

Spring

A *Fand* story by Laney Cairo

Sometimes, just sometimes, Fand was infuriating. He couldn't be relied upon not to bolt into the forest if anyone arrived, even if it was just Felicity. He couldn't always get a fire going in the stove, or remember to close the door and windows of the shack if it rained.

Will didn't mind, really. It wasn't like there was anything much in the shack that could be harmed by the rain, not since Will had moved their bed away from the window, and anyone that visited should be understanding about Fand and his shyness.

Compensations abounded.

At that moment, Fand was sprawled facedown in the vegetable garden, talking to the seeds he was planting. Will could hear him, muttering under his breath.

"Onions, remember to be onions," Fand said. "Not beans, not this time. Maybe next time."

The goats were pressed up against the fence that was supposed to be keeping them out of the veggies, eternally optimistic, so Will tossed a weed at them, catching Dynamite in the neck, making both of the goats back away from the fence, postponing the inevitable fencing failure.

The soil was dark, heavy to turn with a spade, saturated from spring rains, and Will flipped the last sod in the trench he was digging and leaned against his spade for a moment.

It wasn't raining, and sunshine struggled through the clouds. With the turn of the season, each day had become a race against the elements, a desperate panic to beat back the weeds and reclaim enough of the rough ground to get a real garden in.

Fand, covered in mud, clambered out of the new bed Will had cut in that morning and wandered over to Will, draping a grubby arm around Will's already grubby neck.

"Think you can ask the goats to stop crushing the fence?" Will asked.

Fand sighed. "I tried, but it's not like talking to Digger."

Digger, hearing her name, rushed over from where she'd been guarding the goats despite the goats ignoring her.

Will patted Digger's head. "Goats don't listen?" he asked.

"Apparently they're starving," Fand said, and he sounded perplexed. "I gave them weeds, but they wanted real food, whatever that is."

"Molasses," Will said. "Fitch did warn us that Dynamite and Boom are addicted to molasses."

"I'm not insusceptible to molasses myself," Fand said, and Will shook his head, laughing.

Fand adored molasses, and unlike the goats, he had opposable thumbs and was quite capable of gorging himself on the stuff while Will was at work.

Fand grinned, looking pleased with himself. "Did I do that right?" he asked.

"Do what?" Will said, pushing Fand's hair back off his forehead, still chuckling.

"Make a litotes," Fand said, and Will shouted with laughter that time, startling the goats and making Digger bark.

Fand beamed, cheeks shining with delight, and Will hugged him again. "You did," Will said. "Congratulations on conquering that page of the grammar text book. That doesn't mean I'm going to let you feed molasses to the goats every time they ask for it, though."

"But they want it," Fand said, toying with the top button of Will's shirt. "Do you think there is enough hot water for a bath?"

"Are you trying to distract me from the subject of how much molasses we go through?" Will asked, and Fand smiled coyly, undoing enough of Will's shirt buttons to be able to slide grimy hands across Will's chest.

"Perhaps," Fand said, and Will didn't care if the daylight would last another hour and he hadn't finished the bed he was digging. He didn't even care that Fand tasted of illicit molasses, not when Fand was laughing too hard to kiss, tugging at his clothes, leading him towards their shack.

Will could always bring more molasses back, next time he went into the nearest town.