

## Free Fiction Monday: Flower Fairies

January 10th, 2011 | [6 Comments](#)

*Funeral directors deal with everything at a funeral, but only a few have had to handle an influx of flower fairies. Worse, the arrival of a flower fairy child, alone and unsupervised. Flower fairies are unpredictable...except when they're angry. And then they're terrifying. What will they do if they think one of their children is in danger?*

*"[Flower Fairies] is a sensitive, beautiful and heartwarming tale of honoring the dead."* —The Internet Review of Science Fiction

A story by World Fantasy Award winner Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Available for 99 cents on [Kindle](#), [Smashwords](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and in other e-bookstores. Also available in the collection, [Five Fantastic Tales](#), which is available in [trade paper](#) as well as e-book format ([Kindle](#), [Smashwords](#), [Barnes & Noble](#)).



### **Flower Fairies**

**Kristine Kathryn Rusch**

*Published by WMG Publishing*

*Copyright © 2010 by Kristine Kathryn Rusch*

She stands behind the bouquet of flowers, her little face barely visible through the green fronds. Her skin is the color of loam, her eyes the faded green of underwater seaweed, and her lips the dusky rose of the tulips that hide her.

My heart pounds. I see her among all the bouquets set on the long white table, but my colleagues don't. They're moving flowers, checking tags, figuring out which bouquet goes into what memorial chapel.

We have four funerals this afternoon and two viewings tonight. The funeral home is large, modern, with several exits and entrances, so none of the groups will see each other. Their music shouldn't even overlap.

On days like today—a Saturday, shortly after the winter holidays—I employ nearly a dozen people, some of whom just stand by the doors and make sure the right family goes to the right memorial chapel.

It's all very delicate and very sad, and I try very hard to make sure that my employees seem sympathetic. After hundreds of funerals, however, many people lose sympathy. They recognize the patterns and realize some people are loved, some are hated, and some are simply forgotten.

And then there are the very old, whose friends and family have died long ago.

The very old touch me. I can easily see myself as part of their ranks, alone and forgotten. I want someone to honor me when I die, just as I'm sure they wanted someone to honor them.

So I do. For their funerals, I put on my best dress, and sit in the chapels myself. The ceremony is often elaborate, planned for friends and family who are now gone. When that happens, it's clear the person never expected to live so long. Often she (and it usually is a she) planned her ceremony with my father or my grandfather.

We keep amazing records. My family has planned funerals for this town for more than a century. If an historian comes into our little parlor and asks to see the records from a burial sixty years before, I can find it. I can tell who presided and who attended.

I can also tell what kind of floral arrangements decorated the memorial chapel.

Flowers have always been my specialty.

Perhaps that's why I notice the flower fairies long before anyone else does.

This little girl looks no more than three, but looks can be deceptive, particularly among flower fairies. Three is a problem. Three means I might have to return her to her family.

When she realizes that I see her, she smiles. Her eyes brighten to emerald and actually twinkle.

She touches the flowers in front of her. Ferns accent a mix of dusty rose and purplish blue tulips, with a single well placed lily in the center.

"I made this," she says in a decidedly childlike voice.

Everyone in the room turns. The silence, which was already heavy, turns oppressive.

She doesn't seem to notice. She's smiling at me. She is as young as I feared.

"Isn't it pretty?" she asks.

I turn to my assistant Diane. Diane's skin is normally the color of chalk, but it's gone even paler now.

"Call Roderick," I say.

Roderick is the only one of the flower fairies who uses modern technology. He burns through cell phones like smokers burn through matches. Fortunately, he's smart enough to keep the same number with each phone change.

Diane slips out of the room. Technology usually doesn't work well in the presence of the magical.

I smile at the little girl. "Your flowers are lovely."

“Thank you,” she says primly. Then she waits. She wants me to ask what it is she’s doing here or, worse, what she wants.

I never ask the flower fairies what they want. That’s the wrong question. It’s a question—particularly with a magical child—that could get the questioner in decades of trouble.

“Is this your first bouquet?” I ask, not really wanting to hear the answer.

She nods. “Can I stay?”

I don’t dare say no to her. Saying no to an infant flower fairy is much more dangerous than saying no to an adult.

“You can stay,” I say and try not to cringe.

\*\*\*

I was little more than a babe myself when I first met the flower fairies. My parents owned a summer cabin near one of the mountain lakes. It was the only place I’d lived that didn’t smell faintly of formaldehyde.

Instead, it smelled of the cool, clear lake water—and flowers.

Flowers. Flowers everywhere. My father believed that the cabin’s previous owners had planted thousands of perennials, not listening to my mother when she would remark that many of the flowers that covered our property every year were annuals. Not only that, but they often bloomed at the same time—peonies and geraniums, roses and lilacs, asters and snowdrops. Seasons seemed to mean nothing on our land, something I didn’t appreciate until much later.

I must have been six when I stumbled onto the clearing. In those days, children—even young children—were allowed to wander so long as they came back in time for supper. I wore a watch with large hands. I’d learned to tell time two years before, and I adhered to the schedule rigidly.

The schedule gave me freedom, which I desperately needed. When you grew up above a funeral home, you knew more about sadness, mourning, and death than you should have. The entire house had an oppressive air—one I accepted as normal until I grew old enough to visit my friends.

Sunlight filtered through the trees, burning off the last of the early morning fog. That fog made everything seem opaque—the trees, tall and strong with their green leaves; the shadows, deep and dark and somehow welcoming; and the flowers, which covered the meadow like grass.

The colors would have been overwhelming but for the fog: Blues and reds and pinks and so very much white that it looked less like an accent color and more like a deliberate shade.

I stepped from my path in the trees, expecting to walk on a carpet of flowers, because that was what they looked like, a carpet that led to another part of the woods.

But I sank into them. The ground where the flowers grew was lower than the ground in the forest. I walked in a sea of blooms, shoulder-high, and I felt like I had found heaven.

My watch stopped and I was late for lunch, forbidden to go off on my own again for a week. By the time I returned, the flowers were taller, and I didn’t like walking inside of their stalks. The darkness with its intermittent rays of sunlight frightened me—and even then, I knew there was something wrong here, something not completely normal.

But I visited the clearing every summer. I learned to remove my watch before I stepped inside, because it stopped every single time I went into the clearing.

But I was never late to lunch again—the fairies saw to that. For such capricious little creatures, they have oddly tender hearts.

\*\*\*

We have six memorial chapels—two large, three medium, and one small, so that the family doesn't notice that the deceased has few friends. This afternoon's funerals will take place in both large chapels as well as two of the medium chapels.

We'll have crowds.

But the little girl's flowers aren't going to any of those chapels. They're going to the small chapel, on the far side of the building.

At six tonight, we're holding a viewing.

I don't expect anyone to come.

The deceased is Helena Spenser, one of the very old. The obituary that ran in the paper this morning said she was one hundred and five, but the age was just an estimate. Like so many of her generation, she was born at home and no one ever issued a birth certificate.

And like so many women before her, Helena Spenser often lied about her age.

I met Helena a decade ago, when she made her funeral plans. She was formidable, a woman who still had vestiges of unusual height. She carried herself like a dancer, back straight, moving with fluid grace.

I even remember the outfit she wore—a black dress trimmed with red, and decorated with a single rose in the dress's lapel. Her hat, a cloche which matched the dress in design and trim, tilted rakishly on her thick silver hair.

My office was small then; I hadn't yet built the new Memorial Center. We sat in what had once been the servant's quarters in my family's oversized Victorian and, heads bowed, decided how Helena Spenser's friends and family would celebrate her long life upon this Earth.

Only this morning's obituary warned me that Helena Spenser's family had died sixty years before in a devastating fire. Her close friends—a group of widowed women who had raised hell and money for our little town—died nearly two decades ago.

She had acquaintances, but not the kind that most older folk had. She had never left the home she built after her husband and sons died, so she had no retirement center bridge partners, no orderlies who cajoled her to eat, no nursing home directors who felt it their duty to attend the funeral of one of the "members." She never went to church, so no minister would feel obligated to say a few words about her passing.

While she'd been spectacular in life—an actress who became a playwright, a self-made woman who had somehow survived the loss of everyone who mattered to her when she was still in her forties, the center of society into her seventies, and a philanthropist until the day she died—she kept to herself.

There was to be no ceremony. I remembered that much without even checking her file.

*Such nonsense, she'd said when I broached the topic all these years ago. Show the world I'm dead and then*

*such nonsense, she'd said when I broached the topic all those years ago. Show the world I'm dead and then burn what's left.*

I hadn't known about the fire then. I hadn't know about it until this morning when I read about her.

I'd known the obituary was coming; I'd called the paper myself to make sure I didn't have to fund a notice of the viewing from Helena Spenser's account. But I hadn't expected the obituary to be so detailed and rich, nor had I expected Helena Spenser's life to be so fascinating.

Although I probably should have.

I had only met her the once, and she'd made quite an impression on me.

\*\*\*

We have no other flowers for Helena Spenser's viewing, and that angers me. This woman gave millions in charity, and no organization that benefited from her benevolence thought to send a single memorial.

Granted, most people send flowers to funerals and Helena is only having a viewing. And in the middle of this morning's obituary, the paper had highlighted a box of memorials where money could be sent in lieu of flowers.

I understand charitable donations. I usually encourage them. But someone should remember this woman as she leaves this life to go to the next. Someone should decorate her chapel, just for a little while.

Looks like that someone will have to be me.

Each funeral has excess flowers. The family takes the cards and the bouquets that they want—if any—and then one of my employees discreetly asks if the family minds donating the remaining flowers to lonely nursing home and hospital patients.

Of course the family doesn't mind. The family doesn't want to think about the flowers because that's just one more thing to worry about.

Besides, flowers die too—and that's an often too visual reminder of the fact that their loved one has just left the world.

So I will take some leftover flowers and decorate Helena's chapel.

It became Helena's chapel this morning, when we moved her body from the embalming chamber to the casket and then moved the casket to the front of the room. The casket is polished lavender—not quite the model she picked out (that one has been discontinued) but close enough.

She looks lovely inside of it, nestled on satin that matches her hair. We didn't have to put much make-up on her. She doesn't look that much different from the woman who visited me in my office all those years ago.

She's wearing a black suit with purple piping. The black sets off her hair, the purple accents the casket itself. It's too bad no one will see this. Rarely has our staff made a corpse look so good.

I check on her before the first funeral. I put the guest book near the entrance, so people can sign in and leave if they want to. I place the placard announcing the visiting hours just outside the door.

Right now, Helena looks lonely in her small chapel, without flowers and without notes. The piped-in music, all 1920s jazz, sounds a little too jaunty for the occasion. But I didn't pick it. She did.

She had planned everything down to the last detail.

Except, of course, the effects of age and time.

\*\*\*

By late afternoon, Roderick still hasn't arrived. I've had Diane page him three more times. I even sent one of the lowliest assistants to the edge of the clearing not far from the old Victorian. This assistant will stand near the old growth tree stumps that dot the back of my property, and call for Roderick.

Roderick never comes when he's paged like that. Instead, he finds me, wherever I am, and reminds me he's not a dog.

Of course, this time, the verbal page isn't working either.

I can't wait. I have to ready the chapel just in case someone shows up for Helena's viewing.

Gingerly, I carry the little girl's bouquet into the chapel. The vase is made of obsidian. I've never seen anything so beautifully carved.

The flower fairy sits on the edge of the vase, her feet dangling off the side. Her little fingers caress the ferns. Her emerald eyes twinkle.

"Will everyone like the flowers?" she asks.

I can't answer that question. If I say yes and no one does, then I have lied to a flower fairy, which puts me at their mercy. If I hedge and say, *I hope so*, then I am insulting the little being who created this arrangement, because I'm telling her in a sideways fashion that the flowers aren't good enough. If I say *I don't know*, I lose standing with the flower fairies.

Instead, I stop outside the chapel doors. I look down the private hallway and make sure we're alone.

"Are you sure you want to remain with the bouquet?" I ask.

She nods. She's tiny and delicate and amazingly beautiful. She looks like a flower herself.

"These flowers are for grieving," I say.

"I know," she says. "That's why there's a lily."

The funeral flower, apparently, for flower fairies as well as for humans.

"All right," I say, and with one hand, pull open the heavy oak door leading into the chapel.

No matter how gently we perfume the air, the scents of death and formaldehyde linger. The body in the coffin never looks real. I am always amazed at how many people say that the deceased looks so happy or so alive or so beautiful.

Helena does look beautiful—for a wax doll—but the vibrant demanding woman I met the day we planned this event was much more beautiful. Animation, personality, that spark of life—it can't be faked, not with make-up and reconstruction and excellent posing.

It can only be mimicked.

I expect the flower fairy to gasp or be shocked. But she rides on her vase like a soldier going to battle. She does look up front as we walk. A small frown crosses her little face.

“Pretty,” she says, and points.

At first, I think she’s pointing at Helena. Then I realize she’s pointing at the coffin.

“I want the flowers there,” she says, still pointing.

I follow the point as best I can. I swallow, trying to think of a tactful way to tell her the arrangement is too small for such a large empty space.

“Usually,” I say, “something as pretty as your arrangement goes on the shelf just behind the coffin.”

I indicate the shelf near the podium. Usually three of the loveliest arrangements go there. But a single arrangement, particularly one this beautiful, would look spectacular there as well.

“No,” she says and moves her finger up and down imperiously. “There.”

She means the closed half of the coffin. I suppress a sigh and silently wish for Roderick.

Of course, he doesn’t come.

“The viewing doesn’t start until six,” I say. “It’s four now.”

I’m not sure she understands. I’m trying to tell her, in a roundabout way, that she’ll be alone. I don’t dare say that bluntly because I’m afraid she’ll use her budding magic to force me to stay or to bring in my assistants.

Or worse, to bring in everyone from one of the nearby services.

“It’s all right,” she says.

And I hope it is.

“I have some errands,” I say. “I’ll be back before the viewing starts.”

“I know,” she says and settles behind the fronds.

\*\*\*

For the next hour, I try not to think of her alone in there. She’s young and if young fairies are anything like young humans, then she must be bored.

If she’s bored, she’ll either sleep or she’ll cause trouble.

I’m hoping for sleep, but part of me expects the worst.

After I leave her, I text Roderick. A plume of smoke rises from my Blackberry, so I know the text has gone through. I set it on vibrate and put it in my pocket.

Then I go to the largest chapel, where the final funeral is just ending.

The funeral is for the mayor’s mother-in-law. She was a difficult woman, who never had a kind word to say about anyone. her son-in-law in particular.

The large crowd isn't here for her. They're here to see and be seen. It's funeral as political event. The mayor will be running for governor next fall, and, unless something goes wrong, he'll win. Everyone wants to be his friend, in whatever way they can accomplish that.

His wife is the only one crying. She's not sobbing. Instead, her eyes are leaking. She keeps wiping the tears away as if they anger her.

They probably do. No one should cry for the woman in the casket. Even in death, she looks mean. Her mouth is pinched from smoking, her fleshy cheeks forming jowls that we couldn't erase with make-up. She died of a massive heart attack while berating the head of the town council and the joke around town (spoken quietly and away from the mayor's hearing) that she had done the impossible: having a heart attack without having a heart.

The mayor is saying a few words. They're deft—he is truly a politician—and then he'll invite everyone forward to pay their last respects.

He has promised me all of the flowers—his wife wants none of them. I slip away, leaving the remainder of the ceremony to my able assistants, who can better stomach hypocrisy than I can.

Instead, I head back to my office, checking my Blackberry as I go.

It's not like the flower fairies to leave one of their children alone for so long. It's not like Roderick to ignore my pleas for assistance.

We've known each other since my days in the woods, back when I was a child. Roderick took care of me and his price (fairies always have a price) was to learn how to use modern technology.

Roderick wanted to cross between his world and ours. Mostly he manages it. People do notice him, but they think it's because they find him attractive. Somehow they miss the glamour that slides off him like glitter.

I'm about to text him again, when Diane catches my arm. I didn't even see her approach.

"You need to come with me," she says.

She was assigned to our other large funeral of the day, but that ended hours ago. I expect her to lead me to the big chapel. Instead, she takes me to the smallest chapel and carefully pulls open the door.

"Look," she says.

I'm afraid to. A magical child left alone in a place of the dead. I thought I was making a mistake. Now I will see exactly what that mistake is.

I peer inside, carefully, so that the girl can't see me.

My breath catches.

Flowers cascade off the closed casket. Lavender and bluebells mix with a carpet of greenery. The greenery outlines the aisle that flows all the way to the main door.

I remain in the hall and let the door close.

The child was bored, and she found a way to amuse herself. My heart catches.



“You didn’t hear from Roderick, did you?” I ask Diane.

Diane shakes her head.

“I didn’t notice,” I say. “The flowers aren’t covering Helena, are they?”

“I didn’t notice either,” Diane whispers.

We should check. One of us should go inside and make sure the girl didn’t cover our corpse with a carpet of roses.

But I can’t bring myself to send Diane in there, and I’m not going to go myself. I don’t know how to tell a magical child—a flower fairy—to stop doing something.

I’ve been chastised by the flower fairies before.

I brought my father to their clearing, hoping he would ask them to do the flowers for his funeral home. They humored him, then made him forget.

And they punished me for sharing our relationship.

They made me promise that I would display any flowers they gave me, even when I became director of the family funeral parlor.

I agreed. I thought I had outsmarted them because I never planned to work with my family.

I was twelve.

I didn’t understand the ways of the world.

I still honor that agreement, even though the contract has expired.

I have seen what happens when someone crosses them.

I adjust the placard on its board. Then I text Roderick again.

*Urgent, I type. Please. Help.*

The smoke rises, acrid and dark. He’s getting my messages.

He’s just not answering.

And I don’t know why.

\*\*\*

At quarter to six, I slip into the private bath behind my office and change into my best dress. This dress is new; I bought it the day I heard of Helena’s death. The dress is black with red trim—not as glamorous as hers was, but I can never do glamorous.

I don’t wear a hat because hats indoors, particularly at a funeral, are often considered bad luck. But I pile my hair on top of my head and secure it. Then I slip one of the hothouse roses—also red—into the makeshift bun.

I can never be as dramatically beautiful as Helena, but I can at least honor her by looking my best.

I slip on a pair of black pumps and grab a glittery black clutch purse.

Then I head for the smallest chapel.

Diane stands outside the door to usher in anyone who shows up. It's a little after six. So far she's ushered in no one. We've received no calls, no condolences, and no questions about where to send cards.

Roderick hasn't come either.

I twist my fingers together. The little flower fairy won't know that anything is amiss at the viewing, but what do I do with her afterwards? I'm not sure she should stay with the bouquet.

Diane grimaces at me as I approach. I recognize the look; she hates these lonely viewings as much as I do. We've done too many of them over the years.

"Want me to go in with you?" she asks.

I shake my head. "Send Roderick in, though, if he ever shows up."

She nods.

I grab the oak handle on the door and pull it open.

This time, my gasp is audible. Diane crowds beside me and gasps as well.

The chapel is covered in greenery. The pews are covered in a carpet of wildflowers, the floor itself looks like its made of moss, and trees grow in the corners. Flowers bloom on the shelves—more roses than I've ever seen, carnations, and lilies in stunning displays.

But the bouquet on the casket remains, and so does the open part of the casket itself. Helena Spenser looks like she's resting on a bier made of flowers.

"My God," Diane breathes. Then she touches my arm. "If anyone shows, should I send them in?"

"Yeah," I say. I have no idea how I'll explain this, although I've had a few fairy-sponsored magical moments before, and I've found that simple works best. "If they ask, just tell them she loved flowers."

"Okay." Diane seems reluctant to move.

I know I am. But I've come to pay my respects, and I'm going to do that. Then I'm going to sit as if I'm family and watch over her until viewing hours end.

I step inside. The aisle is so soft that my heels pierce it. I wobble. I'll do damage as I walk, so I pull off the shoes and set them by the door. They're instantly covered with grass and purple crocuses. I wonder if I'll ever get them back.

I walk on the moss. It feels warm as sunlit ground. It's comfortable and soothing, like going barefoot in the glade.

Still, I step carefully. I'm not sure where the child is. I don't want to hurt her.

I walk up to the coffin. Helena's eyes are closed, her lashes brushing her heavily made up cheeks. She looks content, even though I'm not sure how. Corpses don't show emotion.

I glance at the bouquet, wondering how that infant fairy managed so much work in such a short period of time.

But I don't see her.

I tell myself this isn't unusual; to create this magical wonderland, she probably has to move around a lot.

But my heart is pounding.

What happens if I lost her?

What happens if she gets hurt?

I don't even know what to call her. Fairies guard their names jealously and they don't like pet names.

I decide to cajole her. "This room has never looked lovelier."

"Good." The voice behind me is male and it makes me jump.

I turn. The man behind me is taller than I am. He is so thin that my hand could probably encompass his waist. He wears leaves over his hips and down his legs, but his chest is bare.

His skin is green, his hair brown. Instead of looking strange, he looks gorgeous.

Such is the way of flower fairies.

"We have worked hard this afternoon," he says.

As he speaks, more fairies come out of the greenery. They're all heights, and thin. Some have green skin, some have loam-colored skin like the little fairy. Some have skin the color of ivory. Their hair often matches the flowers they carry. They are all barefoot. The men wear leaves like this man does, and the women wear skimpy dresses made of petals.

Since fairies wear nothing in the wild, they are covering themselves according to human custom.

"This is stunning," I say. "And quite unexpected."

The door in the back opens, and Roderick slips in. He's wearing a suit and it looks stranger than anything the other fairies wear. Normally, Roderick wears tight black jeans, a t-shirt with some Goth band I don't recognize, and heavy boots.

The suit looks like an Armani, perfectly tailored to his slender frame. The white shirt beneath accents the darkness of his skin. His normally spiky hair has been combed back, and his piercings are empty.

He looks like a teenage boy told to clean up for his grandmother's funeral.

"There you are," I say with so much relief it even surprises me.

He smiles. I thread my way through the throng of fairies and stop beside him.

"I tried to contact you," I say. "I was worried."

"It's a small price to pay," he says, then sweeps his hand toward the chapel.

As he does, I see the glamour fall from his arm. The scents of moss and sunlight and a hundred flowers follow that glamour

“If I had warned you,” he says, “this would not have happened.”

“Why not?” I ask.

“Because this is your domain.” He bows his head slightly. “We have invaded. We beg pardon.”

He thinks they’ve done something wrong.

“Pardon granted,” I say, because you never cross fairies, no matter how well you think you know them. “I appreciate the respect for my domain. But you do need to know that I would have allowed this.”

He looks at me in surprise. So do some of the others.

“This is a non-denominational chapel,” I say. “What that means is the family and friends can design the service they want for the deceased. Just as you have here.”

The little girl climbs into his arm. She puts her thumb in her mouth and rests her head on his shoulder. She’s watching me with those emerald eyes.

The fairies had sent her ahead because they knew I wouldn’t object to her. They had tried to outthink me.

He cradles her close. “You would have allowed this?”

I nod. “It’s lovely. I’m sure Helena would have appreciated it.”

He says, “We wanted to honor her.”

“She meant a lot to you,” I say, falling into my role as funeral director.

“To all of us.” He smooths the little girl’s hair. “We honor her, because she honored us.”

I’m surprised. I thought my staff and I were the only ones who knew about the flower fairies.

“She saw you then,” I say.

“Not at first.” He rests his head on the little girl’s for just a brief instant. “But every day for the last sixty years, she stopped and admired our flowers.”

Sixty years. Since her family died.

“Then she would murmur how lovely they were. Gradually we revealed ourselves. She visited our flowers. She played with our children. She was a bright, warm spot in the middle of our day.”

I thought of that for a moment. A woman who had lost her husband and children. A woman who was looking for a way to go on. She had found it in flowers each and every day.

Then she learned the secret behind the flowers and instead of being afraid, she embraced it.

She embraced them.

As I have never dared to do.

“Do you mind if I sit?” I ask.

“Is that what you planned to do?” he asks.

I nod.

“Do you do that at all such occasions?”

“No,” I say. “Only the special ones.”

And this one is very, very special.

“Let’s all sit,” he says. He leads me to the front pew, then joins me. The little girl has fallen asleep in his arms. She has his look around the eyes and lips. I wonder if she’s his.

I know so little about him—about any of them—and I am afraid to ask.

One by one, they approach the open casket, and one by one, they drop a flower inside. The flower varies—sometimes it’s a daffodil, sometimes an orchid. But it’s always lovely and it always fits.

When they’re done, they sit in the pews. Vines cover them. Honeysuckle grows along the walls. Wisteria covers the doors.

We bow our heads in silence to this great woman. We mourn her passing and we celebrate her life.

Then, when the viewing hours are over, they all stand—and vanish.

Except for Roderick. He remains beside me.

“We’ll clean this up,” he says.

“Leave it,” I say. “We won’t use the chapel for another two days.”

He smiles and touches my face. “Come see us in the glade,” he says. “We miss you.”

Then he too vanishes.

I stare at the motes of glamour, still floating where he had been. Before, I would have heard a threat in his words.

I would have been frightened.

Fairies can be terrifying.

But it took Helena to remind me that they are also extremely special.

They honored me today by respecting my chapel while honoring her.

If I treat them kindly, perhaps one day, they will decorate my chapel and sit in silent vigil after I am gone.

I hope so. Because from now on, I will remember that while flower fairies are capricious, they have oddly tender hearts.

*“Flower Fairies” by Kristine Kathryn Rusch first published in Realms of Fantasy, October, 2009.*

[Share This](#)