

ONDINE – ELLA DUTTON ENTRY

The golden sun peeks over a row of bushes, with a glowing light preceding it every so slightly. Its cheerful rays begin to make their way across my face, heat replacing the cold chill of my metal structure. The soft light soon floods the garden I stand in, unmoving in my ballerina's pose. I balance gracefully on the tips of my toes, and my dress is carved so well that the ruffles always seem to match the direction of the wind around me.

Every day I watch over the road beside me, the hum of cars and hustle of people is almost constant, though at night, it is sometimes quiet enough to hear the soft hoot of an owl and whisper of the wind. However, I feel different this morning. There is a gentle tingle spreading around my body, pulsing at my fingertips and feet. It feels so soothing but at the same time thrilling – I've never felt anything before, not even the strongest winds in a storm. Within minutes the sensation has washed all over me, and I can sense something else happening – clearly this bizarre moment isn't stopping here. My hands slowly become softer; fluid almost, and it seems as if I am melting, but I know I can't be. My fingers start to bend, and I realise I can move them – this miracle is making its way around my body in the same way that the tingles did.

I drop to the soles of my feet and let my arms sink down to my sides. My entire body aches – yet another feeling I am experiencing for the first time – this is presumably because I have been stuck in the same stiff position for four decades. I take a few wobbly steps around the bushes I stand amongst, nearly falling into a spiky-looking plant. The corners of my lips tug upwards to form an uneasy smile and I regain my balance. I make another hesitant attempt forwards, and this time make it out onto the pavement. Pedestrians walk past me, not paying attention, but I am too caught up in the moment to care. I carefully make my way across the road, being sure to cross with other people, so that I don't make any mistakes.

A few hours pass and I have wandered around Reigate, taking in all the new sights. I finally end up back at what I suppose I could call my home, and see a large crowd of people flooding the pavement. They all appear to be gaping at the empty space where I usually stand, many of them talking in loud voices about how I have disappeared. I don't trust myself to run yet, so try to walk faster as I make my way over. I am unable to speak, unlike them, so to get my attention I wave my arms in the air, push to the front of the crowd. They take no notice, too wrapped up in my 'disappearance' and with each passing second I become more confused. Why aren't they paying me any attention?

I realise the case is hopeless and miserably walk away, my head hanging low. I drift down the high-street and notice a person huddled against a tree; I know just by looking at him that he is homeless. I hope he gets some good luck soon – maybe some kind soul will help him out. I know that I would if I could. Just moments after the thought crosses my mind, a woman passes by him, she crouches down beside the man and passes him some money.

“Buy yourself a hot drink and some food,” I hear her say, her warm voice matches her friendly face. The man sits up straighter and lets out a grateful but surprised smile. That was ... weird. Just a coincidence, I guess.

I pass the local park soon after, and see a young boy riding a bike across the grass. He looks so happy, but then topples to the ground. I see a flash of red – he must have hit a rock. I pray that he’s ok, that he hasn’t really cut himself, and he suddenly stops crying. The boy stands. I walk on, curious about the things that have been happening, when I see a family looking desperately around the park; they’re practically turning the place upside-down in an attempt to find the thing they’re looking for. Edging closer, I hear they are calling a name and I realise they are searching for their dog. I feel so bad for them, and I decide to will their dog to appear. To my utter surprise, it shows itself immediately, running joyfully towards them out of a bush.

Content, I decided to call it a day and head home. I arrive by my road and see that everyone is travelling towards the town centre, and the park, and I’m overjoyed to hear the excited chatter about the Mayor’s arrival. It’s the perfect opportunity to slip into place. Darting in between the straggler, I reach my collection of flora, take a graceful leap over the bush and settle in my original pose.

I have greatly enjoyed my adventure today, but in my heart I know that I belong here, and here only. It is my duty to watch over my beloved town; that *must* come first. I know I will stay by my road for a long time, but I hope a time will come when I can do this again. I have loved being able to see the rest of the town and how civilisation has changed since I was erected. I feel my body begin to stiffen, my arms go numb, and soon I am back to my true unmoving state.

Margot Fonteyn was a ballerina. born in Reigate. Her statue, erected in 1980, depicts her in her favourite role of Ondine.