

FAE TV



BeWiccan

What happens when a fae Wiccan falls in love with a man who doesn't have a clue? The new show, "BeWiccan" follows the humorous adventures of two guys in love. One is Wiccan the other is not! Pg. 32

Gillikin's Faerieland

Will they ever get off?

We asked the star of the show, see what he says inside. Pg. 42

Plus Fae TV Listings

Complete local listings of all your favorite shows, news & sports. Pg. 21-32



Publisher's Notes

Welcome to the first Airy Faerie of 2010. We have come catching up to do, so let's get started. Belated Blessed Yule! Happy New Year! Happy Martin Luther King Day! Blessed Imbolc! Happy Ground Hog's Day! Happy Birthday! Happy Un-Birthday! Happy Chinese New Year! This will be the Year of the Tiger! The Tiger is said to be courageous, candid, independent, competitive, and very lucky but may seem to be stubborn and selfish.

I will let Phoenix tell you about some of the major things that life tossed our way that kept us busy last year. With the details of life outside of Airy Faerie saved for later in the issue I get to share with you the wonderful things we did in 2009 that involved our little e-zine.

We made a connection with many new on-line friends and you have been seeing some of their contributions in recent issues. Thank you Raven Bear Paws, Hermes Polyandros, Eisbaer and Shayde for adding to the rich diversity that makes up our Airy Faerie family. That is not to say we don't appreciate the contributions of the rest of our family. It's just that those four participate are new to the family and most are from outside our physical community and we don't get the chance often enough to say thank you. During the year, we welcomed Eisbaer when he moved here from New York. We had the opportunity to meet Hermes Polyandros when he came for a long weekend visit last summer. We are still working on 2010 vacation plans so maybe we will have a chance to meet one of the others.

We spent a long weekend in California celebrating Phoenix's fiftieth birthday. While there, we met several new friends, one of whom was an extremely talented photographer named Yogabear. Later in the year he discovered the pages of Airy Faerie and asked us to participate in his current project titled *Beard Tugs* which is a celebration of beards and the men who wear them. We just heard from Yogabear that he is actively working with the printer so look for an announcement soon on how to find some of your Airy Faerie

friends in someone else's artistic efforts.

We discovered some new friends in Denver's historic cemeteries. Granted they are dead but we have had fun learning their stories. There are the Proctors whom you read about in the Samhain issue. There is the gentleman next to them who started the real estate trend in the area for buying land when it was cheap and selling high as people moved to Denver. His eternal reward is that his house is more famous than he. It is still standing and has been featured in many movies. There are the three murdered prostitutes whose story would make a great movie as the lover of one was one of the suspects of the murder of one of the others. And one of the other suspects in that same murder was her lover, a policeman.

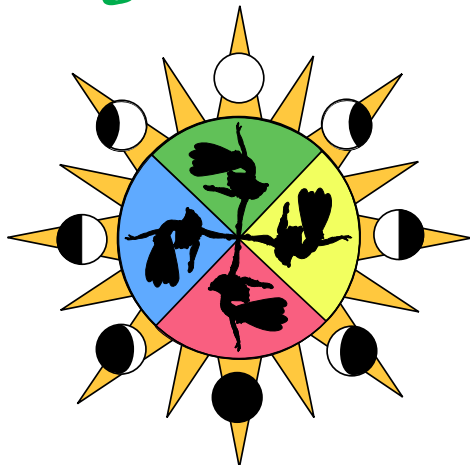
I guess that is enough about our past activities and time to shift to what you hold in your hands (or reading on screen). For this issue we have several new stories and poems by Raven Bear Paws and Hermes Polyandros. Potsan Panz pulled herself away from the television long enough to contribute something. Frankly I'm glad she did since it gave me the opportunity to clean the nose prints off of the screen. We also continue our tale of the young Prince Apollo, as he tries to understand and remember all that happened in the past. The story game heats up as Phoenix takes over as story teller.

I am sure most of you can recite this next part from memory, the Adult content warning. This issue is like most of the other issues of the Airy Faerie. It has graphics and stories created for people who like to see images of male nudes, gay sex, and read about gay adult situations. OK, all together now, "Please do not read this fae-zine at work or on a public computer. Please wait to view this e-zine until you are old enough."

Happy Valentines' Day! & Happy Mari Gras! Who wants some beads!!!

Naked hugs and blessed be
DragonSwan

Airy Faerie



Imbolc 2010

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Hymn to Eros

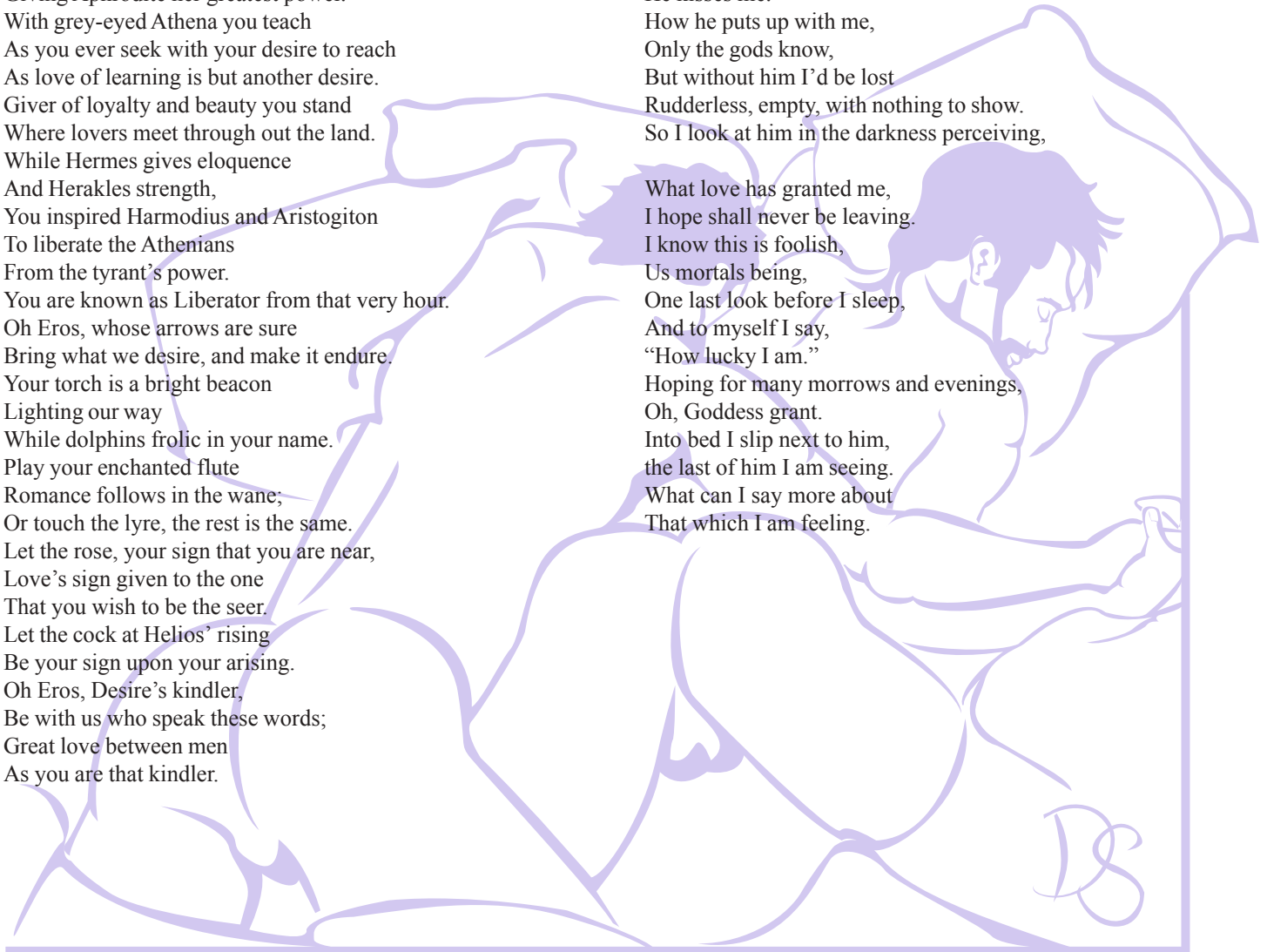
By Hermes Polyandros

Oh, Muse give flight to my words.
 As I sing of Eros, eldest of gods,
 Yet youngest of gods.
 Born from Eris, Dark void of Chaos,
 Brother of Gaea, Mother-Earth.
 You are Desire.
 Kindler with arrows of fire,
 Unerring archer
 Whom none are immune to their touch.
 Oh, you child of Eris,
 Chaos follows in your wake
 As you let fly your darts
 Piercing even the coldest of hearts.
 Worshipped you were by Lacedaemeans
 You inspire the warrior's love
 Bonding man to man,
 Granting strength of heart
 As well as of arm.
 Like a son of Love's goddess you are;
 Giving Aphrodite her greatest power.
 With grey-eyed Athena you teach
 As you ever seek with your desire to reach
 As love of learning is but another desire.
 Giver of loyalty and beauty you stand
 Where lovers meet through out the land.
 While Hermes gives eloquence
 And Herakles strength,
 You inspired Harmodius and Aristogiton
 To liberate the Athenians
 From the tyrant's power.
 You are known as Liberator from that very hour.
 Oh Eros, whose arrows are sure
 Bring what we desire, and make it endure.
 Your torch is a bright beacon
 Lighting our way
 While dolphins frolic in your name.
 Play your enchanted flute
 Romance follows in the wane;
 Or touch the lyre, the rest is the same.
 Let the rose, your sign that you are near,
 Love's sign given to the one
 That you wish to be the seer.
 Let the cock at Helios' rising
 Be your sign upon your arising.
 Oh Eros, Desire's kindler,
 Be with us who speak these words;
 Great love between men
 As you are that kindler.

Before I Sleep

By Hermes Polyandros

When I slip into bed,
 Sometimes late at night,
 I see him lying there,
 And rejoice at the sight.
 Sometimes he wakes and kisses me
 With a gentle passion,
 Like no one has but he.
 Sometimes too late,
 I sit at the computer,
 He wakes, tells me "Go to bed."
 I say, "Soon." meaning sooner or later.
 I know he's not angry.
 He knows I need the sleep,
 But my restless mind still wants to tarry;
 But before long I slip in beside him,
 Ready to sleep.
 He rises early,
 And hour at least before me,
 But somewhere between rising and leaving,
 He kisses me.
 How he puts up with me,
 Only the gods know,
 But without him I'd be lost
 Rudderless, empty, with nothing to show.
 So I look at him in the darkness perceiving,
 What love has granted me,
 I hope shall never be leaving.
 I know this is foolish,
 Us mortals being,
 One last look before I sleep,
 And to myself I say,
 "How lucky I am."
 Hoping for many morrows and evenings,
 Oh, Goddess grant.
 Into bed I slip next to him,
 the last of him I am seeing.
 What can I say more about
 That which I am feeling.



A Mother's Letter to Her Son

By Raven Bear Paws

This came to me in a dream. I saw a vast cemetery with white marble headstones as far as the eye can see. On one of the many small hills stands a lone figure in a bright blue dress. The mid autumn sun shine peeks its eye through the tree she stands near. Clutched in her shaking hand is a tattered teddy bear, in the other she holds a piece of paper that appears to be a stained with the tears of a thousand sorrows. Written across the top of the paper are six words "A mother's letter to her son."

A Mother's Letter to Her Son

Hello, my angel,
It's mom.

I tried to be strong for you today; like you wanted me to. But I have to admit that it was hard when they rolled you out of the airplane surrounded by those nice young men in uniform, I felt a momentary lapse of weakness. As a single tear ran down my cheek the memories began to play in my mind.

The day you were born:

You looked like a tiny angel when they placed you on my chest. I saw tears in your father's eyes as he placed his hand on your tiny head. Your soft coos and gurgles were like a symphony playing in my ears, as I smothered your angelic face with kisses because I wanted you to know that you are loved. As I watched your tiny chest rise and fall it was then I understood what happiness was.

Your first birthday:

To me it seemed to come with a blink of an eye. You sitting in your high chair, laughing as your dad played peek-a-boo with you. You smashing your hands in your cake, painting your face with it, like it was the best thing in the world. I can still hear your laughter echoing through the house as if it were yesterday. With my hands over my heart I knew my little boy was growing up.

Your first day of Kindergarten:

You stood in the doorway of your classroom, holding your Power Ranger lunchbox, crying because you didn't want to go. Seeing your tears nearly broke my heart. But I couldn't help but laugh because as soon as you saw the other children your sobs stopped and you joined them laughing and playing. Things were so simple then.

Your high school graduation:

Sitting by your dad's side as you walked across the stage to received your diploma, your dad's chest swelling with pride because his little boy had grown into a fine young man. Pride! Baby, I could not begin to tell what I was feeling that day. Eighteen years have passed since my little angel was born. Days long gone of tucking you in bed, reading bedtime stories and kisses good night.

Pride?

No!

The feeling of being proud for my little man was all grown up and ready to take on the world.

The day you joined the army:

Your dad was so proud. He called all his friends to tell them his boy was going to do his duty and defend the country. I myself was proud, but a bit scared too. Knowing that so many sent overseas come home injured or worse, in boxes. Had I known

I would have tried harder to keep you home. I remember your smile the most as you hugged me and told you would be OK. "Be strong for me, mom, OK?" Had I only known.

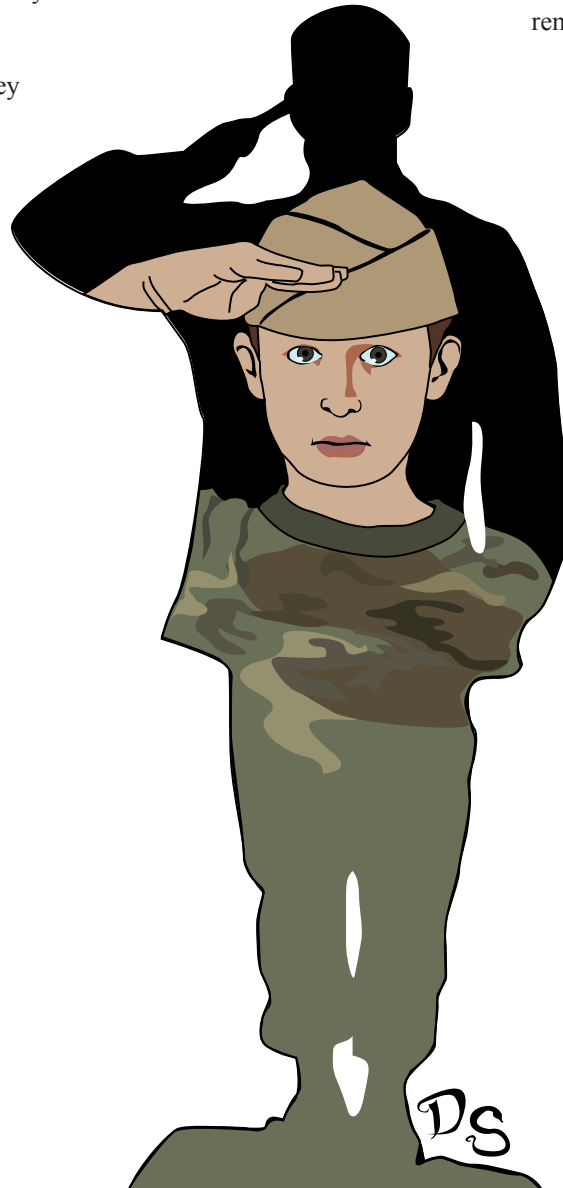
The knock on the door:

Three years have come to pass since you joined the army and eight months since your deployment to Iraq. Every passing day since you've been over there has been a nightmare for me. Just last week Mrs. Jensen's son Billy (you remember Billy? You boys were best friends growing up, inseparable) was killed by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan. (Of course you know)

Well, while I went to get the mail that June 17, 2009, I was greeted at the door by two army officials with somber looks on their faces. As they spoke ("Mame, I regret to inform you at Twenty Three Hundred hours yesterday your son was killed in the line of duty") my world crashed around me. My baby, my boy, my angel was gone.

Now I stand here as your body is loaded into the hearse. I am proud of you my boy, my baby, my angel. I want you to know I love you and miss you and I am trying to be strong like you asked me to. My little soldier sleep well.

Love,
Mom



My Goddess

By Raven Bear Paws

Oh Great Mother
 Be with me
 Thou art my heart and soul
 Be my love, passion, and creativity
 And bless those who are in need of your love and strength.
 Oh Great Goddess,
 Forgive the world of their wrong doings,
 And show them your light.
 Embrace them to your breast for they know not what they do.
 Show them the path to your light.
 Oh Great Mother Moon,
 Grant me your wisdom and strength
 Protect me as one of your children
 And protect all those who I love and cherish
 Be the flame of life with in my heart, my body, my soul.
 Mother Goddess
 Thou art truly divine
 Protector of your woodland children,
 Mother to all sacred nature,
 Mother to mankind.



Ode to the Goddess

By Raven Bear Paws and Wendy Andrews

Be my eyes Great mother,
 And show me the path to your light.
 Be my heart Great Mother,
 And show me the path to your love.
 Be within my soul Great Mother,
 And show me the path to your wisdom.

I am but a child Great Mother.
 I am naked within your presence.
 Embrace me within your Green touch,
 And show me the glory of your nature.

Be with me Great Mother,
 But do not carry me upon the righted path.
 Be my beacon of hope,
 And help me to understand life's hidden treasures.

Oh Great Mother,
 I am your child of the heath;
 Loyal and true.
 I praise thee on the highest mountains,
 And praise thee to the lowest valley.

I see thee Great Mother
 In the wind, in the trees, and all the creatures of the earth
 Great and small.
 To you I pledge my devotion
 My undying pagan trust
 To be with you in Summerland
 When my life here is done.

(editor note: Wendy Andrews is Raven Bear Paw's mother - Thanks mom.)

Make Me One

By Raven Bear Paws

Dance with me mother,
 dance with me along the clouds,
 scatter my soul to the four corners
 and make me one with the wind

Sing with me mother
 sing with me and make my heart soar,
 spread wide the branches of the tree of life
 and make me one with the earth

Cry with me mother
 cry with me and cleanse my spirit
 let the rivers flow freely
 and make me one with the water

Bathe me mother
 Bathe me in you divine heat
 let your sun burn freely
 and make me one with the fire bath

Pray with me mother
 pray with me and show me the way
 surround me in your loving light
 and make me one with your spirit.



The 4-F Tarot: Building a Deck

by Phoenix

We are rapidly approaching the fourth year of working on this project. We keep making progress, right now a bit slower than we have at other times, but with each card we create that color bar gets that much more filled in. One of the nice things about doing something like this because you love it rather than doing it for the money is that you can take all the time you need to do it right. We recently purchased a new deck with some lovely artwork. And as I read the book that came with the deck I realized that is basically what we bought - artwork. The artist had gone through their portfolio and took his completed drawings and forced them in duty. A slight alteration here and there plus a couple of new images to fill in the gaps and poof, he went to the printers to make money.

Since we are doing this for love, not money (fools that we are), we will take all the time that is needed to do things right and reflect that love. Unfortunately, in 2009, time was a scarce resource. The combination of a plumbing disaster at my house (of which we are still dealing with a year later), helping host a festival of over 600 pagans, moving not once but twice (both DragonSwan's home and work), helping host a major public Samhain ritual and all of those other little life happenings ate away that time. No complaints, just reality. But we still found time to create some new cards like those hunky fellows on the opposite page.

Having a carpenter in the deck was probably one of the first choices for an image we had once the concept of the 4Fs (Feather, Flower, Fin and Fur) was realized and we started to apply it to the human aspects of the deck. I knew I wanted to have beaver energy and I equally knew that it would be represented as the carpenter. As I balanced the energy of the deck, he has moved positions a couple of times but he finally settled into the role of King of Earth.

Like our magician in the last issue (gads that seems like a long time ago! What am I talking about? It was a long time ago),

DragonSwan and I sat down and talked about this card. He went to the computer and started the art based on the discussion. I walked into the room and it was exactly what we talked about. Unfortunately, it was exactly what we talked about and I realized something wasn't working. So back to the drawing board and more talking about what was needed to start making this card work.

In this case, our original vision was that these men were working inside the house, up on ladders and such as they put on the finishing touches on the space. I knew that I wanted multiple figures on the card. That combination proved to be fatal as in the confined quarters in which our characters live on a card made the image extremely cramped. We moved them outside and deconstructed the house back to a time when they were actually building it. In that process, they went from being hunky interior decorators to actually being construction workers and started channeling the beaver energy that we were looking for.

With that decided next came the task of figuring out the look and feel of each of the characters. As lustful as it might be, it didn't feel right to make all three of our hunks be shirtless. So papa bear got to keep his off while the younger folks got dressed. Three gents, three hair colors, three facial hairs and three wardrobe decisions equals three times the work of cards with just a single featured character.

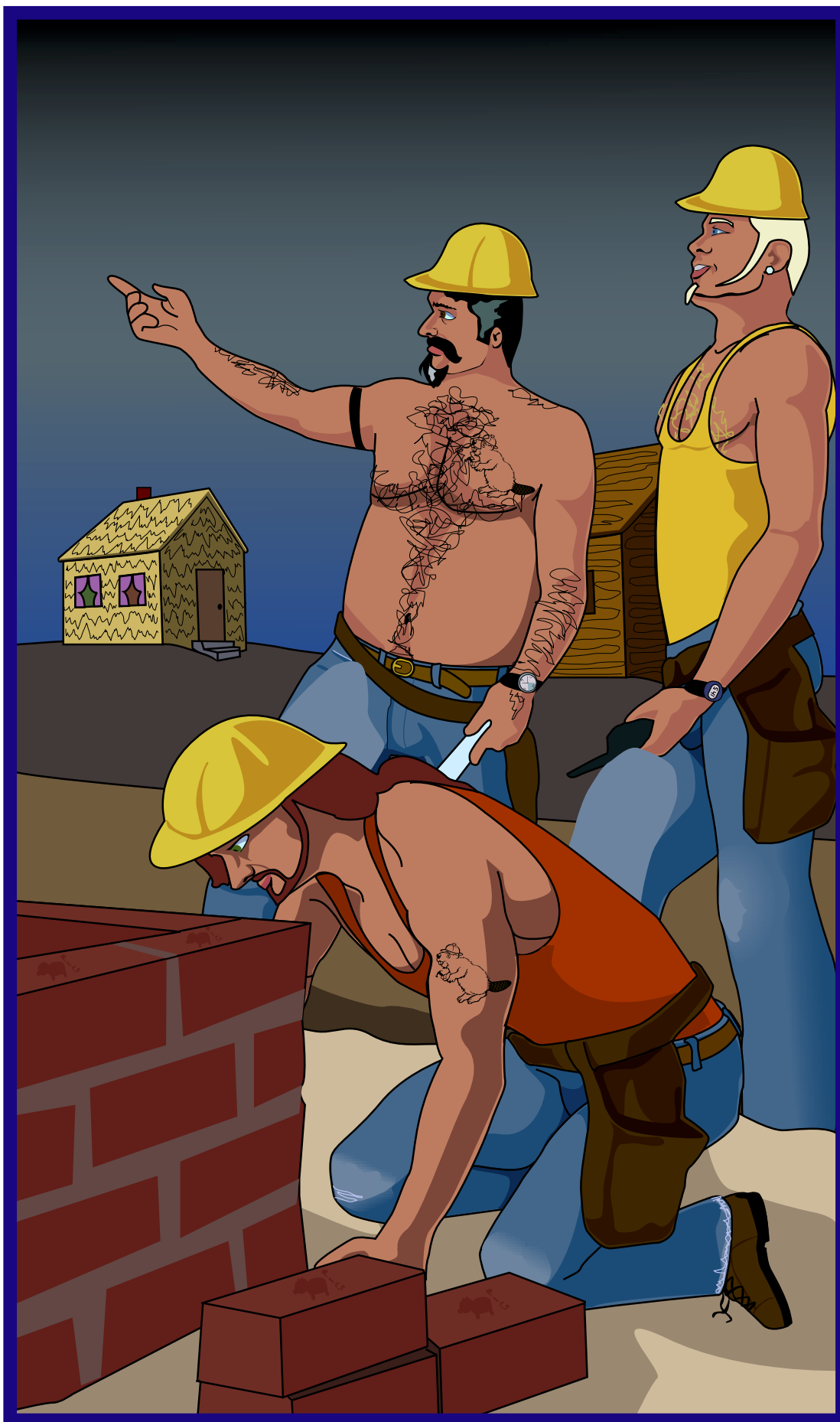
Then there is the setting itself. The sky is darkening and there is still work to be done. Will the two standing there staring at something start to help? Or are they there just to supervise? Or are they there to laugh at all the effort the brick layer is doing when their houses are complete?

In a reading, there are multiple layers of meaning you can play with starting with which person is the focus in the reading? Is it the worker doing something? The apparent boss man pointing out something to the apprentice? Or that apprentice going "I don't have a clue what he just said but 'yes, sir'?" In a reading this card might be about "Great job! You got started and the foundation is laid." And it could even be "So, you got it started. Big Deal. Why isn't it finished yet?" A lot of that will depend on the energy going into and out of this card. Are the others saying you have time to spare? Or are they saying that the big bad wolf has been spotted and you need to get busy?

While things go slowly on finding the right look and feel for the newest additions to the deck, we are using that time to go back and enhance the look and feel of the cards that have already been published. These are starting to transform from the more draft like versions we first worked on into the more polished versions we'll have at the other end of the process. Of course, having started to establish what that means to the art work also means that we are generally applying that polish to a newer card, which in turn means we are taking longer on creating the card with the first draft. It all takes time and we knew that it would be a long process. But as they say, "Slow and steady wins the race."

This is how this card looked in the Litha 2008 issue and how it looks today





Quest for the Crystal Phoenix

Chapter 37: Spirits in the Wind

by Orpheus

"So what do you think, Apollo?" asked his father.

Apollo counted to ten before speaking. It was partially because he knew better than saying what he really thought about sitting in a closed room for four hours when he really wanted to be with his friends. And it was partially because he was thinking more about what he wanted to do with his friends than paying attention to the discussion.

"We stick to the original plan and I journey with Aunt Susan to Sharpeton," he said. "Father, as you have said, it would be awkward for me to go back to either Resquad or Alphatown for a while. It would be hard to hide the fact that I've changed a little bit since I left two months ago. The people in Sharpeton haven't met me yet so they won't know about the change. I'll just be older than they expected but they won't know about the 'sudden growth spurt' that I experienced."

"I just don't feel good about lying to my people," said Susan.

"But there is no lie, Aunt Susan," countered the prince. "Do you think we should tell the full tale of how I fell into a faerie circle and disappeared from the kingdom for nearly five years?" He looked at his father's and his consort's rings. One was black while the other was white. "See, the rings confirm that while it is the truth, it isn't the wisest choice."

"But what about saying that you are under a spell?" said Rondar. His ring turned as black as Adam's.

"You can see the answer to that," said the prince.

"He's right, Ronnie," said Adam. "We've taken vows saying that we will be honest and truthful. Besides, people would wonder why the spell hasn't been broken so we would have to expand the lie to explain that it can't be reversed."

"So not saying something isn't lying and it really is our only option," said Apollo as both rings turned white. "Lord Poseidon gifted our family well when he gave you those rings."

"Then I guess it's settled," said Susan as she stood. "Tomorrow we head up to the caves to see this princess you have talked about and then we send your father on his journey home. Now, please excuse me. I need to start making arrangements for a new grounds keeper since my last one has fled."

"At least we know that Belladonna can't return to the grounds unnoticed," offered the prince. "Rowolfson has assigned a pack to patrol the area. Even if the Black Queen casts an illusion, the wolves know her scent."

"But what if she bathes in perfumed oils?" asked Susan. "Many of the court ladies do that. It would be impossible to tell her scent at that point."

"And what of the issue of her scent being so thick in the area?" added Rondar. "If it was impossible for Belkaro to track her, what makes you so sure that she couldn't slip in and hide out where we least expect her to be able to?"

"The wolves won't be fooled by artificial scents," responded

Apollo. "Their noses are far keener than ours and can detect the smells we try to carefully mask. As to the other," he paused to look Rondar in the eyes, "with Belkaro's help, I hope to correct that problem."

"Some spell you learned in the past?" asked Adam.

"Not a spell as such," said the prince. "I'm going to meld with Belkaro's mind and using his senses identify Belladonna's scent. Once I know what I'm looking for, I should be able to use the Earth Magic to tell the plants to cast off the scent so that the Air Magic can collect it and send it to the fires for destruction."

"Is there something I can do to help," asked Adam.

"Maybe," replied his son, "but I haven't figured out all the details yet. I'm going to try this afternoon to see if it is even possible. Once I see what is really needed I may need your help."

Apollo excused himself. After collecting a cloak from his room he headed outside and down the path to where the cottage once stood.

Manin and Belkaro were waiting for him. The wolf led them to a small clearing which was only a few trees into the woods. Apollo spread his cloak on the ground and sat down. He instructed Belkaro to sit in front of him and for Manin to sit opposite him.

"Is this going to hurt?" asked Manin.

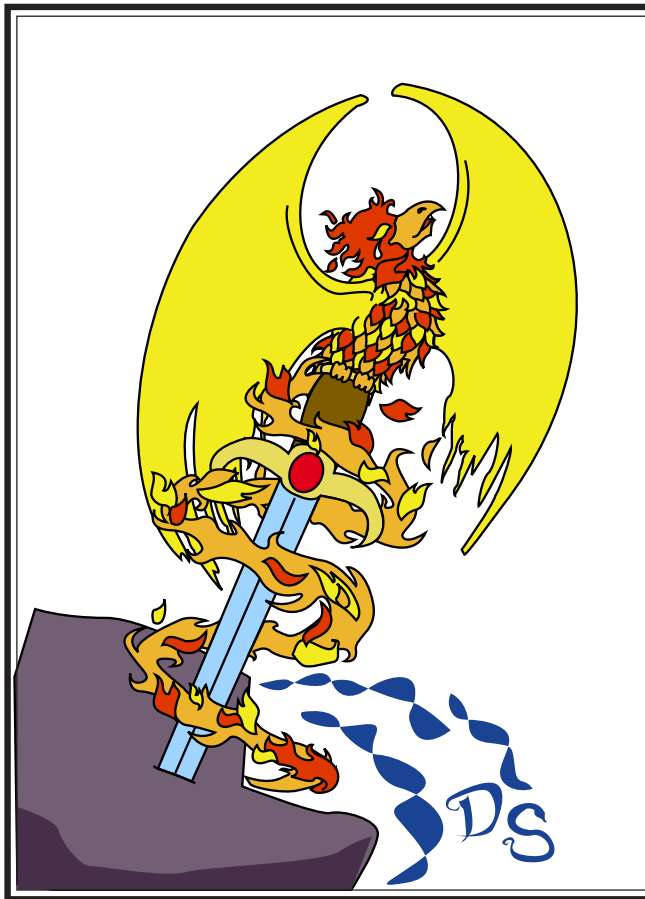
"It shouldn't," responded the prince. "Since this is the first time you've done this you may end up with a slight headache but that would be all. I wouldn't normally ask you to join the meld but you understand Belkaro's words better. Thought to thought I shouldn't need a translator but..."

"...it doesn't hurt either."

"Exactly."

Apollo reached out on both sides of the wolf and joined hands with Manin. "Once I meld with Manin, I'll touch you and bring you into the meld. Understood?"

The wolf nodded and had that look of "get on with it already"



in his eyes.

Apollo reached out his thoughts toward Manin and found his thoughts centered around how good it felt to hold hands in the sunlight. "Later," whispered the prince. "Focus on the wolf." With a common thought in their minds, Apollo was able to link their minds as he had done with Johnny and Rowan many times before. Apollo felt the connection snap in place and felt as if he had done this before with Manin. He could feel Manin's pulse quicken at the contact. He wondered what it would be like to touch minds when they jerked off that night.

"I'd like that," came Manin's thought, "but didn't you say to save that for later?"

"Yes."

Apollo released one of Manin's hands and both placed their free hand on the wolf. The prince extended his thoughts toward the wolf. He felt the wolf tremble.

"I'm not going to hurt you," thought the prince.

At first, the wolf's thoughts seemed much like his growls, but with Manin's thoughts in the meld he began to put words to those growls. "This is weird," came Belkaro's thoughts. "Having someone inside my mind is like I've lost a part of me."

"Think of it like what I should have done to accept you into my pack," offered the prince, "only it is just your mind."

"I think I would prefer the physical," thought Belkaro.

"What are you two talking about?" asked Manin.

Apollo tried to figure a way to express the wolf pack's form of domination but Belkaro didn't share that same need for being sensitive about the matter and recalled the memory of one of his last tests of leadership and its conclusion. Apollo could feel Manin's pulse race and nearly broke the meld as he slipped into Manin's image of wanting the prince to do the same to him.

"Later," thought the prince.

He directed Belkaro to find Belladonna's scent. The wolf stood and moved a few feet from the cloak and lowered his muzzle to the ground. "Here is a sample of where she has walked."

Apollo focused his earth senses on the spot. He could feel the blade of grass in his mind. There was something on its surface. In fact a couple of somethings. With Belkaro's help he learned that a rabbit had nibbled on the neighboring blade of grass and a deer had stepped on it.

"But which scent is which?" he asked in his mind. "Is there a place with just her scent?"

It was nearly impossible to find a place where only the former queen had passed. But with each spot they checked, Apollo began to recognize which scent was the commonality and thus was the one he needed to understand. He wrapped one scent particle with his earth energy and tried to find out what made it unique. The particle was too small so he energized it to attract other similar particles to make something larger. When he collected enough to make a visible oil drop, he tried again. Yes, it felt like the energy of the woman who attacked him as he left the past. He felt his anger at what she had tried to do to his friends, what she did to her own family, rise up and sent a burst of fire at the oil droplet.

"Who dares harm one of my chosen?" came a sudden vocal boom which broke the meld. A dark mist formed around them and an ebony haired woman emerged. Her eyes flashed red in the gloom created by the mist.

"Heca!" shouted Apollo as Belkaro growled at the sudden

appearance of the goddess.

She looked passed the trio and tried to find the victim of the prince's attack. "Where is she? Why did you harm one of my daughters? Chosen or not, I'm going to rip you apart muscle by muscle." She grabbed Apollo by the throat and quickly released him as her hand burned at the contact. "There are more ways to accomplish the task without physical contact."

"There is no one here, your Divine Worshipness," gasped the prince. "We were merely cleansing the area of some stench that has been offending our senses."

"You! I know you," said Heca. "You are supposed to be dead. That miserable tramp told me a lie to get back in my graces! Now tell me what you were doing."

"Back off, Heca!" came Lord Apollo's voice as he stepped out of a sunbeam that pierced the black mist.

"Oh, how sweet. And just where is that love sick moon god to make this a happy reunion?"

"Off helping some moonstruck lovers, I'm sure. I don't need him to cast light on your darkness." With his words, the clearing was filled in sunlight. "Now, why did you harm my godchild? I have little tolerance for when one your priestesses does something so stupid, but you know better."

"But he did something to one of my daughter's first." She had tears in her eyes from the burns on her hands. Lord Apollo put his hands around hers and relieved some of the burn, but not all.

"That should help until we settle this matter," said the Sun God. "Now, Apollo, what is she talking about? Did you attack someone who looks to Heca?"

"No, My Lord." The prince explained what they had been doing. "So, I didn't touch Queen Belladonna, only her cast off energy."

Heca listened carefully as the prince told his side of the story. She stepped over to the cloak and picked up a stray hair. "I acted in haste" said the Dark Mistress, "While she is still my daughter in energy, she is not a favored daughter. I am vexed that she lied to me about your death, so I will give you one warning. Be careful when working with sympathetic magic, child. When something was once part of a person, it will always be part of that person. They will know when you do harm to them, even in such a small way." She lit a fire on one fingertip and brought the hair to its flame and Belkaro yipped in response. "Belladonna knows someone has played with her essence, so what you can do to her, she too can do to you."

She walked over to Lord Apollo and brushed her hand against his cheek. "Now, have I earned freedom from your cursed fire?"

He covered her hand with his own. "Yes. And then some."

"We should have been together long ago," sighed Heca as the pain faded. A mist started to form around her and she faded from sight. "The game has begun."

"I'll never figure her out," said the Sun God. "She spurns my affections in favor of Dion and treats me as if I dumped her. She gives permission to her priestess to try to kill me to win advancement in the ranks and then says we should have been together. It would have been like night and day."

"You two were once lovers?"

"Not exactly but that is not the topic of the moment. Now what were you hoping to accomplish by your stunt?"

"It was not a stunt! Belkaro couldn't track Belladonna the other day because her scent is so thick in the area. I figured that if we

could cleanse the area, then we might have a way to start tracking the queen back to her other hiding places.”

“The queen has walked these grounds many years and I’m sure she has crossed and recrossed her path many times,” offered Lord Apollo. “As a result, it will likely take as many years to properly get a large enough area with which to cast your net.”

“I recognize that, godfather,” said the prince, “but today was just a test to see if it was possible. I’m going to need to fully tap into the Earth Magic to do the job right.”

“Couldn’t you ask the faeries to grant a wish or something like that?” asked Manin.

“Possible but wishes like that tend to have odd consequences such as giving Belladonna the ability to walk around without leaving any scent at all. Which means Belkaro would never have a chance of tracking her.”

“I’m glad you are at least trying to think ahead, son,” said the god. “Now, I think you had better learn more about that sympathetic magic Heca talked about before you try again.”

“Trust me, that jumped to the top of things to ask Princess Lilac when we go to the cave tomorrow.”

“Good. I shall leave you. Watch yourself with Heca. She believes in the saying that revenge is a dish best served cold. Even though she apologized, the fact that she had to do so will not sit well. She will be waiting for the perfect way to get even.” Lord Apollo scratched Belkaro behind the ears before giving his namesake and Manin a quick hug. He stepped into a sunbeam and soon the clearing faded back to the light level it had before his appearance.

“I don’t think I will get used to that,” said Manin.

“Use to what? Gods disappearing into mist and sunbeams?”

“No. Being around gods in the first place, let alone getting hugs from one. It was hard enough back in Star Corners trying to think of

Queen Susan as just another relative coming for a visit. But a god? Giving me a hug? That is beyond fantasy.”

Apollo was trying to decide how to tell Manin about seeing that particular god naked back in the Valley of the Kings but was interrupted by a sound crashing through the bushes in the edge of the clearing. “What was that?”

In an instant, Belkaro’s ears perked up and he launched himself at the shape coming out of the woods. Before he connected, the wolf was covered in a net and he tumbled to the ground with a thud. Apollo called on the winds to blow the intruder away from the wolf as he ran to the Belkaro’s side to untangle him. The wind knocked the intruder into a tree and the sound of something being broken could be heard before they slumped to the ground. No sooner had he knelt down when he heard Manin scream. He spun around and a black hooded form was holding a knife to Manin’s throat.

“One move and your companion dies,” came a deep feminine voice.

Other black hooded forms encircled them, swords raised and lances closing in and restricting the prince’s movement. Apollo quickly analyzed the situation and decided the immediate threat was to Manin. His friend’s eyes were wide with terror. He was a man of peace and had told him that he didn’t handle weapons. Apollo reached up to the solar energy and grabbed a sunbeam and directed its fire into the sword. The brigand yelped at the sudden heat in her hand and dropped the hot sword. As soon as the sword touched the ground, the prince redirected the solar flame from one weapon to the next. As each was dropped the flame had already moved on to the next attacker. He summoned a swirling wind to surround him. As he expanded it, the attackers were forced to hide their eyes from the dirt which was bombarding their eyes. Several stepped back from the wind and tripped on stones which the prince encouraged to rise from the ground.



He grabbed one of the swords which had been dropped and thrust it toward one of the fallen attacker's throat, stopping just as it touched flesh. "Now tell me why you attacked my companions!" he demanded.

"Because I told her to," came a tall, well built figure in black. In his hands, he held a bound and gagged Johnny Jump Up. "Now, do as I command or the faerie dies." He held Johnny by the wings and marched him forward just like a puppeteer would move a marionette. When he stopped, he brought his hands together and held the wings with one hand while he pulled out a knife and held it to Johnny's throat. Several additional black covered figures joined him while some of the original attackers gathered the one who had attacked Belkaro and got them out of the clearing.

Apollo could see pain all over his friend's face. Johnny had once told him that they only real way to control a faerie was to grab their wings. But that wasn't all the prince saw. His saw Hilda Ironwood laying on the ground after being wounded by Laika's clumsy blow with the ax. The images overlapped in him mind and he didn't like what he saw. He launched himself at the leader and forced him to drop his grip on Johnny so that he could defend himself. Like some well rehearsed dance, one of the other attackers tossed their leader a sword so he could parry the next strike.

Swords clashed as the prince and the brigand's leader fought. A small part of the prince's mind was aware that one of the other brigands had grabbed Johnny while another held a sword dangerously close to his flesh. One sudden movement, deliberate or not, could cause the sword to nick him and cause his death. There was no time for that thought as he parried a blow by the leader. He knew he had limited time to fight this battle. He concentrated on the physical battle while letting a small piece of his brain figure out a plan. He gathered energy to himself and healed the small cuts he got before they could bleed. He set that energy to automatically flow. He felt himself grow stronger as he felt his opponent start to expend more energy with every blow. He heard something. Manin? He let a small piece of his mind see what was going on with his friend. He was struggling to get free of two guards who had him pinned to the ground while a third held the sword to his chest. He reached down and pulled in as much earth energy as he could. As he parried the attacks by the leader, the prince sent out small threads of energy to each of the brigands to be sure he could attack all of them at once. With connections secured he circled around the leader so that the prince ended up near the brigands holding Johnny. He wanted to be sure to be close to the faerie to prevent accidental injury when he unleashed the energy he held inside. Just as he got within reach, the prince launched a full force attack on the leader and forced him to step back. As he got that extra moment from blows from the leader, the prince dropped his sword and grabbed the arm of the one holding the sword to Johnny's neck and swung it around with such force that he heard something snap. In that moment, he let forth the eruption of bound up earth energy and caused the earth to shake. Everyone fell to the ground as the earth moved under their feet.

"Enough of this," commanded the prince. "You have attacked my friends." He felt a storm building overhead and reached up to the sky to call the lightning down.

"Please stop," came the weak voice of the one whose shoulder had just been dislocated. With their other hand, they pulled off their hood revealing Dana.

Apollo stood in stunned silence as he stared at one of his guards

crying in pain. "You?! Betraying me?"

"No," said the leader as he pulled off his hood. Even before the hood revealed the face, the prince could feel in the energy that it would be Rondar he saw. "They were under my order to stage an attack as kind of a weapons training exercise. We figured a surprise attack would be the best way to see how you would apply everything you had learned in class. We do this often with trainees. We didn't count on such a reaction."

"And just what did you expect? An enemy who has sworn to kill my entire family slaughtered hundreds of my relatives just a few yards from here and tried to do the same to me. A goddess just tried to strangle me. And my friends get attacked by parties unknown. What was I supposed to do, turn invisible and run and hide? Stand there and go 'Please don't hurt us' while I watch their necks sliced open? Blow my horn and wait for someone to come rescue me while they died?" He picked up the sword that had been at Johnny's throat. "Did you know that one nick from this could kill him?"

"What?" came the collective response from Rondar, the guards and even Johnny.

"You didn't know?"

"What do you mean," said Johnny now freed from his bonds. "I've been around swords and such all my life and never have had a problem."

"Have you ever been cut?" Johnny shook his head. "Have you ever asked Hilda how her sisters died? You might want talk to her about how Hilda Ironwood died." After the adrenaline rush of the battle, the memory of Hilda Ironwood's death overwhelmed him. "She died protecting me."

"How can that be?" asked a puzzled prince. "Hilda Harbell says that happened so long ago that she doesn't even remember. How could you be the one she was protecting?"

"It was the night of my eighteenth birthday and another friend attacked me. He thought I had betrayed his friendship and trust. He was still hurt because the king had killed his brother as part of one of Belladonna's plots and somehow that got twisted in his mind that I would do the same to him. Hilda Ironwood tried to protect me but was injured on my behalf and died in my arms."

Belkaro came over and rubbed his head on Apollo's leg. "He says that Laika never forgave himself for attacking you," translated Manin. "And according to the tale, the faeries stopped going to the Rysbal Court while he was on the throne. They never forgave him for the death of a faerie."

"The history lesson is fascinating," said Rondar. Belkaro snarled as he neared so he changed directions and headed towards one of the fallen guards who hadn't stood up yet. "We have some injuries to take care of first." He knelt down by the attacker who had been thrown against the tree. It was Stane. Rondar felt his head and checked his eyes. "I think he has a concussion. And then there are multiple people with burns. I can snap Dana's shoulder in place but she's in a lot of pain."

"Then you should get them to a healer," said the prince as he applied some healing energy to Manin, who had been rubbing his wrists where Shana had been holding him overly tight.

"I could use some of that for your guards," said Rondar.

"No. They are your guards right now," snapped Apollo as he turned to face his father's lover. He looked at all of them as he spoke. "My guards wouldn't attack me in jest. They are supposed to

be the ones protecting me.” He held up Oceana’s Horn. “What would have happened if I blew this horn? How many people would have come running to the rescue of their prince? And would one of them stopped to think that you were my guards and this was just a test? How many innocent villagers or other guards would you have had to hurt in this trial?”

Toby walked over and knelt before him. A tear was cascading down his cheek. “Please forgive us, Your Majesty. We never thought about how you would react. As Rondar said, we do this all the time with trainees as part of their final exercises.”

The others, including Rondar, also knelt. “It was wrong of me to put you in this situation without first assessing your battle prowess in the salle first,” offered Rondar. “I would have known your reactions were those of a fighter and would have prepared you for the possibility of the attack. As it was, I was still seeing the child whose strength is in archery, not swordsmanship.”

“Forgive you?” asked the prince. “Maybe eventually, but not right now. You are part of my guard and I do have some obligations to you.” He went to each of them and gave them some energy to remove the worst of the pain. “You will need to see healers for the true healing. I don’t want to be so weak from taking care of you that I have nothing available should a true attack occur.”

He stood and watched the guards carry Stane toward the manor. He felt bad about what he had done and had been silently checking him out while Rondar examined him. The prince couldn’t find any serious injury other than a big lump on his head. The cracking sound must have been a branch snapping as he fell against the tree. As the guards disappeared into the trees, Rondar looked back and hung his head as he continued. All of the guards had that look, but it hurt most when the prince seeing his weapons teacher with the same look.

“Rondar,” he called as he ran towards him. “I am sorry I reacted so intensely.”

“No need to apologize, my prince. You were right. We didn’t stop to think that there is someone who knows these woods better than us had already attacked you; let alone understand the full power you now control. Lighting the fire with a flick of your hand is nothing in comparison to what we witnessed...no, experienced today.”

“Let’s say we both did things we were proud of today.”

“There is nothing for you to be ashamed of. You did exactly what you should have done given the fact that you didn’t know it was a test.”

“I wasn’t talking about that,” said Apollo. “I meant afterwards. I should have been more thankful for the test. You were only thinking of what is needed for my survival.”

“And I should have stopped the test when you called down the fire. And I should have known about the risk we were asking Johnny to take as part of the trial but I didn’t. Will you forgive me?”

“Forgiven.” Apollo gave Rondar a hug. “And Stane will be fine. I’ve been checking on him and he just bonked his head. It’s a good thing that he’s the one in the group with the thickest skull.”

Rondar laughed. The hearty sound dispelled the last of the tension in the air. “No, that would have been me.” He gave the prince another quick hug. “Are you going to join me in checking on everyone?”

“Later. Right now, I need to think.”

Rondar dashed off to catch up with the guards. Apollo turned around and saw Manin and Belkaro deep in conversation. Manin’s words were soft, probably as not to disturb his talk with Rondar. He was tempted to ask the wind to bring the words to his ear but he knew that would be wrong. Manin took the temptation away by calling to him.

“Good, you came back,” he said. “Belkaro is confused and I couldn’t really answer his question.”

“Oh?”

“He knew that those were members of your pack when they attacked him. He is wondering if that was some form of Leadership Challenge and whether or not those are now outcasts that should be eliminated so they don’t come back to challenge again in the future.”

Apollo thought for a moment as to how to explain the situation. “It was a challenge of a sort but not one where they hoped to take the leadership from me. Rather, they were making sure that I was prepared should a formal Leadership Challenge from outside the pack be issued. I think they just learned that their cub has fangs and claws.”

“Well, I think you showed them that you are prepared to use them,” said Manin. “You were like some hero in a storybook when you called down those flames. It was almost like I could see fire in your eyes. If I hadn’t known it was you, I would have been frightened.”

“I’m sorry,” said Apollo as he reached out to his friend. “I didn’t mean to frighten you.”

“I said ‘would have been.’ I wasn’t. In fact, I was impressed that you were doing that to rescue me. Father gave up trying to teach me weaponry after the fourth time my sword cut my belt when I drew it out. As I stood there semi naked, my father said that Aries was showing them which sword I was destined to wield so he stopped trying to make me into a fighter.”



Apollo laughed. "Oh, I'm not laughing at you," he quickly added. "Rondar had all but given up on my swordsmanship and said that I would likely cut my belt. It is just funny that you actually went and did it. Now, after that workout, I could stand to wash up." He picked up his cloak and started to head to the manor but stopped so suddenly that Manin almost bumped into him. "I don't know if I'm ready to face my aunt and father after what I did to their guards."

"From what I have learned of King Adam while you were in your coma, I have a feeling that Rondar and the others are probably feeling the same way about telling him of what happened. I mean, nine against one and here you are standing without a sign of having been in combat." Manin sniffed. "Well, other than the fact that you do need that shower. But if you don't want to go to the manor, what about that pond you took me to after we left the encampment?"

"Great idea!" he said with enthusiasm and in a sudden change of thought, "Oh, I can't do that. I don't have any bread for the swan. I dare not show up a third time without a treat for her."

"I can take care of that," said Manin. "I remembered that you said we would likely be hungry after you tried to get rid of the Dark Queen's scent for the wolves so I asked Teddy for some food." He held up the knapsack he had been carrying in demonstration of his foresight. "That pond would be as perfect for a picnic as here."

"The pond it is."

Apollo opened the portal to the pond. He ushered Belkaro and Manin through before stepping through himself. As soon as he closed the portal he saw the swan swimming towards the shore.

"Good afternoon, my lady," he said as Manin joined him in bowing towards her.

"Good afternoon to you too, young man. Dare I hope that you haven't forgotten me a third time?"

He made an act of searching his pockets and 'discovering' the loaf of bread Manin had in his knapsack. He broke off some pieces and tossed them to her. "Very good. Just like the bread Jade Rose's baker, Popover, used to make when she came to visit court."

"I do believe that Theadorable said his father's name was Popover. Perhaps he learned it from him."

"Popover had a son? Now that is a surprise," said the swan. "He seemed to be such a man's lady. Always flirting with the guards and saying things like 'Let's pop over to my place and see what else I can make rise.'"

Apollo laughed. "That sounds like something Teddy would say too."

"So much has changed since I came to this pond and no one comes down to talk to me anymore since Amaranth left court. How is she doing anyway?"

Apollo informed her of the death of the former faerie queen after the attack by Belladonna. Her feathers ruffled as the prince told her of the discovery in the cottage. "That..." she pause a moment and they heard what sounded like counting, "All I can safely say that it is a good thing that Myron didn't pick her as a bride. I can't begin to imagine what would have happened if she became queen before the sundering. Each time I hear of her foul deeds I don't think she could do anything worse. Sweet mother of us all! The twins! Her own daughter! Now this! What will it take to rid us of that creature?" She ruffled her feathers again. "Enough unpleasantness for one afternoon. I have been rude. Please introduce me to your companions. I remember seeing your one companion from your last visit."



"This is Manin, formerly of Star Corners," said the prince as Manin bowed to the swan. "He helped care for Amaranth after she retired to his community."

"Then she was well cared for as I can clearly see the healer's energy about you," she said. "Very caring and comforting as if we are already friends."

"Ever at your service," said Manin.

"And do you remember Rowan? Amaranth's brother? And Iris Angelica? Queen Daisy's daughter?" asked Apollo. She brightened at the name of the former queen and nodded. "This is Belkaro, their many times over grandson."

"It is good to meet you as I spent many an afternoon chatting with your ancestors."

Belkaro walked up to the edge of the pond and extended his muzzle. "He would like to rub noses with someone who knew his ancestors," offered Manin.

The swan hesitated. She craned her head and looked at the wolf. She looked at the prince and back to the wolf. She arched her neck forward and touched his muzzle. "I have felt your energy before. Have we met and I've forgotten?"

"No," translated Manin. "I have not wandered outside of my home territory before. This is an adventure for me. But it is said that a wolf's spirit lives on after the body is no more. If the wolf satisfied our god, they are allowed to join his pack. Otherwise, they are returned to a new body to try again."

"Then I wish you well on this attempt."

"How is it that you are still gracing us with your beauty?" asked Apollo. "I had never heard that swans had such longevity."

"Aren't you going to introduce me to your other companion before you ply me with questions about my age? What is wrong with you modern children? I would have thought your parents taught you better manners than that."

"My other companion?" asked the prince. "These are the only two."

"Then who is that other fellow that came through the portal with you? The one who is being so shy and hiding in the shadows by the tree?"

Apollo stretched out his senses to where the swan indicated. "Johnny! What are you doing lurking in the bushes?"

Johnny stepped out from under a leaf and grew to non-flying size. His head was hung low as he stared at the ground. Apollo walked over to him and wiped a tear from his cheek. He placed his hand

under the faerie's chin and lifted it so he could look Johnny in the eyes.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"It's just that..." Johnny sniffled and couldn't speak.

The swan filled in the thought for him. "I've seen that look a hundred times over. You went and grew up on him and now he thinks you won't believe in faeries anymore."

"That's ridiculous," said the prince. "You know that can't be true, Johnny. My great grandmother was your queen. How could I not believe in faeries?"

"I know, but..." Johnny looked at Manin and then back to Apollo. "but you won't need me anymore."

"I think I'll excuse myself," offered the swan. "I have a feeling you have more important issues to discuss than the uneventful happenings in my little corner of the kingdom." Before anyone could respond, she had already turned and already swum away from shore.

Belkaro growled to get attention. "He says he's tired of talking. When does he get to eat?"

Manin opened his knapsack and Belkaro stuck his nose in it. With an audible huff, he turned around and dashed into the forest.

"I guess he didn't like human food any more than Laika did," said Apollo. When he saw their stares, he added "Humans cook their food while the wolves prefer a...um, fresher diet. Now what makes you think I won't need you, Johnny? You're my teacher and friend. I still have a lot to learn from you."

"What can I teach you after that demonstration?" mumbled the faerie. "You were flashing with power. I was there to help you. Rondar was going to stop as soon as you freed me and I would be able to shift size. And then, at the end, you were mad at me. I...I didn't know that a knife could actually harm me. A cut would be the worst I expected."

"I wasn't mad at you. I was scared down to my underbritches that something might happen to you. Until Hilda Ironwood died, I didn't know the risks the sisters were taking by training with me.

They deliberately kept that from me so I would work out with them with full force and not try to protect them from harm. When you accepted the responsibility of being my bodyguard I would have thought she said something to you."

Johnny thought a moment. "Maybe she did. I sort of remember a time when she said a knife could kill me and I figured that was a bit obvious."

Apollo laughed. "I can picture her saying something like that. Well, now you know that there is more to that statement." He broke off a piece of bread and handed the loaf to Manin. "And I was afraid for you, too," he said. "If anything had happened to you..."

"But it didn't. It didn't happen to either of us thanks to you," said Manin. "And I suspect that the stories have already grown about what did occur."

Apollo groaned. "I hadn't thought about that part. We better jump in the lake and head back before the story grows out of proportion." He started to strip and noticed Manin hesitating. "Do I have to get in and splash you again to get you out of your clothes?"

"Did I miss something?" asked Johnny.

"I doubt it," said the prince as he tossed the last of his clothes over Johnny's head. "First one in gets to schickle the last one in." At the last word he jumped into the pond.

"Hey, no fair," said Johnny. As he emerged from under Apollo's underbritches he heard the sound of a splash and Manin had joined the prince in the pond.

The trio had barely started the game of Schnickle Tag when Apollo stopped to listen to something in the wind. It was his father and the guards were in a panic because they couldn't find him. Apollo stepped out of the water and headed toward his clothes. He sent a message back to his father and started to laugh when his father replied.

"What's so funny?" asked Manin as he joined the prince.

"Apparently father wasn't in favor of the little test today and wants me to stay away from the manor just a little while longer. He said he would call me to come home when the guards come to him to confess that they can't find me anywhere." He grabbed a piece of fruit and stretched out on the grass. "That sun feels good."

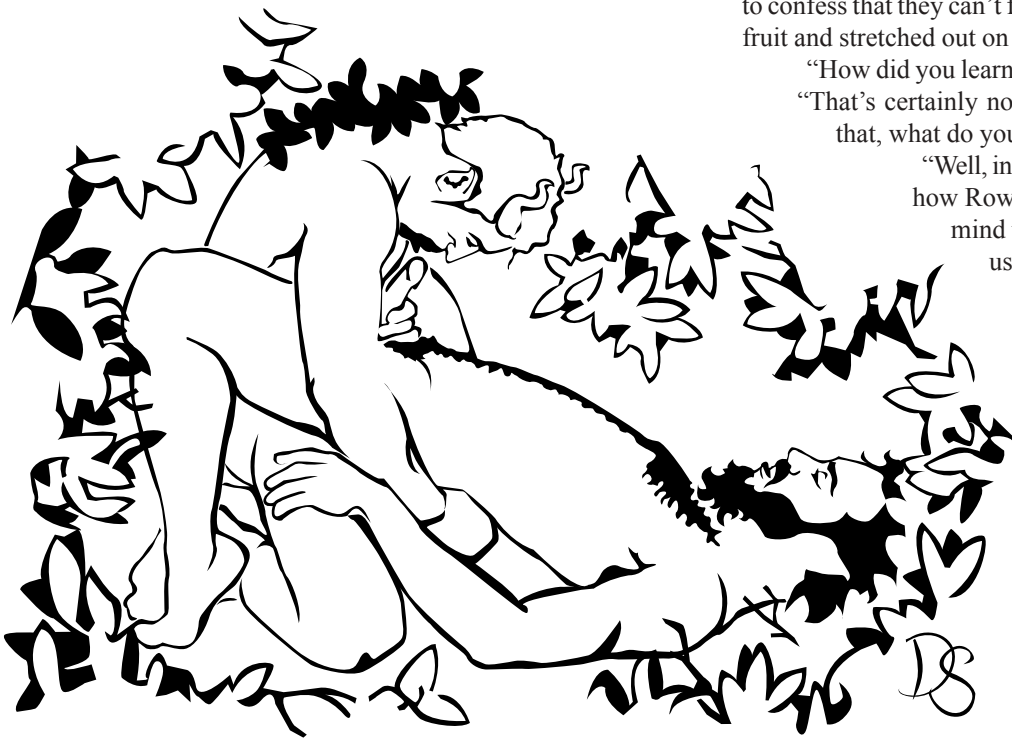
"How did you learn to the elements like that?" asked Johnny.

"That's certainly not something I taught you. If you can do that, what do you need me for?"

"Well, in a way you helped teach me." He explained how Rowan and he had worked together using the mind to mind techniques that Johnny had often used to help him see the magical energy in the world. "Amaranth was surprised to learn that the mental games the male faeries played actually could be useful. She didn't even think a male faerie had what it takes to be a Faerie Godperson. I turned her dress invisible to prove that anything is possible."

Both Manin and Johnny gasped. "You didn't," said Johnny, who found the words first.

"Actually, I did but that really was for a different reason a bit later but it proved my point in a dramatic way."



He spent the rest of their meal telling his friends what Amaranth was like when she was younger as both had only known her in her later years.

"Just wait 'til Viola finds out I've learned the secret about the Bubble Entrance," said Johnny excitedly. "I can't wait to see her face when I make the entrance she's been trying to perfect for years."

Apollo laughed. "I can't wait to see how silly you are going to look wearing the spiked tiara that makes it possible. Tiara and leather. That's certainly going to start a novel fashion trend."

"Maybe you're right. I'll let Viola have the spotlight."

Apollo groaned. "I know we have to tell Viola but I'll have to figure out something to tell Lily. I'll never live it down if I give one a secret but not the other."

They heard Belkaro howl a little off in the distance. "He says he found something and wants us to come." Apollo got up and started to head towards where he sensed Belkaro's excitement. "Aren't you forgetting something?" Apollo looked puzzled so Manin pointed. "Your clothes, perhaps?"

"Put yours on if you want, but there is no one anywhere near here," said Apollo. He paused a moment to scan the area with his earth senses. "Well, only if you don't count some squirrels, rabbits and several different birds."

Apollo ran off not giving Manin a chance to answer. Belkaro was standing by a bush. When Manin joined him, Apollo was happy to see that he hadn't dressed. "He says he noticed your smell in the area and was curious to know what you had been doing. He noticed that it was often side by side with wolf scent."

"After all these years? How is that possible?"

"The area is protected," offered Johnny. "Can't you feel it? It feels like a very old spell. It's weak but still effective for discouraging visitors when a member of the Charming family is present."

"What got you so excited that you howled?" asked Apollo.

Belkaro put his nose to the ground. "He says that there is something here under the bush."

Apollo knelt down on the ground and searched the spot that the wolf had been indicating. His hand felt something and picked it up. "Oh my! Is this what I think it is?" He quickly cleaned off some mud and held up a ring for the others to see. He looked closely at the engravings. On one half of the band was a human hand which was covered by a wolf paw from the other half of the band. Apollo stared at it in disbelief.

"What is it?" asked Johnny.

"This is a friendship ring that Daisy gave to Laika and myself soon after she took the throne, only..." he looked at the ring closely. "Only, when he got mad and hated me, he threw it into the lake saying I was no friend to him. How did it get under that bush?"

Belkaro pointed his muzzle at the pond. "He says that her scent is nearby and that it is fresh."

"Her?"

"I think he means Lady Swan." Belkaro growled. "Yes, he means Lady Swan."

"But why would she do that?" asked a puzzled Apollo.

"Perhaps you needed to be reminded," came the swan's voice from shore.

"Reminded of what, my lady?"

"That friends can be hurt perhaps," she said. "Or that he was your true friend even though he forgot for a while. I saw that you still wore your ring and remembered that he gave his ring to my safe

keeping. I thought it might be time to bring this to you."

Apollo felt the ring on his finger. "I almost don't even think of this. There is a part of me that struggles to remember everything that happened in that time."

"Is that how you think of your friends?" chided the swan. "You barely feel their touch? And don't think about them even though you have a reminder?"

"It isn't like that," snapped Apollo. "I remember Laika clearly. When I look at Belkaro I almost expect him to transform into a human and wrestle with me like Laika would. When I saw Iris Angelica with the pack I thought that Laika might be standing by to see how his daughter handled the situation. And it was worse at the manor where I held him after his brother died. Or here where we were happiest. Even right now, holding his ring in my hand I can feel him near."

He paused for a moment and Manin placed his hand on the prince's shoulder. "He meant a lot to you, didn't he?"

"Yes. He was almost like a part of me," said Apollo. "It didn't take much to think about him. I could always feel his energy. With the barest thought, I could hear his howl in the wind. I've caught myself several times, I think I heard him and wanted to call to him."

"Perhaps he's trying to say something to you," said the swan.

"That's impossible," said Apollo.

"Is it?" asked Johnny. "Didn't your father tune in to the wind to hear your mother's words from the past?"

"Do you think?" asked the prince. "Even after nearly five hundred years?"

"It's possible," offered the faerie. "You, yourself, are proof that impossible things can happen. If I told you when we first met that you would be bringing down bolts of fire from the sun to rage and win a battle with nine of the best guards in three kingdoms, what would you have said?"

"Impossible."

"And yet you did it."

Apollo went silent and just listened. He focused on the ring he held in his hand and asked the wind to bring Laika's words to him. After a few moments something started to grow in his ears. It was Laika's voice, only older and weaker than he remembered. Someone was talking to him. It sounded familiar but somehow different.

The second voice was speaking. It seemed to have an other world feel about it. "I have come for you. Are you finally ready to join my pack?"

"I am not worthy, Rowan. I betrayed my pack leader."

The second voice narrowed and stopped booming and sounded like the former faerie. "He forgave you, my friend. I forgave you. I am who I am because of my love for you. You have been a fine leader to your people."

"But my job isn't done. Daisy entrusted a secret to me and told me to only give it to him."

"That's a fine thought, my friend. But we both know that your body is telling you otherwise."

"Then grant me my request and not take me to your pack. If it takes forever I will wait right here for him to return."

"So be it."

He heard a loud crack and then nothing.

Divine Gifts

by Hermes Polyandros

There are times that make you wonder if there really isn't someone listening to your wishes and desires.

When I was first in the Craft, I looked at pictures of High Priests head wear and wondered if I would even be able to have anything like that. My vision was one different than those that I had seen before though. Somewhere I had seen an illustration of a man wearing horns but they extended out in front and not like antlers, single tined and not from the sides of the forehead but extending straight out in front.

All the horns that I ever saw were antlers and were set in bands or a sort of helmet on the top of the head and to the sides. All the horns that I knew of or had seen were full rakes of many tines and not any of single tines.

Now it is one thing to find a shop that had just the right sort of chalice that you wanted, the right athame, a cauldron or other tool but I never ran across any horned sets or even horns. Nothing like what I was looking for. One thing that I learned early is that if you are patient and the Gods find you worthy of gifts they will give you what you want, and often make you work for it for that way you will have a more appreciative feeling when it is found.

I grew up in Upstate New York and was trained by a woman that attended the same college I did but was from New York City. My family had a camp in the foothills of the Catskills on a small lake. It was a magical place to me to begin with, but only after my training did I really get to know that real magick. We fondly called the place simply the cottage. It consisted of 4 front lots and 4 rear lots of woodlands from which we cut wood for the fireplace. Through that rear lot my maternal grandfather had cut a path that lead to the roadway that ran behind the back lots and completed the circle and connected the dead end of our road to that of the main circuit road. I used to go up that path frequently as it went through thicket of young trees and open areas where ferns and bracken grew in damp cool shade.

Here I would worship the gods and nature and feel their presence. At times I would feel them even when alone. But I never expected the way I would know that they did listen to me.

One early Summer, I walked up the path just wandering and looking at the newly opened leaves and fiddle heads now fanned out into full ferns. Something was different that day though. As I walked taking in the beauty of nature all around me I was pulled, as it seemed to a place about twenty feet to the left of the path. I do not know to this day what drew me there. But there was a skeleton of a deer and a log laying across it as if a dead tree had fallen on it as it passed. The skull was beginning to turn green as algae was evident. How long it had laid there I could not tell but the most marvelous part was that the short horns were single tines like a yearling had and were curved just as I wanted them to look like.

At first I could not believe my luck. No one had such horns and generally the hunters like the bucks with many tines on them. I stood that for a few minutes and just tried to think what I could do and whether I should take that skull or leave it alone. I finally decided to bring the skull down and see what I could do.

My father was a carpenter and so we always had carpenter's tools around either our home or cottage. I showed the skull to my



father and he said that I could likely cut them off but just where and how. He left me to figure that out myself. Well, I could not pull them off as they were firmly attached to the skull I did not want to cut them off and not knowing how to mount them I did not know if I should leave bone or not. I finally decided to cut the skull and that way when I was able to mount them then I would have enough of what ever was needed for the mounting and I did not want to keep the skull. I cut the skull, thanking and blessing the skull for the blessing it had given me, and then returned to the woods. I decided to bury the skull on the opposite side of the path from the skeleton. I brought a shovel and began to dig. The ground was very stony and everywhere I dug hit a stone, but I persisted and finally had a hole big enough to bury it. I covered it with the stones and gave thanks to the spirit of the deer that had given me the horns and then the Goddess and the Horned God.

It was about a year later that I found someone skilled in leather to make a mounting to my specifications for a reasonable price. He made a band that would fit my head and cut the skull fragments off and screwed them to the band. He then lined the band with soft leather and lacings for adjustment purposes at the back. Between the horns he made a pentacle in white. I was very pleased with the result. I went back to the spot where I had thought I had found the skeleton, but the spot was empty. The log was still there but not a sign of a bone. I crossed the path and looked for the spot where the skull had been buried near an oak tree and found that likewise it was not to be found. My first thoughts were that this was weird, but then I did not know that origin of weird. Weird comes from the Anglo-saxon *wyrð* meaning "fate". Indeed it was weird and fated to be found by me, and who but the divine presences could have done this. None other.

Blessed Be.

Aíry Faerie 4F Spread - Meet the In-Laws

by Phoenix

It has been a few issues since we've done a spread using the deck we are creating. I always find the challenge of using a new deck is that the "book" is very good about telling people what different cards represent but something always seems lacking when trying to take those descriptions and applying them to the position the card landed in a spread. Of course, the ability to interpret the cards is the secret of becoming a great card reader.

There is the other side to that. I can recall a dinner with some friends and they did a reading for me. The deck they used was so complex that the book literally had something about how to interpret each card in the various positions. I don't think I need to say much about the experience of watching them flip back and forth in the book to get the exact meaning needed for the reading. And dare I say that one of the people was a professional reader at one of our local metaphysical stores?

So while I write in other places about the concept of each card, I think it is equally important to show how they interact in a spread. For this issue, we are staying with the traditional ten card spread. The situation we focused on when selecting cards was that the questioner, "Steve," had recently gotten into a relationship. They were into the two to three month stage and it was time for the dreaded moment. Steve had been invited to join his partner for dinner with his partner's parents. This was to be their first meeting and Steve was wondering what to expect. The resulting selection of cards is shown on this page.



At the heart of the spread we have our Orgy/Tower. A big dogpile of energy that is about to explode. Crossing it we have our lovers who are mourning the loss of their dog. Offhand, I'm going to bet that it isn't going to be the best of times. Below the reading are our koi and above is our Magician. Coming from the past are the lovebirds and heading into the future is our fighting fish.

Let's focus on this core part of the reading for a moment. From the past we have the closeness of the lovers. The present is the frenzy and building explosion but the lover is standing by to comfort. And in the future you come out fighting. Crowning the energy is the Magician who says you have all these tools to work with to help you. The foundation is the koi and I want to focus on that a moment.

The art that DragonSwan came up for our fish has always intrigued me. I get such a sense of perspective from this image. I feel as if I'm looking into the pond from the outside. Well...can we say that Steve is doing just that? He is going into that situation as the outsider. Once he enters he's going to discover that trouble is brewing and it is going to hurt but as the magician, he has the tools he needs to go into battle. Now, the other interesting thing is that we generally think of betas being in their fishbowl. Doesn't that also describe the situation. And let's face it, the flashy beta is one of the stars of the aquarium and Steve's lover is bringing him home and putting him on display. The beta spreads out his fins to put on the best show and so too should Steve.

Working up the remaining cards - "how you see yourself" is entering the classroom. Remember that first day of school? You walk into the room for the first time and no one is there? You want to turn and run before someone sees you? I don't think this situation for Steve is any different.

"How do others see you?" Steve is a tree growing in one of the most unlikely places. There is all that chaos that is happening but somehow, he is that tree that has managed to get that root started. Perhaps the in-laws accept having a gay son just as long as they didn't have to meet the friends and are now forced to acknowledge it. Maybe they never think that anyone is good enough for their little boy (and that probably extends to include the Pope and the Queen of England.) Sometime during the evening, Steve can plant the seed and win over Mother Burnside.

The challenge is our lizards. They have learned to adapt to living outside their watery homes. So too shall Steve learn to adapt. Meanwhile, just chill out and sit in the sun.

And finally, the outcome is our phoenix. The fires have raged and left behind the burnt trees. But there is new life.

It is going to be a challenging evening, there is no question in my mind about that. The explosive energy is something that needs to happen just as the forest fire is needed to clear out the deadwood so that new growth can occur. Perhaps it is needed so the parents can finally face their feelings about having a gay son. Your being there may be the catalyst for a discussion that is long overdue. Maybe it ends up so ugly that there is a rift in the family. Maybe that is what your lover needed to move on with his own life instead of being Momma's Boy.

He is there for you, or perhaps it is you who are there for him. Eitherway, there will be something good that comes out of the experience for the evening.

Story Game

Chapter 8: by Phoenix

....Brian woke with a start as the smell of smoke filled his nostrils. He looked up and saw his altar in flames.

“Shit! I must have fallen asleep after I lit the candles.”

He dashed to the kitchen and grabbed the fire extinguisher. Just as the last of the flames were doused, the smoke detector went off. “Great,” he thought. “Now everyone will know.” He went into the hall and yanked out the battery, silencing the high pitched shrieks from the alarm.

Brian went back into his bedroom to survey the damage. Other than the mess and singed altar, it appeared that he had woken at just the right moment before more serious damage could be done. With the immediate adrenalin rush over “Man, that ironwood incense was giving me some pretty crazy dreams.”

He felt the necklace around his chest so he twisted it upwards so he could see the figure on the chain, “And you Mr. Pan have to be responsible for some of them too. I have never had such erotic dreams in my life. I’m going to have to watch out for you!” As he left the pendant fall back to his chest, he could almost picture the little faun winking at him.

BAM BAM BAM... “What the...” came a deep masculine voice at his front door.

Before Brian could react, the voice continued. “You in here? Your door opened when I knocked.” The voice grew louder as it followed the smell of smoke and through the lingering haze came what could only be described as a god. He had long raven black hair, the kind you could just run your fingers through when you were having hot sex, his eyes were almost the same color, dark Smokey liquid pools that you could lose yourself in forever. He was tall and beefy. His broad, well defined shirtless chest had a small patch of fur right over his heart and a thin trail of fur led down to his groin, which was hidden behind a brightly colored sarong.

“Hey, are you OK?” said the stranger as he sat down on the bed. “I’ve been standing there a couple of minutes and you haven’t said anything.”

“Sorry. I must have fallen asleep with my candles lit and I had some of the craziest dreams. Seeing you step through that smoke haze I thought I was having another one of those dreams.”

The stranger laughed. “My lover would beg to differ. If I were in them, he would tell you it was a nightmare, not a dream.”

Brian tried to laugh at the thought of anyone saying this handsome hunk was a nightmare. But he realized that Jeffery used to say the same thing about him. Now Jeffery was gone and maybe he was right. A tear started to form in his eye.

“I know that look,” said the stranger as he put his arm around Brian. “Your jerk of a boyfriend says that about you. Where is he anyway? I haven’t seen him in the halls recently.”

The warmth of human touch felt good to Brian. He found himself opening up to this complete stranger. He told him everything, including his unkind words about Brian being a witch. “Tonight was the first time I lit my candles in a long time. After what happened, maybe he was right.”

“Being a witch isn’t a bad thing. Leaving lit candles unattended is another,” chided the stranger. “Anyway, I came over to invite you to our party.”

“Thank you, but I don’t even know your name, why would you invite me to your party?”

“As to the first, I’m Apollo.”

Brian held out his hand for a handshake but Apollo brought him in for a hug. Brian could feel Apollo’s cock stirring beneath the thin fabric of the sarong. Apollo kissed Brian full on the lips and soon tongues were entwined.

“God’s how I’ve wanted to do that since I first saw you with that jerk. I knew he was wrong for you and I knew what you really needed.”

“Which is what?” asked Brian, still gasping for breathe after the kiss.

“Immediately, it is to come to our party.” Gesturing to his attire, “We just came back from our annual trip to Hawaii and thought it would be fun to revisit that sunny energy on a chilly night.”

“But I have nothing fun to wear for a tropical party,” protested Brian, wondering why he was suddenly feeling shy after that passionate kiss.

“Nothing is fun too,” said Apollo as he rubbed his hand over Brian’s hard cock that was straining to be released from his jeans. “The only reason I’m wearing this sarong is because I didn’t want to shock people by walking down the hall butt naked.” He untied the knot around his waist and wrapped the sarong around Brian’s waist. “Put this on or join me and we will shock them together.”

Apollo kissed Brian again and while tongues explored deeper connections in mouths, Brian felt Apollo unbuttoning his jeans. He allowed the god in human form to strip him.

“Yummy. What do you think about three-ways?” asked Apollo. “Cuz once my lover sees your furry pelt, he is not going to let me keep you to myself.”

Brian had always thought three-ways were just a fantasy. They weren’t for basic folks like him. They were against everything that he had been taught about being faithful to just one person. But with Apollo’s hand on his quivering cock, he could only let out a soft moan.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

Apollo led Brian through the apartment by his cock. He only allowed him to stop long enough to pick up his keys to lock the door. Once in the hall, something came over Brian and he suddenly felt free. Here he was standing naked in a public place. Jeffery would be mortified to see him since Jeffery would wear clothes in the shower if that was possible. But more than that, he was naked with a stud who was also naked and going to a party where clothes weren’t allowed. Part of him knew that he should be scared about all of the unknowns ahead but Apollo was radiating such calm that he knew everything would be just perfect. Brian was almost disappointed when no one opened their door to witness his bold display.

When they got to the end of the hall, Apollo opened the door and stood to the side to allow Brian to enter first. As he stepped into the room, he felt the sand ooze up between his toes. He looked up to see a man around a campfire on a beach. The final colors of the sunset were just fading in the sky and a cool breeze caressed his skin. The lone figure rose from the fire and headed toward him. Long red hair floated in the breeze behind him as he approached.

“I’m Hermes. I see my better half rescued you from the clutches of that evil villain who doesn’t appreciate fine jewelry.”

It must have been the dwindling light that had prevented Brian from recognizing the owner of Midnight Magik at first sight. “Did

you give this to me? How did you do that? No one was in the hall when I opened the door.”

“I’m fast. But I didn’t give him to you. He gave himself.”

Brian couldn’t get Hermes to say more. He was led to the fire. When he settled on the ground, Brian felt Apollo slide in behind him, wrapping his strong legs around him. Hermes stood before him and sat down in Brian’s lap in a fluid motion that caused Hermes’s dick to slide from the top of Brian’s head all the way down until it reached Brian’s belly, only stopping its descent when Hermes impaled himself on Brian’s stiff cock. Without any foreplay or warning, Brian found himself fucking a man he had lusted after every time he went into the store.

“Don’t think,” groaned Hermes. “Don’t fantasize. Do it like you never have done before.”

Apollo turned Brian’s head so that the two could kiss. The fire of the living sun was in the kiss and Brian felt the heat shoot down to his cock. Jeffery had always told Brian that he was boring vanilla when it came to sex, but here in the moon light, Brian felt the strawberry of the red head on his lap and the chocolate of the brunette kissing him turn him into something special. He started thrusting into Hermes, who in turn began to ride Brian’s cock like a champion bull rider. Apollo had a way of playing with Brian’s nipples that acted like turning up the volume. Brian had never been much into tit play, but that now seemed to be the inadequacy of Jeffery not Brian that had been the source of that disinterest.

As Brian began thrust with increasing passion, he began to rise on his knees and forced Hermes backwards. He put his hands behind the redhead as he helped lower him to his back while his stretched his body on top. Brian was so intent on fucking Hermes that he almost didn’t feel when Apollo started licking his ass. The tongue was soon replaced by probing fingers. Brian was caught in a mixed feeling. The ass beneath him was one of the finest he had ever experienced, but the probing made him want to concentrate on that pleasure.

He felt Apollo’s dick work its way into him so he had to slow down his own fucking. The probing cock reached its depth and Brian felt him begin to pull out, ever so slowly and then back in, equally slow. On the second pull out, Brian matched the pace in Hermes’s ass. In and out in unison. Faster and faster as they maintained the synchronization of thrusts.

One of Apollo’s thrusts went deeper than Brian knew possible and he let out a small moan. “Here, suck on this,” said Hermes, offering the Pan pendant to Brian’s mouth. Expecting the taste of metal, Brian was surprised to find flesh in his mouth. He looked up and found that he was sucking the dick of a faun. Brian was too lost in the passion to be surprised. The faun matched the rhythm of the others as he thrust his dick out and in of Brian’s mouth, in a perfect counterbalance to the motion of the fucking. The faun pushed in as they pulled out.

Brian heard a rumble and turned his head toward the noise. In the distance, he could see the red glow of the fires of a volcano. The trio with him didn’t seem to notice. If anything, they reacted to the volcano’s announcement by increasing the pace.

Within a few passion filled thrusts, Apollo pulled out of Brian’s ass and the synchronicity of motion resulted in Brian doing the same with Hermes. Apollo quickly flipped Brian over as Hermes crawled out from beneath him. Brian lay on his back as he felt the release of his companions splatter on his chest. His own release resulted in a

fountain that plastered cum into the standing faun’s eyes.

“There she blows,” shouted Apollo as the volcano erupted in an echo of the passion that was on the beach.

“Thanks. I needed that,” said the faun kissed the three men on their foreheads. Before Brian could say something, he had already disappeared into the woods.

The three men took a quick dip into the crashing waves that were filling the night air with their pulsing sound. Soon the three were cuddled in front of the fire. The warmth of the company lulled Brian to sleep.

When Brian woke in the morning he found himself in a strange bed. A note was standing on the nightstand.

“You looked so comfortable we didn’t want to wake you. But we had to go open the shop for the last minute Yule traffic. We left a key by the front door and we will come get it from you this evening. A & H”

Brian debated about just staying in this bed and letting them find him there when they got home. But he remembered the mess he had to clean up. “Ah... duty calls.” He spied a stack of sarongs neatly folded on a dresser and wondered if he should grab one to head back to his apartment. “Why bother?” he finally decided. “It’s not that far and no one will be the wiser.” He held up the necklace. “Right little guy?” Brian imagined a conspiratory wink and figured that was a sign of agreement.

He grabbed his keys and the single key next to them and headed buck naked back to his apartment. He put the key into the latch. “See, nothing to worry about.”

Just then...

*Tune in next issue to see who picks up
the next chapter Brian’s tale*



Spice Rubbed Bacon

By Potsan Panz

My friend Darlene Fey come over the other day and accused me of just sitting around all day; watching television and eating bonbons. Now, I know she didn't really mean that. After all as some point during the day I would have to get up to refill the bowl of bonbons. Beside, we both know she came over for dinner because what I really do all day is watch television to learn how to make better bonbons.

I will admit a certain fascination with cooking shows. The hosts are my heros and some of them are so darn cute. Handsome and can cook, what a wonderful combination. I will also admit that I know that I will never prepare most of the things I see. Salmon ice cream may be something needed to win a competition but I think I will stick to having my salmon lightly poached and my ice cream mint chocolate.

But every so often, one of the shows inspires me to rush to kitchen to try something out. Such was the case one morning when the host made an over the top brunch that had a potato dish that used a whole wheel of Camembert or Brie cheese to top just two potatoes. That just sounded too rich for my simple tastes. But it wasn't the potatoes that caught my attention that morning, it was the bacon. They fixed a spice rubbed bacon and it really made me think.

In my books I have many recipes for different glazes for ham but I had never thought of doing anything to bacon. Bacon was something you fried or wrapped around an appetizer and put in the oven. The recipe was simple enough. Mix some brown sugar, some garlic powder, some curry powder, coat the bacon and cook away. I rushed to the computer to get the recipe and made it the next morning. It was very good. I do have to say that as much as I like garlic, the full tablespoon called for in the recipe for only six slices of bacon does seem a bit heavy handed for breakfast. Since then I've experimented and offer the idea to you to try on your own.

For this recipe idea use the thick cut types of bacon. It works with the thinner cuts but I find that by the time you handle the bacon to get it coated, the bacon tends to tear and stretch. The thicker cuts hold up better through the process. Of course, if you are a TV host, you go to the butcher and buy the full slab of bacon and cut it to the exact thickness you want. Who knew you could buy a bacon roast?

Now to the fun part - cooking! Start with about a ¼ to ½ cup of brown sugar (amount depends on how much bacon you are making). Add dashes of some of your favorite spices (a dash in this case is generally ¼ teaspoon's worth or less. Who measures these things?). Garlic powder is good to use as is the curry. I have also used mixtures of cardamon, tumeric, ginger and my all time favorite, cinnamon. As you experiment with this, you will find your own combination and balance of spices. Mix all that together and put in on a plate or pie tin. Take your bacon and coat both sides with the mixture and then start to fry it up. Because of the sugar, it will burn easily so use a medium heat and cook it slowly.

When the bacon is cooked, do not place the bacon on paper towels to drain the excess grease. The bacon is sticky and sticky bacon and paper towels have a way of bonding together. Been there, done that and now sharing the secret to avoid that. Put the bacon on a cooling rack which is over the paper towel! Let it drain but keep it off of the paper towel.

Serve it with your favorite eggs and you have a fancy breakfast treat with no real extra effort involved. For added fun, try this when you want to make a bacon burger or bacon and cheese sandwich or a good old basic BLT.

Crunchy bacon is still good, but it is nice to add some variety to the star of breakfast once in a while.



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