

THE MEMORIES WE CHERISH

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Synopsis:

Juley, a middle-aged animator, has been clinging to her childhood memories, and the friends she made them with, for years. To Juley, it's betrayal to leave them behind after the essential part they played in her life. That is, until a dream about the forest of her childhood and the home of her long-lost friends, Tiliki, Cyfrin, Ogden, and Nishati. Travel alongside Juley as she reunites with her friends, discovers the mysteries of the strange, dreamlike forest she's landed in, and comes to realize that despite the past's beauty, there is far more treasures awaiting in the present.

Characters:

Juley is a middle-aged animator, who's been struggling for years to better her craft. She's stuck... but she can't figure out what's wrong for the life of her. After a visit from the past, she realizes that it's time to move on from her past to a better future. Juley is more gentle and caring by nature, but is also very insecure and easily unsettled.

Tiliki is a foxlike spirit from Juley's childhood forest. She is very light on her feet and gymnastic with endless energy to match. She loves to explore and discover. Tiliki highly values her friends, especially her best friend, Juley. Cyfrin, her mate, is also dear to her, as he helps ground her when her energy and curiosity get the best of her.

Cyfrin is a wolflike spirit from Juley's childhood forest. He is fiercely protective by nature, but also innocent, playful being, almost like a puppy. Cyfrin especially worries after Tiliki, his mate, and is a grounding force for Tiliki's sporadic energy when it becomes a bit too much.

Nishati is a deerlike spirit from Juley's childhood forest. She's snarky, poised, and often exasperated with her friends and their antics. But deep down, Nishati adores and cares for them deeply. It just takes time to become accustomed to her blunt observations and half-hearted complaints.

Ogden is a bearlike spirit from Juley's childhood forest. He is a soothing, wise being, almost like that of a grandfather. Ogden often plays as peacemaker amongst Juley and her spirit friends as voice of reason. That doesn't mean he's incapable of his own fun and teasing from time to time. He is gently spoken in slower tempos, and lumbers around in a practiced gait.

Setting:

Just after the second scene. Juley has just reunited with Tiliki, who is hurriedly taking Juley to her den. The rest of their friends will be meeting them there. Juley and her friends have been separated for many years due to the forest the spirits resided in burning down while Juley was away at an Animation Camp for the summer. Now, they are all about to be reunited in what, appears to be, Juley's dreams.

Act 1, Scene 3

The stage is set for TILIKI's den. TILIKI has her den underneath a large pine tree, so she has decorated the area just outside with nick-nacks and curious objects. Preferably, there should be a "hole" somewhere in the stage where TILIKI can enter and exit to retrieve items from inside her home.

(CYFRIN is center stage, pacing nervously. NISHATI, and OGDEN enter from stage left, all seeming a bit confused by CYFRIN's anxiety.)

CYFRIN

(Relieved as he notices his friends' arrival.)

Nishati! Ogden! There you both are! Took you long enough!

OGDEN

(Calm, soothingly spoken.)

Calm yourself Cyfrin. No need to cause such a stir. Tiliki will arrive shortly, I'm sure. Nishati and I arrived with no issue.

CYFRIN

But her howl was so sudden! What if something happened?! We've all been feeling it, the disruption-

NISHATI

(Rolls her eyes, exasperated as she interrupts CYFRIN.)

This is *Tiliki* we're talking about. She probably just found some new trinket to show the rest of us, *again*. Stop being such a lovesick pup and *think* for a second.

(CYFRIN scowls at the accusation, a noise somewhere between an embarrassed grumble and a wolf's whine escaping him. Then, a sharp rustle sounds from stage right. CYFRIN growls and moves to stand protectively in front of his friends. OGDEN and NISHATI tense, a bit on edge by the noise and CYFRIN's behavior.)

(TILIKI enters from stage right, prancing and bright. She stops in her tracks, taken aback, when she sees how on edge CYFRIN is.)

CYFRIN

(Incredibly relived, CYFRIN stops growling.)

Tiliki! Oh, thank goodness!

(CYFRIN instantly relaxes, dashing over to TILIKI to inspect her for any injuries. He anxiously circles around her, and TILIKI giggles in embarrassment and confusion.)

OGDEN looks on in fond exasperation. NISHATI scoffs and rolls her eyes, despite the smile escaping onto her face.)

TILIKI

(Laughing and flattered but confused.)

Cyfrin!? Cyfrin, you goof! You always worry too much!

(TILIKI swats at CYFRIN playfully, finally convincing him to stop his circling. CYFRIN comes to a stop to stand at TILIKI's side, linking their hands together. The action makes both TILIKI and CYFRIN smile. TILIKI suddenly springs into her excitement again, remembering why she had everyone gather.)

Oh, that's right! Look who I found everyone!

(TILIKI frantically starts waving in a "come here" gesture to JULEY, who is still off-stage. CYFRIN, OGDEN, and NISHATI are confused at what TILIKI is waving at. JULEY enters from stage right and timidly waves to everyone. The group is shocked, except for TILIKI, of course.)

CYFRIN, OGDEN, NISHATI

(Shocked but overjoyed!)

Juley!

(CYFRIN instantly dashes over to JULEY and starts circling her, not unlike he had with TILIKI. JULEY is a bit surprised by the attention, even a little uncomfortable, but NISHATI comes over to greet her with a hug. This stops CYFRIN's circling, so he joins the hug too. TILIKI grins and joins in. OGDEN calmly lumbers over to the group, completing the group hug. They remain like that for several moments, content. JULEY remains a bit stiff and unsure, despite their joyous greeting.)

JULEY

(A bit emotional.)

It's so good to see you guys, really! Gosh, it's been so long... you guys haven't changed much, huh?

(The group hug dissolves. TILIKI is still bouncing with excitement, proud of her surprise. CYFRIN goes back to holding TILIKI's hand, as if he's trying to keep her from flying away with all her energy. JULEY wipes her eyes, a little teary from the reunion with her long-lost friends.)

NISHATI

(Amused.)

Of course we didn't change! We're spirits.

(NISHATI raises an eyebrow.)

You sure did though. When'd you get as tall as me?

(JULEY blushes a bit, flattered but self-conscious. She starts to fiddle nervously with her hair and curls in on herself a little. OGDEN huffs.)

OGDEN

(Gentle in an effort to comfort JULEY.)

Now, now, it's alright. The look suits you, dear. Makes you look more... grown up.

(NISHATI nods sincerely, sorry for making JULEY uncomfortable. JULEY gives a shaky smile back as she relaxes again, pleasing OGDEN.)

I must say, it's amusing to know Tiliki is now properly the shortest among us now.

(Everyone laughs, and TILIKI pouts playfully at the teasing.)

CYFRIN

(Laughing and teasing)

Remember when we wanted her to dye her hair?? Image if we finally convinced her!

(Everyone laughs again except to JULEY, who is once again uncomfortable.)

JULEY

(Monotone and murmuring, not really sure she wants her friends to hear her.)

I already tried, a couple of years ago. It was pretty, but it just felt... wrong.

(The rest of the group's laughter hushes at JULEY's admission. Tense silence falls, no one really sure what to say to break the somber air. TILIKI, saddened, seems to suddenly come up with an idea and dashes off into her den, startling everyone else.)

Tiliki?!? Hey, where are you going?

(JULEY moves to follow TILIKI into her den, but TILIKI suddenly pops outside again, holding something in her hand that she'd retrieved from inside.)

TILIKI

(Grinning from ear to ear.)

I know what'll cheer you up Juley!

(TILIKI proceeds to proudly display for JULEY what she's brought from inside her den: a small, round citrine stone, about the size of the palm of one's hand. JULEY is shocked to see the stone but eased a bit by the familiar object. CYFRIN, OGDEN, and NISHATI are put at ease when the stone makes its appearance.)

JULEY

(In disbelief.)

Is... is that-? That's the friendship stone I gave you, isn't it!?

TILIKI

(Pleased with herself.)

Yep! Keep it in top condition and safe, just like you told me too! I always sleep with it under my paw every night!

JULEY

(Smiles a bit.)

That's... that's great Tiliki! I'm glad you still have it...

(JULEY fidgets a little in discomfort, so TILIKI hands the stone to her, figuring she wanted to hold it. JULEY stands there examining the stone as she recalls the memories and nostalgia it held. She holds in a very gentle manner, as if it was something far too precious to be held with normal grace. Eventually, she speaks again, softly.)

After all these years... it's still here...

OGDEN

(Nodding.)

We all knew how special these gifts were to you Juley. After you left, each stone you gave us was all we had left of you.

(The spirits all nod in agreement. JULEY smiles softly, endeared by the sentiment.)

JULEY

(Softly.)

Does that mean you guys still have yours too?

CYFRIN

(Grinning.)

Of course we do! We made sure to put them in *super* special places.

NISHATI

(Flippant, but deep down still caring.)

Yes, after you spent *days* lecturing us on how to keep them safe. Geesh, that was horrid.

OGDEN

(Mitigating.)

But still very helpful. It was an important exercise.

(NISHATI rolls her eyes while CYFRIN beamed at the praise. TILIKI gets very excited again.)

TILIKI

(Getting antsy just standing and chatting.)

It's silly for us to just tell you though Juley! We should show you! Come on, it'll be fun!

JULEY

(A little taken aback and unsure about an expedition.)

Oh! Umm, ya, sure. That'd be... fun.

TILIKI

(Cheering as she leaps happily)

Let's go then! Let's go! Let's go!

(TILIKI grabs onto CYFRIN as she leads the charge to exit stage left with CYFRIN in tow. OGDEN and NISHATI look on in amusement and move to follow. JULEY, still hesitant, stays where she stands for a moment before NISHATI notices and ushers JULEY to follow. JULEY stiffly moves and joins the two spirits. Everyone exits stage left.)

(Blackout!)