me some last questions to see how good I did.

I'm very excited about this. I've always wanted to be magic. The books I'm already starting to read when the girl's asleep make magic people seem so special, and I really want to be special. So, I tell Mr. A I'll do my best, and he sends me into the first room.

(I wrote about these rooms as they come up, but I know now (four years later) that these 'tests' were spread out over the course of a few weeks. We were in host training for three years, the first of which was spent simply setting up several areas in our Inner World.)

There's a man in a silly top hat in the room. He has a blanket on the floor with a tea set on it. There's plates there for a stuffed mouse and a stuffed cat and a baby doll with a red heart painted on its chest and one that has nobody behind it.

"Hello, Alice! I'm the Mad Hatter!" the man says. "Come sit with me."

I know this! It's Alice in Wonderland. Mamma's read me the book, and I've seen the cartoon movie a few times.

I sit down at the blanket, and the Mad Hatter serves me some pretend tea. He tells me about Wonderlands, about the four queens and kings and their many courts. That as Alice, I have to know all about this Wonderlands, this secret Wonderlands that only I will hold. It's easy to pretend I'm Alice. I fall so far into it that I am Alice with blonde hair and a blue dress and all.

The Mad Hatter tells me about the Cheshire Cat and his eyes that see all, and the Doormouse that knows the secret tunnels into the four Wonderlands castles. The Doormouse is very quiet and a good spy for the Mad Hatter. He tells the Mad Hatter what the four courts are up to.

The Mad Hatter asks me questions about what I think Wonderlands is like, little things like colour. We spend a little while creating the world, making it real with words and pretend. I think it's all sorts of fun.

Sometimes, the Mad Hatter asks me about my momma and daddy, and when I answer him, he gets a bad look on his face. He pinches me and reminds me that I'm in Wonderlands. I'm Alice. Alice doesn't have parents. It doesn't take me long to get confused when he asks those questions.

I learn about the magic of Wonderlands. That the people of Wonderlands are always happy and feel no pain. I think it's really good.

The Mad Hatter shows me that he's part of magic Wonderlands. He takes up the teapot and shows me there's real tea in it now. Then, he puts his fingers in the tea, and he's so calm. I'm afraid for him because tea is hot, but he says it doesn't hurt, and I believe him.

He pours us the rest of the tea to drink and gets up to get a refill. We talk about Wonderlands some more until someone brings the teapot back. While we wait, the Mad Hatter tells me that Wonderlands has to stay a secret, that no one (not even Mr. Rogers!) can know about it. If I tell about it, Wonderlands will disappear, and all the kings and queens and counts and dukes and Cheshire Cat and the Doormouse and even him will die. I don't want all those people to die, so I promise to keep it secret.

Once we have the teapot back, the Mad Hatter asks me if I want to show him my magic. I'm Alice and part of Wonderlands, so if I do what he did, it won't hurt. He takes my wrist and dips my hand in the teapot's tea, and I want to pull it out. Mad Hatter keeps hold of me and reminds me that I'm Alice and I can't feel pain, and he's right. I want to be Alice, so I pretend that I don't feel pain.

I don't do but a little crying and stay mostly quiet, so when the Mad Hatter takes my hand out, he looks happy.

"What a magical little girl you are, Alice!" he says.

He gets up to hug me and put some ice on my hand and tell me it's ok. When I'm done crying, he reminds me that I can't tell anyone about Wonderlands or being Alice. He wants to see if I can smile while not feeling pain the next time we play and that everyone in Wonderlands is so proud of me for passing my test.

I get up to go and play in the corner for a little while until someone gets me for another room. I'm not very good at the playing this time. My hand hurts, and I'm not sure why, and I feel a little dizzy. I think we may have vaguely remembered what had just happened, but pain and dissociation were making it hard to think, and we got whisked to the next room (or home, not sure which) before we were hundred percent back to normal.

The tiny room I go to next has a couple of archery targets set up against one wall and a tiny bow-and-arrow-set with suction cups on the arrows. There's stuffed animals and other animal/fantasy creature toys along the other walls. The man in the room is wearing all green (but 90s clothing) with a green cap that has a red feather in it. He bows.

"Welcome, Robyn, to Sherwood Forest."

I'm a little nervous, but he seems so open and nice that I giggle a little. He tells me that he's one of my Merry Men and that we're going to practice our archery today, which is exciting. I'm not very good at it, but the Merry Man doesn't seem upset. He shows me how to do it, but he's not happy if I mess up something that he's already shown me. Those mistakes get me pinches and smacks on the bottom with his real-arrows. I do my best so he doesn't have to hurt me. He tells me he doesn't want to, but it's the only way to make sure I do my best. He wants me to do my best so I'll pass the test.

It's fun even with the pinches and smacks. I like it when my arrows stick to the target. Once I've done that a few times, the Merry Man stops me. He tells me that in Sherwood Forest, it's Robyn and her Merry Men's job to hunt down dragons and traitors and other scary beasts for our King. These beasts are very, very good at sneaking and hiding, so it'll be my job to learn how to find them. He says he'll be teaching me how to do this, but right now, he has to find out if I have the magic I'll need to be Robyn.

The Merry Man tells me that Robyn is a strong girl. She doesn't ever feel sorry for other people or even feel like she did the wrong thing. She is the King's special hunter, and she doesn't feel sad or bad (guilt), not ever. No matter what. She only does what the King says because he trusts her to do it.

The Merry Man takes me out of the large room and to the door next to it. We go into a small, little hallway and another door, and it smells and sounds terrible in here. There's a screeching (I don't know what it is, but it's alive), and it smells like someone pissed themselves. There are cages in here with animals and a tray on a table.

Don't like it. Don't want to be in here. Robyn is strong. She walks with the man to the table. A little rat is pinned to the tray with its chest and innards all opened up. It's still alive and looks so bad. (How the fuck is it still alive?) I don't like it! The man gives me a tiny knife (scalpel). He tells me I've got to kill the rat because the King said so. I don't want to kill nothing, but I don't want the rat to be hurtin'. The man shows me where to stab, and I do. The little rat stops moving. I can't move when I'm told, so the man picks me up and takes me out of the room and back to the archery targets.

He tells me I didn't pass (because I froze up, I think), but that was ok. I'd get one more chance later. He tells me I have to keep the King's secrets. If I don't, everyone will know what I did. He gives me a stuffed rabbit and shows me how it has a Velcro opening in its stomach, and I can pull out its babies and its heart. I can practice with it and play so I do better next time. He says he'll send it home with me. (I, part of the surface layer/host, remember this stuffed animal. I didn't remember it until reading about this memory, but once I had, it seemed obvious that it wasn't a normal toy. My parents were obsessed with getting me the newest, coolest toys, so long as they weren't electronics, and this stuffed rabbit was hand-stitched together. It had a patchy lining, so yeah, you could pull its baby rabbits out, but sometimes, stuffing came with it too. Weird.)

He pats my head and says, "It's ok, Robyn. You'll do better next time."

(When looking at our file later in life, we saw that they'd noted we were very good at dissociating from the body (Alice) but we had far too much empathy (Robyn), which we'd need to be trained out of.)

I go back to the corner to play but can only sit there. I start moving soon, and that's when I get called on.

There's something about a desert and real life, current-day mummification, and a sphynx here. Something about learning the 'magical' rites and secrets, but it's very fuzzy right now. I won't push because I've already pushed enough.

I know we end up in that sectioned-off corner of the room at the end of the day. Mr. A is there. He smiles and tells us he heard we did good today. We sit down when told and watch the train going into the tunnel video a few times. Mr. Rogers comes into view and gives us a shot to make us feel better. We're happy for it cause we don't feel so good. The shot makes us relax, and Mr. Rogers sits down to ask us some questions about the day. He has a pen light that he shines in our eyes when asking the questions, but he stops while we answer.

He asks us about what we learned with his friends today, and we want to tell him because we want to make him proud, but we're also afraid of making Wonderlands disappear or people knowing what we did. So, we tell him we just played. He tells us he doesn't believe us, and he's very disappointed. He has to make sure we're telling the truth.

He becomes someone else. Not Mr. Rogers but truthseeker (that FUCKING BASTARD). He hurts us, but not sexually. Room must be sound-proofed. He asks us about Alice and Robyn and who we are. But we're just Lilith. I'm just Lilith and Adam and Eve. I don't know no Alice or Robyn. This is Imagination Station. I'm a good girl. I'm a good boy. I don't know what he's saying.

He says he believes us and cleans us up and holds us tight when we're picked up. He tells us we did so good. That we passed. That we are indeed magical. I don't know what magical is, but I don't care. I just hug Mr. Rogers and beg him not to go away. I don't like the truthseeker. He tells me I won't see him again today.

When I calm down, Mr. Rogers says we have to finish the day. We (him and us) have to make sure we keep the secret. No Imagination Station or anything else from today can be told. We agree with him. We don't want it to be known. He says to be sure he has to do one more thing and that it might hurt, and we're scared, but we don't move after he has us stand up and he goes behind us. He presses some metal bumps to the lower tip of our left wing (shoulder blade; these parts feel like they have actual wings), and we don't know what it is. It *hurts so bad*, like tingling over the body, and we smell something (hair burning, older parts say). We fall down. It still hurts, even without the metal bumps. Mr. Rogers takes us to a separate room with beds and free-standing curtains. We go in and out of sleep there until daddy gets us. We go home.

We get very confused after this cause we know we're magic, but momma starts telling us that magic's not real, even when we don't tell her about our magic. She starts sending us to time-out when we argue with her.

So, we're magic, but magic's not real. And everything like what happened with Mr. Rogers is also magic, but magic's not real.

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