

FOREST DANCE

We stepped outside the hotel in the early morning mist, Stela and I, and were met by the first dim rays of the sun peeking through the clouds. Lured by the quiet, lush, morning, we decided to take a walk in the Black Forest.

The plan was for us to trek deep into the forest and experience being lost amongst the tall trees. We wanted to feel the fresh morning dew deep in the woods, stepping over broken limbs and felled leaves, then trying to find our way back to the hotel later.

The exotic sounds of the forest, the singing birds and the wind whistling through the trees, welcomed us as we headed towards the path. The fresh smells of the leaves and foliage on the forest floor, should energize us, we thought.

Quickly we got away from the trail we walked towards. However, we were not afraid because any of the small trails would lead us back to the hotel. We had all day to explore the wilderness.

It was beautiful, (the forest), with the tall trees, sweet smelling mist and the paths leading into the wilderness. Soon I began to feel butterflies in my stomach knowing that we were heading into a place where we didn't know what awaited us, but I trudged on. Suspense was in the air....

Gingerly, we trod single file down an seldom used path that disappeared into the tall trees. With each step we moved closer to an even more forested ocean of the same. The quiet shadowed darkness and rustic air welcomed our intrusion. Shortly, our feet were wet from the morningness that took its time to melt away... come mid-day.

The sun had not yet found this place so, all was dark and wet and smelt of the freshness we anticipated. This was what we wanted... and more than we expected. The surrounding area wove a beautiful exotic quilt of peace and tranquility, offering a sense of safe solitude for us on our journey.

She spotted a small opening among the thickets, and ran to it. She wanted a natural stage. I followed reluctantly. Her spirits rose when she saw the clearing. She wanted to dance.

Ducking low beneath the bushes, we carefully stepped deep into the underbrush, navigating wet leaves, rocks and decaying wood residue.

The crackling of broken branches caused by our invasion, alerted a family of rabbits colored the same coat as the rustic ground matter. To the rabbit family this was home. They hopped along at the sound of our noise, moving so smoothly that we marveled at the path the mother rabbit took.

She adroitly darted atop the forest floor, as though she danced on a marble ballroom floor. Her five babies hopping in a straight line, followed close behind. They were like a small dance troupe, moving to unheard music on a stage, to the rhythms of the lead dancer.

Soon, we came upon the clearing Stela sensed was there. Here the grass was shorter, green, and wet, surrounded by lithely bending trees. In some spots, the grass was new and straight in its presentation. In other spots, it was tall and leaning... favoring the easterly winds.

Some of the grass bore burnt golden tips, the result of too much sun. In other places the grass was darkened by decay and the absence of sunlight. It looked like a multi-colored stage, in an outdoor theater.

In reality, it was a clearing surrounded by an audience of tall people, all dressed in barks, limbs, and fresh earth. The stage was covered a myriad of reds, yellows, greens and brown leaves.

Turning to me she said, "Please, take my picture" she said, with a smile. Then she handed me her camera. It was like she knew it was there all the while. Her big eyes, lit to "full" as she sprinted several feet away and awaited my shots.