

*Monday Morning April 6th*

*It has been many years since I watched as Mother burnt to ash. The smell of smoke drifted on the wind. Her womb was replaced by a wound. Humans bent on unceasing consumption cut through maternal limbs meanwhile slaughtering our animal and insect siblings. In youth I lay on the leaves of the tall strong trees daydreaming. I conjured up images of humans and I dancing together, their mass gentle alongside my miniature form. Our communal revelry pleased nature's watchful eyes.*

*Today the theater of my mind only projects nightmares of violent red and yellow snakes winding their scolding bodies up the trunks of my childhood trees. My Fae clan has conceived an attack on the 'human monsters'. One that will demolish them and bring Mother back. I struggle to stand beside my people in this war. I'd rather conjure up healing and unification than cause more pain and desecration.*

*"Fae folk do not rest when there is a threat." Screamed my father this morning as I tried to calmly read my scripture over my morning tea. My hand jolted at his words and sent scolding hot liquid down my arm. "May those blisters on your arm be a reminder of the scorching heat the humans brought your Mother down with!" Father roared as he slammed the door, leaving me alone with nothing but another wound to mend.*

*Too many things are still healing for me to begin this fight. It seems like just yesterday the humans were playing music on their massive stringed instruments. They chanted sounds Mother loved. She told stories about how humans with their enormous hands tenderly planted seeds in her soil. She spoke to me in the wind and in the chirping of birds.*

*Birds do not stop here anymore. The humans scare them away with their clanking, moaning, earth scaring machines. Too much has changed too fast. I cannot get a grip. I must force myself to join the Fae troops in eradicating the humans from our home. Everyone believes this is the way.*

*Humans have always underestimated our kind. They never stop to think we could be more powerful than them. Yes they can trod on us, but have they ever? No. Just today while stealthy flying through burnt roots I wisely avoided the weight of one's sole. They simply choose not to see us. A splinter of hope lingers in my side. Could they come to know us as I once dreamed of knowing them.*



“You have no choice Aaron, you must rise to the moment.” Melody commands as she packs her napsack with the necessities for battle. She throws a bandage roll at me, which I kneel to dodge before it leaves her hand. “See”, she seaths, “ you are far too full of Mother’s magic to hide in the shadows while others fight for you.”

“Who said they were fighting for me?” I mumble through my porridge. Even with her keen vigilance she misses this. She is enraptured with the sight of herself dressed in gear she has never before had a reason to wear. Watching her admire herself in this way infuriates me. “This isn’t time for pride!” I hiss.

“Nor is it a time for romanticizing a fleet of human traitors who do nothing but take.” She growls. Her wings begin to flick the way they do when she is ready to fight.

This is the end of the conversation. I am done attempting to allude to the theory of peace between humans and the Fae. *It is time to let childish daydreams go.*

“ You disgust me, sitting here writing while our entire clan is marching toward the vectors. What in this realm is so disdainful to you that you cannot adhere to the most obvious of calls?” She grabs my pages from the table before me. “ You are a disgrace to our race Aaron. The humans deserve to be taught a lesson.” She chucks my writing in the bin, snatches a sack she packed for me, and begins ramming my arms into the straps. I sit like a corpse in my desk chair.

A cutting wind blows open the door and freezes our insides. Melody's eyes are strained, she throws her hand over her mouth. Fear gags us. I muster up the courage to speak, “Who's there?” Lord Ezra, our leader and highest elder, passes through the threshold with both hands wrapped white knuckle around his scepter. Melody falls to the floor in full prostration. I am shocked by her actions.

“Quiet children,” commands our Lord. “This is no time for squabbling. Get yourself on a vector Melody. As for you Aaron, let's take a stroll.” The mage sweeps his hand toward the door and I instantaneously stand and exit. “Is peace with you?” The Lord asks me as I walk beside him. Walking rather than flying is not a common thing for me and I trip over my feet. He laughs at the sight of it and his laughter lifts the fear from my body. “Peace?” I ask with smarmy dismay “What is that?”

“It was not long ago that our homeland felt it, to forget such a thing is the first step in the wrong direction.” I cannot play a game of who is the wiser with this man.

“Look,” Ezra commands, pointing to the sky, “Those are our people.” My fellow Fae zip past us on vectors, pixie dust trailing from them like falling stars. “Why are you not with them?” Without a thought I counter,

“Why are you not with them?” At this Lord Ezra laughs the kind of Fae laugh that can bring forth an entire field of wildflowers. He bellows holding his belly as if he might split.

The moment my angsty words left my lips I regretted them but his laughter softens any remaining dread. After Ezra catches his breath he wraps his wings around me and pulls me very close, putting his forehead on mine. He looks me square in the eyes,

“ I am not with them for the same reasons you choose not to be.” I am speechless.

*There are legends that Lords can read their people’s minds, but I’ve always chalked that stuff up to baby talk, dreams and things.*

“Go home Aaron” Ezra whispers as he gently releases me from the shelter of his wings. As I walk back on the path we just traveled together, it is as if everything we passed before is now more vibrant and alive. Fluorescent green moss spirals forth from a log where I could swear there was nothing before. *Do I hear the wind speaking to me again, like it did before the fires. Something has changed. What is it?*

*Monday Night April 6th*

*I found out this evening that as I walked home Lord Ezra appeared before the troops. He commanded them to call off the attack. He claimed to have had a sighting of something he had thought no longer existed. Something he asserted could save us all.*

*Melody told me all of this as she ripped off her gear piece-by-piece throwing it in the bin. "Where did he take you Aaron? What did he see? Why you?" She screamed. "Why me what?" I asked with a bit of satisfaction in the fact that for once Melody might be thinking not everyone admired her more than me. "Forget it" She said, shoving my head with her palm as she walked out of the room.*

*I only sat there for minutes before I began to be vexed with ideas surrounding Lord Ezra's "vision". What did he see? Did it have something to do with me? I tried to organize my desk, evict squatting house gnomes, the usual mundane tasks which typically reset my mind, nothing calmed me down. I was possessed by a desire to know straight away what it was that could save us .*

*"Please God don't let it be me." I thought. "What real use could I be?" I couldn't take it any longer. I threw on a cloak and snuck out before Melody could notice or Father could return home. I slid down the regular paths half walking and half flying. A stone in my gut told me I was traveling toward my demise while a curiosity flicked at the tips of my wings.*

*Shaking and panting with fear and exhilaration I arrived at the meeting hall. I knew Ezra would be there with the leaders of our clan. The men around him looked swollen with rage as I peeked through a window. One elder picked at the table with his knife like a youngling avoiding his dinner. "This is not up to discussion. there is no appealing to your senses. The boy and I are the final two. You must accept what needs to be done." lectured Lord Ezra. At this the elder threw his knife across the room. I*

*slammed my body to the ground just a moment before the tip stuck beside the window I watched through.*

*I heard a door slam and then silence. "Some will never be able to imagine that there once was another way. I advise the rest of you to at least accept it." Finished Ezra.*

*Now I cannot sleep, "The boy and I are the final two" rings over and over in my ears like the May day chimes.*



Before Melody can rush into my room to harass me with her morning demands Ezra knocks on the front door. "Good morning Lord," chokes my father through his coffee "Let me just fetch Melody for..."

"It is not Melody I seek" interrupts Ezra. At this I enter the room. My father rubbernecks from me to our Lord and red begins to fill his face.

"What do you want with my pansy son?" blurts father.

"Pansies, what beautiful flowers" coos Ezra. Father spits at the floor and bares his teeth.

"Aaron pack a bag, we will be gone for some time. As for you father dear, I have no more need of your services." He waves his hand at Father as if he is shooing an aphid from a leaf. He sits at my desk and finishes father's coffee while I pack my things. With my bag on my back I glance at Melody's gear in the trash, "Oh you won't be needing that." Ezra laughs.

It's not long before we arrive at the human settlement. When their shelters are in our sights Ezra lands on an eternal torch that lights the streets. It is about an hour past dawn and none of them are stirring yet. Again I cannot control my mouth , "How do they possess such magic as this?"

Ezra points to the metal stem with an illuminated bud we are perched on. "This is no magic. They call this science. It's light is made by burning coal."

"Must they burn everything?" I rage. Ezra raises his hand,

"Stop. Quiet. Our hope has risen." He points to a human woman in the street.

The woman rolls a cart of flowers to a common area. There is an aura about her unlike that of any of the humans who trod through our home. She is light, almost like a Fae, gentle and airy. Her skirts blow in the wind as she ties up her curls in a pile on her head. Again Ezra cloaks me in his wings as he did yesterday in the forest.

"Some may say that you are a dreamer, but you are not the only one. This human and I both believe that this devastation can end. Together we can heal Mother and stop the burning. You Aaron must convince her to speak to the slayers for us, to use her power to change their ways."

"Me. Speak to her? I've never consorted with a human! If you believe as well, why can't you do it?"

"Only youth can motivate youth." He releases me from his wings and now I'm spiraling down into her flower cart.

The sound the mortals make when speaking reminds me of our sink when it is clogged. A Young man approaches the cart and burbles some words to the flower lady.

At her response I fall into a deep sense of ease. Her voice is nothing like that of her folk. The noises she makes dance on the breeze as if they are my folk flying from her lips.

The young mortal man she smiles at blushes and departs seeming quite affected by her. *What to do, what to do?* I fret, running my fingers through my hair with my free hand, the other holds on as I dangle from the stem of a tulip.

“Are you OK?” I suddenly hear the flower woman say as she plucks my tulip from the cart and brings me up to her face. I startle, lose my grip, and began to fall toward the cobblestone road. My wings deceive me in my shock. The woman catches me in her hand.

I lay there wide eyed fearing 1000 nightmares, foremost in my mind is the idea she might eat me. “Oh dear thing you look entirely mystified Here take solace in this green patch”. She lets me down carefully amongst some weeds and off she trots, cart in tow, as if consorting with Fae is a daily occurrence for her.

Instantly Ezra is at my side. “ I see she affects human and fae young men similarly. “ He laughs, giving me a hand up. “I imagined this might be the way it would go at first. That is why I advised you to pack as if we might be away for some time.”

*Wednesday Morning April 8th*

*Last night we collected seeds like when I was a child. We shared them beside a fire.*

*“Close to her things grow,” Ezra said of the woman. “She is unlike those who bring fire, she is more a gentle rain.”*





I rise early with the sun and shake Ezra awake. Before his eyes are fully opened I ask, “Is she the only one of her tribe that sees us?” Ezra rolls to one side, takes three very deep slow breaths and proceeds to prepare his morning tea. He is moving at such painstaking snail speed that I think I might strangle the answer out of him. After several strong sips he peers at me with a scolding force.

“Never rouse an old man before he rises on his own.” At this he gives me a map guiding me to the flower woman’s house. “There.” He points to a structure on the map. “That is her dwelling. Go there and ask her.” *Is he serious?* He picks up his scepter in a fear inducing fashion and gesticulates North.

Now I fly North on restless wings. All of this is beginning to wear on me. *What is right at this point? What do I personally want? I thought I had to get in line and destroy the humans. I didn’t want to annihilate them but it seemed like everyone wanted me to submit to this fate. Now here I am looking for answers from one of them at the command of my Lord. Too much too fast,* I think again to myself as I contemplate how to address the flower woman pulling weeds in her garden.

I get closer perching on a fencepost. *I need to find something in her present tasks that I can make small talk about. Small talk with a human! What a dream come true.* Yet here I am speechless, dumbfounded, scared. *Why did Ezra pick me? “The Boy*

*and I are the final two". Why did I have to be the last Fae youth who had any hope in humanity?*

"Oh hello stranger." Says the flower lady. She is talking to me. "You've followed me home have you?"

"Well not quite but yes." I fumble.

"What a cute little thing you are."

I don't feel cute, I feel stupid being spoken to like a pet.

"I am here on a mission commanded by my Lord to seek your services." I report with my hands on my chest and hip like an honorable soldier. She admonishes me,

"My services huh? Is your Lord in need of some flowers?"

"Please let us not play at this time of great need." I say in the most paternal fashion I can force.

"Give me a break bud. You're not a day over 18. I know the look of a Fae youth and it's written all over you. Why are you really here?"

*What a crass young lady the flower woman can be. She seemed so tender and sweet on the street but here in her own garden there is no getting by her.* "Alright Miss. I will be frank, I'm a hopeless romantic pitiful fool. " I give up my power stance and let my arms fall to my sides. "I'm the last of only two Fae in my race who hold a wisp of hope that your people and mine can live in unity. I'm here to beg you to help me. My Lord says you will understand. Do you understand?" I slump into a crossed legged position on my post.

She walks to where I sit, scoops me up in her hand, and takes a seat herself.

“What can I do?”

“Oh! That I don’t know yet, I forgot to ask.” I laugh in shock.

We chuckle a good while at my lack of preparation and then she puts me on her shoulder and tells me with a smile,

“Lead the way to your ‘commanding Lord’. I’m sure he has a plan. “

Arriving back at camp we find Ezra right where I left him. Now he is puffing a pipe and reading a book with his feet up as if enjoying a leisurely vacation. He startles a bit at the sight of the lady with me on her shoulder. He does his best not to show it.

“Well that was fast.” He calls up to me.

“It seems a little honesty goes a long way.” I say as I fly down to where he sits among moss and roots.

“Did you ask her?” He inquires, and I realize he told me to ask her the question because he did not know the answer himself. At this revelation I fear he might not have the plan that the lady and I came for.

During our discourse the woman lays down on her stomach and puts her chin on her hands. Ezra gazes back-and-forth from her giant face to my tiny one several times and then explodes, “What? Why are you both staring at me?”

“Oh!” I jump. “We need to know what it is that this young lady can do to help us.” Ezra walks over to the lady’s ear and tugs it slightly as he whispers into it. Her eyes widen and then focus sharp, her lips tighten to a line as he speaks. When he is done keeping

the plan from me, she gives him a wink and offers her hand for me to climb into. Ezra graces me with a pat on the back.

Off I go on the lady's shoulder again with no clue as to what it is I am doing. The lady sings tunes as she walks us through the forest. They are the chants Mother loved. This woman is special in that she is gentle. I can see that she places her feet with intention, being sure not to tread on plants or bugs. I do not care where she is taking me. What I have to do doesn't matter because I trust her. She is telling me that she understands me without speaking a word.

We arrive at a worn down hut that reeks of smoke and soil. A burly human smudged in filth, like a soldier painted for war, leans against the hut. He is eating turkey from the bone. The size of him stresses the shack so that it appears as if it might fall over.

"Airwin," he grimaces, "What brings you to my side of town?"

"I have a request." she curtsies to the repulsive man.

"Awe what a cute little past time you honor." He smiles at her formality exposing a mouth full of rotten bone.

"I need you to assemble your men here for a meeting prior to tomorrow's slash-and-burn."

"On whose request?" He stands tall and drops his turkey leg at his side as if he is going to use it like a club.

“Mine.” He guffaws at her, sending spit flying from his slick lips. “What is this girl? Who put you up to such a joke? I’ll bat them over the head.” He raises his meat bone high above his shoulder.

How my gentle lady stands in the presence of this swine with astute composure is beyond me. He is worse than my father and Melody combined. My lady speaks to the beast the way an elder does when educating a youngling, “Lucious, I am not making a joke. I need to speak with your men tomorrow. It is very important.” Her words subdue the slob.

“As you wish Miss.” He tosses what is left of his dinner on the ground and goes inside. I assume he is about to make some calls.

“How did you do that,” I ask the flower lady. “How did you calm that gargoyle?”

“There is powerful magic in my realm as well.” She tells me. “I believe tomorrow you will get to try your hand at it.”

Upon returning to her home the flower woman informs me that I must slumber in her garden. She says that she will rouse me early for our chat with Lucious’s men. Again I trust her and I go easily to sleep amidst her many blossoms. I wake to a hand maternally gripping my shoulder. Through my groggy vision I see the lady’s face but it isn’t huge, it is my size. *Wait she is not my size, I am her size!* I promptly panic as I acknowledge how small the flowers are around me. “Aaron, get a grip, we don’t have much time, eat this bread. You can have tea on the way.” I stand and much to my surprise I walk confidently on my newly acquired feet.

On our way to Luciose's hut Airwin comments on how dapper I look full size. I shoot her a look that says, *"Don't make this harder than it already is."* At the hut about twenty men lay in wait. It is evident they are fuming about being called early to assemble. They throw knives at the wall of the hut to keep themselves busy. They drink cups of hot liquid that offend the nostrils.

"Who the hell is this?" One of them points at me as we approach. Airwin makes eye contact with Luscious and he raises his hand to silence his man. Luscious corrals his herd into a semi circle and gestures for Airwin to take the stage.

"Go ahead Aaron" she says pointing toward the place I thought she was going to take. I walk on my new feet to the central gaze of a hoard of beasts. I am wingless but I am still a Fae.

I clear my throat and begin, "For too long I've stood by and allowed you fools to plunder this land. Today the cutting down, the burning, all of it stops. You defile our home with your unceasing need for more and I will not suffer one more day of it. Take your tools and your fire and put them to rest. You fail to see what you do to those around you. Your eyes are never open enough to see beyond your own nose." A pig puts a finger to one nostril and blows snot out the other.

I continue, "If you slash and burn today or any other day from here forward, I will see to it that you no longer see a single sight." I walk to Airwin, shaking inside but appearing composed within my new human flesh. *Whose words were those? Were they mine?* Airwin addresses the mob, first with a curtsy and then she says, "Peace will find you and your family if you wash your hands of this work."

The men watch as she prepares a bucket of water from Luscious' well. She unravels a pocket tied at her waist and offers a bar of soap. One by one Luscious' men come forth and cleanse their filthy faces and hands. As each becomes restored they leave in the direction of their home. Last to get clean is Luscious himself. He asks Airwin if she might help him straighten up his home, now that he has time. She promises to bring a bouquet tonight.

We hike back to Ezra as a team, both humans. When we are within his sight I again become tiny and winged. In the lady's hand I tell her many things. I tell her that I learned today that magic exists in every realm. Most importantly I tell her that I believe if we continue to work together one day we might live as one.