

A Small Visitor

By Diego Tovar – Chevy Chase, MD

When I was a child, summer was the world. Heat wavered above the ground, and the lush woods behind our house felt vast enough to keep secrets. The trees rose like familiar giants, their branches stitching patterns of shade across the path. Every trail felt like a doorway to something I hadn't met yet.

One afternoon, the air turned so still that even the cicadas sounded unsure of themselves. I wandered into a clearing where an old oak had fallen seasons ago, its trunk now a low, rough bench. I climbed onto it and traced idle lines in the dust. My shirt clung to my back. A bead of sweat slid down my cheek and vanished into the soil, as if the ground had been waiting for it.

That was when the fly arrived.

It settled on the back of my hand, light and sure. Its calm weight kept me perfectly still. Up close, it was nothing like the nuisance people swatted away. Its body flashed with shifting greens and bronze, as if small lanterns burned beneath its shell. Its wings were clearer than glass. Even the fine hairs along its back caught the faintest strands of light.

The fly lifted one slender leg and drew it across another with the unhurried ease of a creature entirely at home. In its eyes, the clearing broke apart into countless tiny mosaics—the fallen oak, the soft green shimmer of leaves, and somewhere inside those fractured reflections, me, watching.

For a few breaths, the woods seemed to hold still with us. A lizard whispered through the brush. The branches above creaked tiredly. The world, usually restless, slipped into a softer rhythm, and I felt myself harmonize with it. I was no longer just watching but sharing a brief accord with a tiny neighbor.

I didn't understand it then. I only knew a fleeting, tender grace was unfolding, bright and fragile as a soap bubble in the sun—a moment I wasn't meant to look away from. My breathing eased. Curiosity widened, then settled into a feeling very close to awe.

When the fly finally lifted away, it rose as if carried on a thought, drifting into the sunlit air. My hand tingled where it had rested. I watched my palm all the way home, hoping another visitor might choose it.

After that day, the woods never felt quite the same. Every path seemed to listen back. Even now, I think about that brief meeting in the shade. It taught me what I couldn't yet name: that every small life carries its own quiet story, and that the world sometimes opens through the narrowest of doorways, if we are willing to stop and look.