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## QUAREIA—THE INITIATE

Module IX—Working with the Spirits of  
the Land

Lesson 4: Ancestors

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# WELCOME

*Welcome to this lesson of the Quareia curriculum.*

*The Quareia takes a magical apprentice from the beginning of magic to the level of adeptship and beyond. The course has no superfluous text; there is no dressing, no padding—everything is in its place and everything within the course has a good reason to be there.*

*For more information and all course modules please visit*

[www.quareia.com](http://www.quareia.com)

*So remember—in order for this course to work, it is wise to work with the lessons in sequence. If you don't, it won't work.*

*Yours,*

*Josephine McCarthy*



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## QUAREIA—THE INITIATE

### Module IX—Working with the Spirits of the Land

#### Lesson 4: Ancestors

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You have already done some work with ancestors in the course so far, but before we get to this lesson's practical work I need to reiterate something you have probably already started thinking about, as you need to be keenly aware of it now, particularly in relation to land and faery work.

Working with ancestors can be very useful, but it is also a snake-pit of problems. Countries with populations not deeply rooted in the land or cut off from their ancestors are particularly vulnerable to classic mistakes when it comes to ancestor work. Ancestor work can encompass our own bloodline, ancestors buried in the land, and the much older primal ancestors, faery ancestors, and the ancestors of land beings that still reside in the earth.

The first problem for a magician is romanticism. When you are cut off from your own line and live far away from the land of your ancestors, like many Americans, then it is very easy to form a romantic view of your ancestors and their ancient land connections. In this modern time with such accessibility to information and communication, it is tempting to glamorise the ritual and nature rites of tribal people and attempt to copy them. We forget that these tribal people have been on the same land for hundreds or thousands of years, that they all operate within roughly the same paradigm, and that their way of living is intimately woven in with the fabric of a small land area.

As very few modern people have a comparable connection, attempting to ape the ancestor work of people who do is nearly always folly. As well as leading magicians up blind alleys, it also prevents them accessing what deeper, more truthful ancestral powers that they *can* tap into. I despair at the number of magicians with romantic ancestral altars, often dressed in the trappings a culture totally unconnected with their real ancestors.<sup>1</sup> Such work has no connection to any ancestral truth: it is about modern fashion, done in ignorance, and for all the wrong reasons.

The first issue is the ancestors themselves. When you do not know your own family roots it is easy to have a rose-tinted view of them. Some know their immediate ancestors and do not like them, so they reach deeper and further back for an ancestor to glamorise. For those who do know their ancestors it is still easy to gloss over inconvenient truths or simply not realise them. In magic you have to be acutely aware of the sensitivities of your ancestors, and you must respect their paradigm.

For example, on my father's side I know the names—and some of the actions—of my ancestors back to A.D. 900. Some were savage killers, some were what we today would call terrorists, some were Catholic priests, nuns, and bishops, some were artists and poets...they were a mixed bag of adventurers, thinkers, and mystics. One thing they all had common was their strong minds and personalities. That is a danger sign—one I did not realise for a long time.

The first mistake I made when I was young was not realising that connecting with certain ancestors would horrify them: they were strictly religious and would deem my life an abomination. We forget that people thought in very different ways in the past, and their rigidity of thinking clashes with our freethinking attitudes today. Putting a picture of your great aunt Betty, a devout Catholic, on an altar that is not *purely* Roman Catholic will trigger a hostile response.

In today's world we value life to the point of unbalance, and see each child as something special. In the past, children often did not make it to adulthood, and so they were viewed in a very different way: if they were a threat to the family in any way then the family would reject that child. The same mentality comes through with ancestral work. While we may be happy to have Aunt Betty in the house as a presence, she may not be similarly thrilled about being there...

This issue occurs the most where the ancestor is from a religion with a pattern of eternity in it, like Catholicism. They believed they needed to be buried and stay in their body to wait for the Day of Judgement. As a

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<sup>1</sup>Central American culture is the current trend.

result, quite a few dead Catholics are still present and connected to the land, waiting to be raised up to God. Along comes a descendant who is a magician, who is not religious as their ancestor was, and who is dabbling in all sorts of magical, mystical, and ritual things. They call the ancestor to them, make a picture or a doll for them, and keep using their name on an altar. There is nothing more horrifying for a devout Catholic soul than to have this happen to them: in their eyes it risks tainting their souls. So think about that.

The other issue that can happen—and which has happened to me—is when an ancestor who is still knocking around decides to relive their life through their magical descendant. In my family line there is a woman from the late nineteenth century who was a very strong personality and very mystical, an eccentric adventurer and a leader. Without realising it I followed in her footsteps around the USA, lived by her grave, and met the descendants of her best friends: I stepped into a pattern unknowingly. There was a strong magical reason for this which I am still digesting, but one of the major side-effects was her deciding that she wanted to move in with me and be ‘in’ me. She wanted me to finish something she started, and tried to force her way into my life pattern and make it hers by pulling me into her pattern.

I had to banish from my home all images of her, her writings, her biography, and stop any connection to her. Eventually she backed off and faded away, but until then she drained me terribly and seriously interfered with my work. She tried to block my writing every step of the way and get me to write her work instead.

The same thing happened with a magical ancestor, a past magician who was a teacher, who tried to muscle his way into my life to continue his work. He was duly dispatched.

Whenever you think of ancestors, think of the living people around you and out in the world. Think of their agendas, weaknesses, narrow-mindedness, sexism, racism, power games, and so forth. All that stuff comes with them and will influence you if you are not careful. Also think about the relatives you have who are still living and their attitudes towards you. Past ancestors are no different: they do not magically become wise, balanced, mature, and broad-thinking beings when they die. If they stay connected to this world then all that potential limitation and unbalanced thinking stays with them.

If you want to work with human ancestors then either work with them through the magical direction/gate in the north in the workspace, which will act as a filter, or go to them. Do not draw them to you. Working in

the magical workspace is the best way, as the north gate is a strong filter: anything incompatible with your pattern of magical work will be blocked from approaching the threshold. Ancestors whose consciousness is still around, and who are amenable to what you are doing, will be able to come to the threshold. If you go to them by visiting their grave and talking to them then you are less likely to have problems with them. Just don't take them home with you.

I do a lot of work with graves and visit those who have died and sleep in the land, usually as a way of paying my respects in the area where I live. I keep a focus of spirituality, but in a neutral way so as not to offend them. But inviting that power in your home is asking for trouble. They may draw on your life force, interfere with your life, and not understand what you are doing. The dead do not suddenly become wise; they are just dead as opposed to living.

Another problem I once had with ancestral spirits was when I hung up old photographs of my great grandparents and their generation. After a few weeks I kept having a feeling around the house of disapproval and mild hostility. I could not figure out where it was coming from, and the feeling wormed its way into my brain as I worked. It slowly built until I could no longer ignore it. I did readings to identify where it was coming from, and traced it back to the wall photos of the old generation. It was one of those slap-the-forehead moments.

Some of those ancestors were still very present in the land (buried Catholics) and were horrified at their great-great-nieces' behaviour. I talked to them briefly, took the pictures down, wrapped them up, and put them in the attic. The feeling subsided in the house and I could get back to work. I have had family photos out before and not had that problem, but one or more of the family members in that collection was still very much present, and was not amused.

Another problem I came across when helping another magician was where they have made figures of their ancestors and had an altar going for them. The ancestor was not present, but another being had stepped in and masqueraded as them. This caused all sorts of problems and the being had to be dispatched. So use your common sense and don't get all dewy-eyed and romantic over your ancestors.

What we will work with practically in this lesson is faery ancestral beings and the ancestors of the creatures and beings that are living around us now.

But for ancestral work in general, remember these points, and also

remember that such work is closely linked to faery, Underworld, and land beings. Ancestral work is never done in isolation; it touches on many areas of magic. You will learn a lot by experimenting and paying attention.

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### *Faery and human ancestors*

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A strange phenomenon pops up all over the world where faery beings and human ancestors have joined together in a strange but sometimes helpful way. The first thing to think about this combination is that the lifespans of a faery being and a human are two very different things.

This sort of union is rare today, but it was more common in the distant past, and it seems to happen like this:

A person or family befriend a faery being or collection of faery beings on the land where they live. They build a living, working relationship, and the family members make agreements or come to understandings with the faery beings. In return the beings watch over the family, advise them, work alongside them, and so forth. They basically look after each other and inform each other. Examples of such relationships are discussed in the writings of Apuleius, and in Plato where Socrates talks about his daemon.

When one generation of humans die and the next is born, the faery being does not notice the difference: to them it is the same people. They expect the new generation to be exactly the same as the old one: deals must be kept, work must continue. It is not that they expect the new generation to uphold the agreements of the previous generation, but rather that to the faery being *they are one and the same thing*. If the person dies without having descendants then the relationship goes no further.

As you can imagine this can make for some very complicated situations, particularly in modern times as we scatter all over the world and no longer carry on the trades or land management practices of our forebears. It has changed dramatically even in my generation: when I was a kid, relatives lived close by and people stayed in the same house for most of their lives. Places in nature special to one generation became special to the next. Farming was often a family concern, and the same family would have lived on one farm for generations. In the twentieth century that changed dramatically for many countries over the hundred year span.

As a result a lot of these faery and human unions were broken when the new human generation sought a better life in cities and towns. Now this raises issues that a magician needs to be aware of. Firstly, there are groups of faery beings on certain land areas who feel betrayed and abandoned. Secondly, and more importantly, the faery conception of time is vastly different to our own.

We think of time relative to our own sense of time: if someone has a short life then their day is still as long as the day of someone with a long lifespan. However beings with a vastly different lifespan, particularly non-corporeal beings, experience time very differently. A twenty-four hour measure for us is a split second to a faery being: *we move through time at different speeds.*

A person carries a lot of inner information within them, and their genetics carry a specific signature. When a faery being works alongside a human they recognise that genetic signature. Succeeding generations have the same overall genetic signature, and the faery being interacts with the holism of that genetic signature, not the individuals within that family. Your family is the 'being' that the faery interacts with, not the individual within the hive.

When you work as a magician with a faery being, and no long-term agreements have been made, then you can cross paths and then depart on your respective paths. They may hang around for a while, even a lifetime, but to them this is a mere passing of souls in the night. But if you make agreements or strong bonds then the faery being will expect them to be upheld within *their* lifespan, which effectively means you are speaking for everyone who descends from you who is still on that land.

It took me many years of working with these beings before I fully understood this, and it started to explain the various encounters that I had experienced. I would go to certain places that were connected to my family, but places I had never visited before, and I would be greeted like an old friend by various faery beings. Then I would be chastised for not keeping a bargain or for not doing something that they felt I should be doing.

This dynamic bears thinking about in terms of your own work with these beings: do not make commitments that your family will not be able or willing to uphold. Rather always work in the moment with these beings. Sometimes you will find yourself taking on a task that may last for years, or for however long you live on that land, but don't make vows that are impossible to upkeep. Never commit, but always help. The beings where I live, and with whom I work, have have repeatedly asked



me to commit to various things, and I have always had to turn them down as I know that such work would die with me. I do not expect anything from them, and they do not expect anything from me, but within that I tend to them, and keep an eye on their area and the creatures around them, and in turn they watch over the land and my home.

When you come across these combination beings that are the result of faery and human connections—and you will—they will appear as faery beings with human features. Through working and living closely with humans they will have taken on a projection of human form, but at the same time they are also clearly faery. If they have connected closely with a human genetic line then they will take on features that are part of that human line, i.e. hair colour, skin colour, and so forth. They will also often project the image of the clothing that was taken on when the combination first started. This visual presentation helps to tell us when the connection was first made: it is common to see human/faery presentations in sixteenth or seventeenth century dress.

If you are working on or visiting an area that has had some form of human habitation then you will very likely come across these combination beings, who will appear in vision as ‘faery humans.’ This tells you that they have a good understanding of human abilities and weaknesses, and that they are used to human contact. They will see that you are not of the genetic line to which they connected, but their relationship with that genetic line will probably still influence how they react to you: they may project some of the personality of the family in that line as a way to communicate with you.

If you live on, or near, the countryside then probably at least one set of faery beings will have this connection. It is pointless going out to find them if you do not intend to work with them: tourism has no place in this work. But if you do live in such an area and wish to forge friendships with such beings then you can find them either by going out regularly on the land and sitting and being still, or tending the land and keeping an awareness of the possibility they are there. That will project an energy that says “hi.” Or you can go out on the land in vision, or do both, with the intention of finding these beings, making their acquaintance, and talking to them.

The reason for doing this is to learn what is needed of you, and to alert them to your being in the neighbourhood. If you have been working with the land features magically then they are probably already aware of you to some extent.

So what makes this relationship so different from other faery and land

beings?

Because they have been connected to a human line, they have a much better understanding of what humans can and cannot do, and they are far easier to communicate and work with. Because they already have a human connection, even if it is inactive, then they will probably not be hostile but will be willing to work with you. Their skills can be very useful to a magician, just as the skills of the magician can be very useful to them: faery beings can travel vast distances at speed, can see into things that you cannot, and can communicate with powers and beings that you are not even aware of. Their knowledge in such areas, areas we call magic, is far better than human magical knowledge.

In return the magician can make sound, which faery beings cannot: they love singing and music. You can pick up things that threaten the area like trash and contaminants, and you can move things from A to B, which faeries consider a wonderful skill. You can create food combinations like baking, clear things, and make signs and marks: think about what your physical body can do that a non-physical being cannot do.

But never fall under the spell of thinking that these beings think like you do and that they are benign; they are not. These beings can be tricksters and are easily enraged; yet if you are a 'good' person in their eyes then they will work very hard to help you. For example if you are looking for a lost child or pet and for some reason you cannot fly to overlook the search area or track the creature's energy signature, then if you are friends with these beings they will go look for you and come back to tell you.

A lot of old European faery tales have some remnants of knowledge of these beings embedded in them, and one way to learn about the faery beings of an area is to read its old stories. They also give you clues on how to behave with them.

If we stretch back further in time then we come to layer of these relationships where an ancient human ancestral line and a group of faery beings have become one being. These are essentially faery beings that have absorbed the ancient human line and are therefore ancestors to both humans and faeries. These can be powerful beings to connect with to learn the lost knowledge of land powers and land features, and they are also great magical teachers. In areas where these beings are still active there are often folk tales of faery kings and queens in the land, or daemons in classical texts. Sometimes these are deities, and sometimes they are these ancestral unions. If in the tale they seem connected to a particular area, village, or family, then you are looking at one of these

combos. Sometimes they take a shine to an individual, such as the tale of Socrates and his daemon. Every land has them in some form or other, and the best way to learn about them is to go and meet them yourself.

When you do meet them, keep the intention that you wish to serve nature as a magician, be it the land, the creatures, the weather—whatever area you feel is most important to you. In the practical exercise I will outline two methods: one that takes you to find the ancestor on the land where you live, and the other one can be used to see if one of these beings is connected to your own bloodline.

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### *Meeting the ancient faery ancestor*

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Every land area will have one of these unless you live in a place that that has had no human habitation at all until the hundred or so years—and that includes different forms of humanity such as Neanderthal. So they are virtually everywhere. If you live in a heavily built-up city area, particularly a city that has been in place for hundreds of years, then you will have to reach deeper into the earth to find them, but they will still be there.

Bear in mind that the human side of this ancestor will be very different from you, so do not take anything for granted. Do not assess a situation within the meeting from your own understanding of life; it is better to remember that the consciousness you talk to will have a very different view on life from yours, more so than other old ancestors you have reached.

Once you have met this being, some magicians will never work with them again, as the reason for reaching and working with this being is very much about the land, the creatures, the land beings, and so forth. So if you choose not to specialise or work in nature areas as a magician then there will be no real need to connect with them again. However, reaching one of them is a good exercise for you, and will inform you. If you feel that as an adept part or all your work will be about working closely with the land then this contact will inform you and will likely work with you in the future.

A good reason to work with this being is that is a close-knit union between faery and human, the closest you can find. By talking with this being you will get the deep understanding from the faery being along with the human's communication skills. If there is a major issue with the

land, which most lands have these days, particularly in terms of climate and weather, and you wish, or have been called, to work on it magically, then this is where to start. They will either tell you what to do, point the way, give clues, or will embed the information within you.

As a quick example, the current weather we are having in Southwest England (December 2015) is very unusual for this time of year. It is warm, almost summer warm, and there has been no frost yet, which is a problem for plants and creatures that cycle around the cold in winter. So I asked the deepest ancestor in the land here if I needed to do anything to catalyse a shift. The answer came back that there was a conversation of heat going on, between the land and the southern seas, and not to interfere with it: it is doing something that the land needs (not the humans). The way I was shown it was as a good fire and bad fire in a struggle, and by not interfering the good fire will be able to do its job.

So let us get to work and meet this being. This work is best done outside if at all possible, in the countryside, by a lake, or even in a city park. If none of these are possible then work from your workspace. Pick a time in the day when you will not be disturbed.

Start by walking out in the inner landscape with the intention of meeting this being. Walk until you reach a small hill, a cave entrance, a large crack in rocks, or a very old tree in the Inner Landscape: you are seeking an entrance down to the shallows of the Underworld, but not too far down. As you walk you will feel beings around you watching you. When you find a land feature that is a possible Underworld entrance, before you go in, stop and be still. You are waiting for someone.

Wait until a powerful-looking woman appears: she will seem to be human and may be dressed in an old-fashioned coat and hat, and she will stand and look at you as if to see what you are doing. When you look at her, you will see her eyes filled with energy and strength, and your body may react to her: this is the Faery Queen, a female power from the land who is also closely connected to humans. She will look deeper and deeper in your eyes until she sees all that she needs to see.

Bow to her. She may ask you for a line from a poem or a song. Whatever comes into your head, sing it or recite it: this power loves sound that is a conversion of the thoughts and emotions of humans, like poetry, songs, and so forth.

She may move forward and touch your hands lightly: she is reading you. When she is happy with what she sees she will point the way to where this ancestor is resting. Bow again to her and thank her, then

follow her directions. If she gives you advice then take careful note of it. If she touches you and your emotions change then she is also advising you, but through your emotions: if you suddenly feel anxious then she is warning you of the power of the ancient ancestor; if you feel overjoyed then she is telling you that the ancestor will be glad to see you.

Follow her directions and climb down into the land until you reach a small cave or hollow. Hum or sing as you go until you reach an area where there are strange beings lying around sleeping. As you peer through the darkness you will see, in the far corner, a man or woman sitting on a stone throne, very similar to the Goddess in the Cave that you met early in your apprentice work: they operate on similar power levels.

When you get to the ancestor he or she may be dozing: not quite asleep and not quite awake. This tells you, in terms of visionary clues, that this person is very old and has been here for a long time without human interaction. Very gently sit by the ancestor and place a hand on theirs. The ancestor will wake up, and may be a bit shocked to see you there.

The other faery beings sleeping in the cave will also start to wake up and may gather around. Tell the ancestor and the faery beings who you are, where your family comes from, and what you do. Then tell them about your magical learning and the things you have learned so far. All this gives the beings the information they need to understand why you are there and what use you could be, as well as your potential needs.

Ask them about themselves and the land you live on. Show them in your mind where you live, and the state of nature around your living space. Ask them about the ancestor sitting next to you, and watch as the ancestor watches and listens to your conversation. Ask them about what it was like before the cities came, and ask them how can you live as a better human being on the land.

Now it is time to talk to the ancestor. Talk with them, offer them a gift from your pocket, listen to what they have to say, observe what they do and how they move, and observe your emotions carefully: these ancestors often communicate not with words but with sounds, pictures, and emotions they project in your mind. Stay as long as you need to and let the conversation go wherever it needs to. They may ask you to do things while you are there, or they may do things to you.

When you are ready to come out, simply retrace your steps. If the ancestor gives you a gift for the lady/Faery Queen that you met then do

not look at it, do not feel into it, and make sure that no matter what it is you give it to her. Once you have given her the gift then if she is willing you can talk to her too. She is a real force to be reckoned with in nature, and her feminine appearance hides a wide-ranging power on the land.

When you come out of vision, if you are still alone and outside, then sing a short song to the wind. Remember, these land features work a lot through vibration, and translating that vibration into lyrical sound is a major gift that humans have, and one that the land, water, and wind truly appreciate. The faery beings also like it, and whenever in doubt with faery beings or land beings, a good icebreaker is song. For those of you who feel more of a pull to formal ritual and temple magic, think about this predilection the land has with song in terms of creation powers/vessels, utterances, and the power of the word. It is simply the other side of the power.

Write down everything you remember from the encounters. With faery work this is particularly important, as small but pertinent details will vanish from your mind very quickly. Type up your notes and take time to go over them a few times, remembering and letting certain things come to understanding in your mind.

If you are planning to work with nature quite a bit as an adept then this vision and visionary work that you experiment with will expand and branch off from this work: it will be a great help to you. The contact is a solid, rooted one and stable enough for you to work a lot with.

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### *Working with the Blood Ancestor*

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This working is one of the many different ways to reach back through your own blood to find a blood ancestor that you can work with, particularly one with faery/land connections. Remember that before Christianity, and even during the early Christian phase of development, such a union was more commonplace, so sometimes you have to stretch far back depending on your own racial and family lines.

For this working, pull out the card 'Blood Ancestor' from the Quareia Magician's Deck and put it on the central altar before the candle. Set up your work room and open the gates. Sit before the central altar, still yourself, and when you are ready close your eyes for vision work.

In your mind see the altar with the card on it. Look at the card and see the person sleeping on the stone, under the stars, with rivers of blood flowing from them: feel yourself stepping into that landscape. Look up and see the stars, look in the face of the sleeping figure, and see your own features on their face. Prick your finger and let blood drop onto the stone: place your hand on the stone they are lying on, and step into the river of blood.

Walk in the blood river away from the body. Follow the river, walking in the blood up to your ankles, and look at the land around you as you walk. The further you follow the river, the more the land changes and the narrower the river becomes.

Eventually the river becomes a small stream, then a trail of blood, and eventually blood drops. Somewhere along that passage you will spot someone sleeping at the side of the blood river, someone partially hidden by bushes and who may have creatures sitting around them. When you spot this person climb out of the blood river and go sit by them. If they do not wake then see if any of the creatures or beings around them will communicate with you. If the ancestor awakens to your touch then you can converse with them.

What you are seeking is knowledge in your own bloodline of relationships with creatures, faery beings, or the land. It may or may not be within this ancestor: the only way to find out is to search and then communicate whoever shows up at the side of this river. Working with the card image and walking through the blood triggers a deep connection within you that stretches very far back in time. Someone in that line probably has the land/being connection you are looking for.

When you have finished communing with them walk back retracing your steps. When you reach the ancestor on the stone, climb up onto the stone and merge with them. Lie there on the stone and look at the stars. Take your time: lie in silence and let the deep knowledge within your line surface in your mind.

When you are ready step off of the stone and go back to your work room. Settle back in your body and when you are ready open your eyes and write down everything you can remember. Type up a summary later.

If you are interested then here is a modern faery story with a lot of magical faery details in it. It may inform you a bit more as to what modern city contact with faeries can be like, how it works, and so forth. I wrote it many years ago, and it is a combination of fiction and personal experience, with the experiences of two other magicians added in to

make it a story. This is an abridged version.

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## *Faeries in Manhattan*

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### I

West 19th Street shivered in a frosty blast of cold air that sneaked through peoples' jackets and nipped their ears. Peter hurried down the street and stood on the corner of 7th Ave, waiting for the traffic signal. His feet kicked against each other in an effort to try and encourage his circulation not to come to a total full stop.

He looked in astonishment as people queued to get into the dance theater on the street corner. Everyone was huddled together as close as manners would permit in an attempt to escape the vicious cold wind.

The green light finally came and Peter shuffled across 7th Ave and down the last few feet to his home. His hand searched all around the corners of his pockets, even though he knew he had forgotten his key. Silent prayers bounced around Peter's head all the way to the front door in futile hope that Chris, his partner, had not popped out for a minute, as was his habit.

He leaned his head against the door with his finger on the bell. No one came. He rested his head on the door not knowing what to do. Maybe Chris has just gone out for a couple of minutes, thought Peter. He put down his briefcase and sat on it.

He sat looking up and down the street. It was empty. He put his nose into his gloved hands and breathed heavily in an attempt to warm his face up. It was then that something moved out of the corner of his eye. It was not small: a strange silent shadow moving quickly past him. He looked around but there was nothing there.

Almost immediately, the frost bit his nose. He buried his face back into his gloves, when he faintly heard someone call his name. He looked up, thankful and expecting to see Chris, but no one was there. His eyes scanned the street in both directions. Nothing. He began to worry that the cold was beginning to affect his mind when Chris strode around the corner waving to him. Peter stood up and looked at the tall man



approaching him. He knew better than to tell Chris that he was going nuts. Chris worried about everything.

Later that night, as Peter wrapped himself in the eiderdown, he thought he saw something move across the bedroom. A shadow flitted by and Peter sat up in bed, trying to see what was happening. Chris groaned against the cold. The eiderdown moved with Peter as he sat up, creating a cold inrush that caught Chris, and awoke him.

“Sorry, I thought I saw something move, like a fast shadow.”

Peter lay back, looking at the ceiling. Maybe he was going nuts.

“This is Manhattan. It’s full of fast shadows, now get to sleep before I put a pillow over your head.”

Peter smiled into the darkness and turned over. Sleep pulled him quickly and before long he was snoring in chorus with Chris. He sank deeper and deeper into the blackness until someone whispered in his ear.

“Would you play for us Peter? Play so that we may dance.”

Peter dreamed he was playing his harp and that creatures were sneaking out of all the nooks and crannies of the city to come listen to his beautiful music. The dream became stronger and stronger as the faery beings danced around him while he played.

They were of so many different shapes and sizes. Some were dressed in eighteenth century dress; some were clothed in bark and feathers. Others were part animal, part human looking. One of the biggest, which looked like a large bear, came and sat beside Peter as he played. The faery being hummed along with the tune and began to cry. All the other faery beings stopped dancing and began to cry too. Soon, they were all weeping and Peter became very distressed.

“Why are you crying? What is wrong? Have I hurt you in some way?”

Peter was distraught that he may have done something to hurt these beautiful creatures.

A faery woman, clothed in the dress of a settler and sporting bright red hair to her knees, came and sat beside Peter and put her arms around him.

“No, knight of the music, you have but given us memories of a better time and place. See, watch, listen.”

The woman placed her hands over Peter's eyes and she closed her own eyes. She started to tell him a story and Peter watched as he listened.

Peter began to see a scene unfold before him: Ocean mist clung to his face as he looked out to sea. Trees bent in the sunshine and the sand moved, shifting beneath his feet as the tide clung to the shoreline. Tall ships dipped as the waves welcomed the strange visitors. Small white faces peered over the shipside while some waved banners and ribbons.

The land around Peter was forest. Deep, thick, sensuous forest that smelled of fresh earth and dew. Hiding in the forest were many faery beings clothed in twigs, bark, and leaves. They looked at the ships with astonishment and wonder.

In among the people on the ship were faery beings darting from place to place, trying to see the approaching land. They were dressed as the humans were, but were shaped differently. Some were tall and thin, some were little and fat. Some glowed like the sun and some were chaotic like the wind. Others had the ocean in their eyes and some brayed like a donkey.

The faeries of the forest were excited. One by one they carefully crept forward out of the trees once they were sure that the humans could not see them. They waved to the faeries on board the great ship, and the strange faeries waved back.

That evening, deep in the forest, the faeries held a gathering, making friends and exchanging gifts. They danced through the night and slept through the day, warmed by the sun and protected by the creatures of the forest.

The faeries of the forest were grateful to the humans for bringing these new friends. So they helped the humans learn about the seasons, the forest, the trees, and the powers of the land. But the people were wicked and selfish. They stole more and more of the forest and did not heed the signs that nature sent as a warning of impending disaster.

They built and built until the forest was no more. The faeries were becoming homeless. They were forced to reside with the faeries of the Underworld, who were good friends. But the Faeries of the forest missed the green and the dew.

Eventually the forest vanished under concrete and the Underworld was damaged by poisons and the strange powers that the humans used for energy. The faeries wandered the streets of the city, tending to any remaining trees and bits of grass that they could find. But the faeries

were poor and in bad health.

The humans seemed to have put aside a little nature for the faeries, for in the city was a large park with water. But the humans had poisoned it by spraying things on the plants and adding death to the soil. The faeries could not bear to be there.

Peter thought his heart would break. He loved the city, but he had never realized before what a terrible price others had to pay for that. He wanted to do something, anything, no matter how small, to redress the balance. He asked the woman if there was anything that he could do.

“Yes,” she said and cupped her hands around his face. “Weep for us. Weep all you can and gather your tears in a chalice. Mix your tears with spring water and pour it into the cracks of the pavement. Water the land with your tears and you will give strength to the earth to fight back.”

Peter began to weep. He wept as though his heart would break. Every pain he had ever suffered both physically and emotionally flowed through him as he wept. Something shook him. Something called his name. Peter opened his eyes and realized he had been dreaming. Chris was shaking him and calling to him to wake up. Peter sat up in bed and looked around.

On his mantle shelf was a glass chalice that Chris had bought him when they first met. Peter sprang out of bed, still weeping and grabbed the chalice. Chris sat up in bed in confusion asking him what on earth he was doing. Peter wiped the dust from the chalice and held it to his face. His tears dripped into the chalice and Peter wept.

Chris got out of bed and gently placed his hand on Peter's shoulder, looking at him in sorrow. Peter tried hard to catch each tear as it tumbled out of his heart. He could not stop crying. He tried to explain what was happening but it just sounded weirder and weirder. So he became silent. Chris padded out of the room and into the kitchen to put the kettle on.

A few moments later, Peter came into the kitchen. He had stopped crying and was now hunting through all the cupboards while holding the chalice.

“Peter, what are you doing? It's three in the morning, and I'm freezing. What are you looking for?”

Chris was hopping from foot to foot. The heating had failed again and his feet were like ice.

“I’m looking for spring water.”

Peter did not look around at Chris as he spoke, his head buried in a cupboard.

“Dare I ask why you bounce out of bed, cry into a cup, and then tear the place apart in the freezing cold at three in the morning looking for spring water? Or should I just go back to bed and pretend none of this happened? And, by the way, there is a bottle of Evian on top of the fridge.”

Chris stepped to one side as Peter dived for the water. He poured some into the chalice where he had wept and mixed the water with his tears. He turned to look at Chris and smiled.

“Just don’t ask, really, you don’t want to know.”

Chris held his hands up in defeat and turned to go back to bed. Peter opened the coat cupboard and took out his boots and coat. He pulled a pair of jeans out of the dryer and struggled into them while trying to find a sweater.

“Peter, what, where are you going, what are you doing? Please, for God’s sake.”

Chris was becoming alarmed. His partner was often strange: a visionary, a poet. But going out at three in the morning in this cold was just plain nuts. Peter put his arms on Chris’s shoulders and looked straight into his eyes.

“There is something weird that I have to do. It’s crazy, and I don’t know why I’m doing it, but I am, so go to bed, and I will be back in a few minutes. Please, just let me do this, then I can get a good night’s sleep.”

Chris nodded and went back to bed. Peter, wrapped against the cold and holding onto the chalice, quietly crept out into the night and the cold. He walked down the street, looking at the pavement. He knew what he had to do. He poured his tears and the spring water into the cracks of the sidewalk up and down his street, a precious drop at a time. When the chalice was empty he looked up and down the street before scurrying back to his warm bed.

He did not see Chris holding back the blind and watching him. He also did not see the bag lady hidden in the shadows as she smiled and nodded to him. She stood, her coat half open, oblivious to the cold as her eyes followed Peter’s every move. She whispered something on the wind

as he turned his back to her and climbed the steps to his apartment.

## II

Peter was deep in thought as he stepped out onto the cold street that early spring morning, and had walked a few yards before his thoughts faded and his eyes focused on the sidewalk. Usually it was covered with litter and feet, but no nature. This morning, little shoots of green poked out of the cracks in the concrete stretching towards the spring sun.

Peter looked around to see if anyone was watching. He squatted on the sidewalk, looking at the green close up. There it was, jutting out of the concrete sidewalk, in the middle of Manhattan: a green army standing to attention in its infancy.

Nobody seemed to notice. Nobody pointed and looked at the little miracles being birthed in their midst. Everyone ignored them except Peter. He wanted to scream at people not to stand on them, not to destroy them. But he did not want to be hauled off for therapy, the ultimate torture. So he just stood and looked in astonishment.

The image stayed with him all through the working day and by that evening he knew what he wanted to do. He dashed home, ignoring the fact that it was his turn to make dinner. He pulled out his harp and opened the window wide, letting the spring enter in all its cold glory. His fingers wove music that filtered out into the street below as he played to the green shoots that had dared to surface in the cold.

He wanted them to experience music before they died in the frost and songs surfaced in his thoughts as he played at random to the little miracles. He played and played until his fingers stiffened and his teeth began to chatter.

That night, as he drifted into sleep, he heard someone call his name. The voice was unearthly and he knew they had returned to him. As he fell deeper into sleep, the call became louder. He found himself on a grassy plain by a tall standing stone. He sat down with his back to the stone and drank in the beauty of the landscape. The green grass lit the land rather than a sun or moon. Trees grew down from the sky, their branches lightly touching the grass below them and their roots dug into the dark sky above. Peter could hear people moving all around him, but he could not see them. He called out, but no one answered.

Something brushed against him and he spun around, but saw nothing. The frustration built within him as he called and called for someone to

appear.

*You have to find us by day, handsome bard, look for us by day...*

The words swirled around him as he stood up, leaning his forehead on the stone.

“But how? But how?”

He shouted out across the empty landscape that he knew was full of faeries. Something tapped his shoulder and his eyes sprang awake. Chris was laid on his side with his head propped on his arm.

“You were shouting in your sleep. Are you feeling OK these days? Want to talk about it?”

Peter looked at Chris’s concerned face for a moment and then shook his head.

“No, its ok. Its nothing, just the pasta.”

Chris frowned. " What do you mean the pasta?"

Then Chris’s face lightened in to a smile.

“Are you trying to tell me that my cooking is driving you nuts?”

He threw his pillow at Peter who dived under the eiderdown while trying not to laugh so loudly.

### **III Four months later**

Peter sat on the steps of his apartment looking at the weeds growing out of the cracks in the sidewalk. He was smiling widely as he held his newspaper. On the back page, in the local news, was a report about city cutbacks and the sidewalk cleanup being cut back. It meant that no more chemicals would be sprayed across the sidewalk to kill the weeds.

An old woman shuffled down the street, pausing at every trash can so that she could look through them for titbits. Peter did not notice her at first until she was almost at his feet. He did not look up. The street people frightened him, not in a danger sense, but it was just something that he did not understand. He felt sorry for them but he was not sure how he should react to them.

She looked up at him and caught his eye. He was trapped. He smiled and looked away.

“You miss them, don’t you?” she rasped. “Once they touch you, that is it. You can spend the rest of your life searching for them.”

She shuffled on, not pausing for a response or a reaction. Peter thought for a moment and then realized that she was talking about the faeries. She must have been, what else would fit with such a comment?

He looked back down the street in the direction she had gone. He wanted to catch her and ask her how she knew and what did she mean. But the street was empty. There was nowhere else for her to go and yet, she was not there.

He ran to the end of the street and he breathed out in relief when he saw her waiting at the end of the next street, looking away from him. He ran towards her and she vanished around a second corner without looking back and he followed. She led him this way and that until he finally found himself in Union Square.

He stood on the corner and looked in all directions. He spotted her in the distance, standing outside a Buddhist restaurant. Once she saw him, she turned and vanished into the restaurant and Peter quickly followed. Now he was certain that she knew he was following her.

He got to the restaurant and climbed the stairs into the main part of the building. A quiet and peace descended upon him as he entered and he began to feel rather foolish. This was not the sort of place that a bag lady would enter, maybe he had been mistaken. He looked into every corner until it occurred that she may have sneaked into the restrooms. A waiter stood and looked at Peter as he stared at the ladies restroom.

“Would you like a table, sir?” The man asked politely.

Peter looked around him. There was a table that gave him a view of the bathrooms and the entrance. He went and sat at the table and the waiter gave him a menu. Peter did not know what to do. He felt embarrassed and realized he would have to order something. He asked for tea and a simple dish before settling with his eyes fixed on the restroom door. No one came in or out.

At first he did not see the old man sitting at the next table. The man had long white hair and a thick beard that he constantly pulled. The man watched Peter with interest as Peter watched the door. Finally, the man came over to Peter’s table and sat aside him.

“Young man, there is no one in there, I can vouch for that. I have been here for fifteen minutes and no woman has been in or out.”

Peter looked at the man and realized he had made a fool of himself by staring at the toilet door.

“Are you sure? I mean, did you see an old lady, a street lady, go in there, a woman with a red scarf on her head and red gloves?”

The man pulled on his beard and smiled.

“Aha, that is why you will wait a long time. She will not come out of there because she is not in there. Funny how she led you here.”

The man’s voice was strange, with a foreign lilt to it.

Peter frowned. “How do you know? Do you know that woman? Who is she?”

The man laughed and rubbed his hands together. “I cannot tell you here, but I can tell you that you will want to hear what I have to say. Have you had strange dreams in the past few months? Hmm, thought so. Eat up, let me finish my soup, and then you can come with me.”

The old man returned to his seat, leaving Peter to stare in confusion at the man. After they had both finished their meals, the old man stood up and put his coat on. Peter had been debating whether he should go with the old man or not. There were some strange people in the city and it would be just his luck to get picked up by a pervert or a maniac.

But there was something good about the old man’s face, and he was very frail. Peter could snap him in two with his fingers if he wanted to. That finally clinched the decision for him. He was in no real danger.

Peter got up and left, walking as slow as he could so as not to hurry the old man who obviously found walking a problem. They moved at a snail’s pace to a door around the corner. It did not look like a house or an apartment, but the service door of a shop or warehouse. The old man fumbled with his keys and finally got the door open.

Before them was a steep stairway that they climbed slowly, floor after floor, until Peter’s legs grew tired. He marvelled at the old man who slogged away without complaint, climbing up what must have felt like a mountain. They emerged in a small apartment that looked as though it had been fashioned out of offices. It was full of books and clocks.

Everywhere that Peter looked there were books, dust, and clocks. A loud noise came from the corner, which made Peter jump.

“Yes, yes, I’m back with your treats. Not so loud, you scare the



natives.”

The old man’s voice seemed aimed at the noise, which Peter was trying to see the source of. In the corner, perched on a bookcase, was a large dark crow half hidden in the shadows.

“Peter, this is A.E., A.E., meet Peter.”

The bird said hello and Peter nearly fell over in shock.

The old man laughed and the bird instantly imitated his laugh.

“I found him on the streets years ago, with wire around his leg and his wing half torn off. He has healed well, but he will never fly, so we two old farts live together. He loves his treats from the restaurant.”

The old man unwrapped two steamed dumplings, which he put up on the bookcase. A.E. tucked into them with gusto, making lots of kissing and sucking noises as he lost himself in an orgy of Zen food.

Peter browsed the bookshelves, which were stuffed with every imaginable subject that would delight an inquiring mind. His fingers stopped at an old leatherbound volume on Faeries. He opened the book and wandered through the text. The hairs on the back of his head pricked when he came to a passage marked ‘Faery Queen.’ He read the text under his breath, as though his lips must echo the words that rolled around his brain.

And though she be terrible, with her staring eyes and sharp teeth, and though she be fearful in her anger, the faery folk do delight when her heart is stolen. For then, and only then doest she wear the clothing of a human form. But take heed, for when her love is a burning passion that draws man into the flame, then she does wear the look of an old and bended woman. And if the young man looks into her eyes and does recognize her, he shall fall with her to faery land, never to be seen again. There he will reside in the land of richness and plenty.

Peter thought of the bag lady and then shook the silly thought out of his head. He put the book down and browsed some more. The old man watched him like a hawk, and A.E. watched him like a man.

“So you be having some interest in the wee folk then, young man?”

The old man's voice sang in the strange accent and A.E. mimicked his sentence.

Peter was going to deny such a thought, but then he realized that this man knew something and might help him. After much soul-searching, Peter sat down, drew the chair near to the old man, and started, slowly, to tell him the story that began that cold spring night last march.

A.E. inched closer to listen, making crunchy noises with his beak and fluffing his feathers every so often. At the end of the story, which came to a close at the Buddhist restaurant, Peter sat back waiting for a comment from the old man. He realized at that point that he did not even know the name of the old man, let alone anything about him. And yet here he was, spilling out his secrets to him.

A.E. leaned back at the end of the story and shook out his tail. He looked straight at Peter and decided to hop down to be at his side. Once he was a feather's breath away from Peter's hand, A.E. put his head down and made little squeaky noises.

"I think he wants you to scratch his head. He must have liked the story, he usually bites anyone who ventures up into my castle."

Moving slowly, so as not to frighten the bird, Peter started to scratch the bird's head. A.E. closed his eyes and groaned with pleasure. He turned his head this way and that so that Peter could scratch just the right places. The old man started to laugh.

"You are definitely a hit, I think he is in love with you".

When Peter eventually withdrew his hands, A.E. fluffed himself up and sat in a contented heaven. The old man leaned forward to Peter and looked straight into his eyes.

"So I gather you want to know how to get into the faery realm then, without going to sleep?"

Peter became excited. He had thought that any mention of the faery realm would end up with him classified as a madman. He nodded to the old man and then looked around him.

"Don't we have to go and find a forest or something?" said Peter.

The man looked at Peter blankly for a second and then started to laugh.

"Oh God's no, young lad. The faery realm is here, it always has been,

always will be. The city is just a temporary scum on the surface of the land. Civilizations come and go, the faeries just wait for all the concrete to vanish back into the forest. It always happens, you mark my saying.

“These days, you get into the faery realm through vision, through the imagination. Your mind is like a car that carries you there. The pictures you see are from the imagination, but what you experience is real. The beings are real and are there whether you exist or not. Your mind just gives you a window through which you can talk to them. That is why they made contact with you through your sleep. But when you go in vision, it is always good to have someone from the animal world to go with you.

“That is why A.E. hangs out with me. He makes sure I don’t end up in outer Bolivia or somewhere. So are you ready, young man? If you are, close your eyes and listen to my voice.”

Peter sat back and got himself comfortable, but not too comfortable. He did not want to fall asleep. He felt A.E. edge his way closer to the chair and the power of the bird strengthened to Peter now that he had his eyes shut.

The old man’s voice was like listening to beautiful, ancient music from a distant land. Peter tried to concentrate on the voice and not allow his thoughts to invade. He found himself falling down through the building, down through the concrete, the sewers, then the rock, and the earth.

Down and down they fell and Peter was aware of A.E. flying alongside him. As they passed through the rock and earth, Peter felt as if he was being filtered and cleansed. Old stuff, emotions, poisons, and worries fell away from him as he passed through the solid rock, leaving him feeling clear and light.

He landed on the top of something and he felt around to try and find out what it was. After stroking the surface, he realized it was bark. Confusion set in until he realized that he was climbing down the inside of an inverted tree.

He climbed and climbed down until he arrived at branches. Jumping out of the branches, he landed heavily on grass. A.E. plopped down behind him and waddled to Peter. Peter sensed the old man land beside him and almost immediately he felt surrounded by many beings.

He remembered the landscape from his dreams; the grass that lit the world and the upside down trees. The old man set off walking across the landscape and Peter ran to keep up. A.E. gave up trying to walk and flew

onto Peter's shoulder, playfully pulling on Peter's ear as they went.

Peter could hear many whispers around him, but he could see nothing. Not until they came to a field full of beautiful red poppies. He wanted to lie down among them: the urge was almost painful. Peter could not resist it and A.E. jumped off his shoulder, landing among the flowers as Peter fell to his knees.

He lay down, drinking in the pleasure of the flowers as they wrapped him in a sheet of happiness and tranquillity. Whispers echoed around him and he started to see shadows out of the corner of his eyes. Something moved behind him and he rolled over lazily to see what it was. He lay on his side, staring, with his mouth open.

"Shut your mouth," called out A.E. as Peter gazed upon the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. If he was ever going to fall for a woman, it would be this one.

Her eyes fixed on him and he became uncomfortable. Her eyes bored into him, searching his soul, and Peter became frightened. Her eyes ripped him apart, exposing all of his deeds for her to see. Peter cried out in fear and terror. Then he saw a vision of himself crying into the chalice and his fear subsided.

*I am the Woman of the Earth and these are my people. When they thirsted, you gave them to drink. When there was danger, you sat and kept vigil. When my children sprouted, you sang them lullabies. Peter the Bard, I give you three wishes, and guard them well.*

"I wish I could see the faeries."

It blurted out before he could stop himself, and the old man groaned behind him. Peter turned around to find out what he had done wrong. The old man told him in no uncertain tones.

"Fool. You have just wasted one wish. You will be able to see them anyway, they were just hiding. They wanted to see that you had a good heart before they came out of hiding."

Almost immediately hundreds and hundreds of beings of all shapes and sizes surrounded him. Some looked human, some looked like animal, some looked like flowers and trees. Some looked like things he had never seen before.

They all circled him and stared before laughing and clapping. Peter was not sure how to react. He did not know what they were laughing at.

A.E. hopped over to him and looked up at him.

“They are laughing and clapping because they have just recognized you as the man who played the harp. They will want you to play for them after the meal. Will you do that?”

Peter looked at A.E. in astonishment. He was not sure what excited him most, a conversing crow or a host of faery fans.

They all tried to grab him by the sleeve and together they led him across the grass and into a forest. They danced through the trees and in and out of the bushes, coaxing him ever deeper into the woods.

They reached a clearing where animals were seated around the periphery as if waiting for a show to start. The faery beings bounced in, holding large tureens of food that seemed to have materialized from thin air. The lids of the tureens were taken off with great relish and the platters placed before the animals for approval.

The platters were piled high with fruit, berries, leaves of all different colors, apple pies, breads, and a large dish of red juice. One of the faery beings offered Peter a cup and pointed to the juice. He nodded politely and scooped his cup into the juice. The faeries all slowed down to watch and see if he would drink it. Their lips smacked and their tongues wiggled as they waited with baited breath until the cup had reached Peter's lips.

The first sip tasted like wine. The second taste was like strawberries, the third was like dewdrops and the fourth was of honey. He smiled and tipped the cup back, drinking deeply with his eyes shut in pleasure. A.E. looked away and groaned.

The old man puffed into the circle, coming in last just in time to see Peter drink of the faery juice. He clapped his hands to his forehead and sighed.

“Oh, by the way, don't eat or drink in the faery realm.”

The old man's feeble voice did not reach Peter, who was rolling around the floor giggling like a baby with the faery beings rolling with him, laughing. One of the faeries held out a fruit to him and Peter bit into it. A strength and vitality flowed through him, causing him to jump to his feet and dance like a madman. He danced and danced until he came to a full stop before a harp.

It was the most exquisite harp he had ever seen. The wood was carved

with many faces peering out around the directions, and each of the faces had eyes of rubies and pearls. The harp was covered in gold leaves, and the strings felt like silk.

He sat on a tree root and laid the harp to his breast. The harp seemed to move under his embrace, like a lover newly awakened. His fingers ran across the strings emitting an unearthly sound that brought each being to a stop.

All the animals, all the faeries, the old man, and A.E., sat at his feet with their eyes turned to Peter's hands. Peter closed his eyes. He wanted to play his favourite song, but his fingers seemed to have lost the memory. Instead, something started to push into his thoughts, something from deep down within him.

The song rose up from his heart and expressed itself through his fingers. Music of the forest spilled out of the harp and all the collected audience sighed. His fingers painted a vision of a time long gone, a time before humans started to build.

Visions of ancient trees touching the sky, flowers large enough to sleep in, a forest floor moving with life, a man child curled asleep in a tree beside a large cat. His heart sang through the harp until the song reached his lips.

In a language as old as the oldest tree, Peter sang of the brothers and sisters of the forest and the mountains. He sang of the union between Underworld and Overworld. He sang of love between the worlds and of children born under a radiant sun.

Because he sang with his eyes closed, Peter did not see the ladies of the trees one by one appearing between the branches. Their hair was of leaves and their skin of bark. Eyes that seemed to hold the light of the stars looked upon Peter in wonder.

One of them tiptoed up to Peter as he sang and put a golden acorn at his feet. Another placed a green leaf at his side, and another propped a branch beside his tree root. When he had finished his song, he opened his eyes to see the audience sat in silence with many pairs of large eyes fixed on him.

Something made him look down. He saw the golden acorn and picked it up. Before he knew what he done, he ate the acorn. A.E. shook his head and clicked his beak in despair. The acorn grew inside him, bubbling up every ounce of mischief that was in his bones. His hands returned to the harp and he began to play a jig. His fingers danced across

the strings as the faery beings danced with the animals.

The old man was swirled around with A.E. hopping in and out of the foray, squawking at the top of his voice. The dance got faster and faster as Peter's hands flew across the strings in frenzy. He hummed and sang along, as the feet of the Faeries seemed to make the ground shake. They danced through the night until Peter felt he could play no more.

He fell asleep, still embracing the harp, which snuggled up to his warm body. A.E. was laid on his back with his legs in the air, snoring his head off, with a profusion of sleeping faeries all around him.

As Peter slept, he dreamed of the surface world. He walked down the streets of Manhattan and saw for the first time the pain and fear in people's eyes. He saw the faery beings huddled around a blade of grass like street people huddling around a fire. He heard the sad songs and the weeping. He saw the poisons trickling down the street: the death, the hatred, and the anger that the people had built around themselves. His nightmare woke him.

The faeries and animals had become still and silent. One called his name and handed him the branch and leaf from the forest ladies. They pointed to one of the upside-down trees, telling him he needed to climb. He put the gifts in his pocket and started to climb.

A.E. and the old man were already climbing and Peter was halfway up the tree before he realized that he was leaving the faery realm. He wanted to stop and jump back down. He did not want to go back to the surface world. But the tree that he was climbing pleaded with him to continue.

*You will be our brother who watches over us, who protects the animals, birds, flowers, plants, and trees. You will ensure that we will still have a world on the surface to play in.*

Peter was full of sadness, but he understood that he could do things that they could not. Just as they could do things that he could not. Surely between them they would be able to make a difference in the cold, decaying world on the surface.

A.E. transferred over to Peter's tree and sat on his head as they ascended to the surface world. Peter became aware of the old man telling him to think of the room in which he first started, to remember the books and the chair upon which he was seated. The faery realm faded away. The tree withdrew from his vision and Peter felt heaviness on his lap. He opened his eyes to find A.E. sitting there.

The old man smiled at Peter. It took Peter a while to reorient himself. The old man told Peter that now he had been there, he could find his own way back by seeing the roots of the tree in his own world, and that if he climbed down the tree he would access the faery realm. There were many questions that Peter wanted to ask but the old man held up his hand for silence.

“No more, I’m too tired. Come back tomorrow and we will talk. Let yourself out, I’m going to sleep.”

There was so much that Peter wanted to say. Thank you was the least of them. But he respected the old man’s wishes and left, walking carefully down the steep steps. When he got out on to the street, he looked at his watch.

He looked again and tapped the glass. Only ten minutes had passed since he left the restaurant. But that was impossible! He had talked to the man for nearly an hour before doing the vision. He put his hands in his pockets and set off to walk home. His fingers played with something for a few moments before he began to realize what it was. Carefully, he pulled out a tiny leaf and a twig from his pocket. He remembered the gifts given to him in the faery realm and he stopped walking and looked at them carefully.

The leaf was much smaller than he remembered but its colours were not like the dull brown they were in the faery realm. He turned the tiny leaf this way and that to try and count the colours that sparkled off the surface of this tiny fragment of nature.

Reds, gold, yellow, blues, colours that were deeper than anything he could imagine flashed and changed with the dull light that was around him. The colours changed as he moved the leaf, greens, brighter than the loudest sweater that Chris had bought him, flashed through the blue as Peter rested the leaf in his hand. Then the gust of wind came. It was too quick. The leaf left Peter standing on the end of 6th Ave with his heart broken.



QUAREIA

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