

## **Spek and Stil Meet Gen**

*Told by John R. Edlund*

Spek and Stil wandered the world. They walked on sand, sometimes soft sand that was tiresome to walk through, and sometimes salty, crusty sand that went crunch, crunch, crunch as they walked.

Spek was looking for someone to talk to. His friend Stil listened to words and understood a little, but he was not a good conversation partner because he never spoke. Stil was looking for objects to ponder. He had experienced the sun, the sky, a hill, some stones, and lots of sand. Was there more to the world?

After walking a long while Spek saw a patch of green on the horizon, some rare color in an almost colorless universe. "Do you see it, Stil?" asked Spek, pointing with his finger. Stil stopped his reflective pondering and gazed at the green spot. His face, unexpressive for the most part, showed a flicker of interest.

### **The Grove**

The friends soon came to a grove of willows with drooping branches and leaves. The wind rustled through trees, making sounds like laughter and conversation. A pool of water glittered at the center of the grove. Stil walked directly into the shallows and stood with his arms outstretched, feet in the water and his face turned to the sky, pondering the in-between, wet and dry, water and air, earth and sky, in a pose of blissful contemplation. Spek knew that Stil would stay like that for a long while. With a sigh, he sat down to wait.

Screened by trees, Gen observed the intruders.

Spek began to write in the sand. He wrote about difference, water and land, Spek and Stil, talk and silence. He wrote about the real, the imagined, and the represented. He wrote about the in-between. As he finished his sentence, he noticed a footprint in the sand. It was smaller than his foot. It was smaller than Stil's. Then he saw a shadow fall over him. He turned and saw Gen. "Who are you?" he asked.

Gen scowled at him. "I am Gen," she said. "What are you doing here?"

### **The Lady of the Grove**

Spek thought that Gen was the most beautiful person he had ever seen, though it was true he had not seen many. And she knew words! She could talk! Spek introduced himself and started explaining writing, the importance of words, the names of the stones, the cactus fruit, everything he was thinking about. His heart was singing too much to register her displeasure. And he recited a poem about Gen:

Black hair and brown skin  
Water and trees in green eyes  
Lady of the grove

Gen scowled again. "No, I meant why did you enter without permission? You are trespassers." Spek pleaded ignorance. He said, "We are recently created. We did not know to ask." Spek felt strong feelings he had never felt. He wanted to embrace Gen, but her eyes said no.

"What are these marks you have made in the sand?"

"They are copies of words I thought in my head." Spek began reading them aloud. Gen said, "No, no. Don't say the spell. It is bad enough that you wrote it! What is your friend doing in the water?"

"I am not sure because he doesn't speak, but I think from his body language that he is thinking about being wet and dry at the same time. He is thinking about water and air and in-between. For him, all the universe is one, but there are wrinkles, divisions and differences that interest him."

"Can you make him stop?"

"I don't think so. He will stop when he is ready."

### **A New Creature**

A small green creature hopped out of the water. Gen was startled. "What is that?" she cried.

Spek looked carefully. "It is a new creature. Stil made it, I think. I did not know he could do that. It lives in water and on land. I will call it Frog, an in-between creature. It will be happy here. You will no longer be alone."

"I was quite happy being alone with my trees. Now you come into my home, put your feet in my water, talk about everything under the sky, make creatures, and write on my sand. Go away and take your creatures with you!"

"The creature cannot go. It was made to live here. It will take care of itself. But we will go, since we are unwelcome. I will leave now. Stil will leave when he is ready."

Out in the water, Stil lowered his arms.

### **Fals Brings Writing Materials**

Spek erased his writing. He turned to say goodbye, but was surprised to see that yet another person had arrived. It was Fals, master of copies, representations, and lies. It was Fals who taught Spek to write. Spek introduced Fals to Gen.

"Ah, so you have made another friend," said Fals, apparently jealous. Fals changed its shape, making itself look exactly like Gen. "Am I as beautiful?" it asked.

"You are beautiful, but you are a copy without Gen's soul. You are not the same," said Spek.

Fals was displeased. "My lady," Fals said, "I have brought paper and ink for Spek, who has learned to write. I meant to give it to him, but he is ungrateful and impolite. I will use it myself." Fals went to the

water's edge, and using the surface as a mirror, began to paint its face. It drew black shadows around its eyes and colored its lips red. "Now am I more beautiful?" it asked.

### **Gen Learns to Draw**

Before Spek could answer, Gen responded. She asked, "Your ink is amazing. Do you have more colors than black and red? Do you have green? Could I use your ink and paper to draw pictures?"

Fals was pleased. "Yes, my lady. Pictures and writing, ink and paper are good for both." Fals unrolled the paper and began teaching Gen to draw.

Stil began walking out of the water, covering his eyes to avoid looking at Fals. Spek met him and said, "Let's go. We are not welcome here."

Spek and Stil wandered on, across the endless sand. Spek was thinking about Gen. Stil was thinking about everything.