

Airy Faerie

Imbolc 2011

FAE TV

It's Super Fae!

Its a peacock, its a dragonfly...its...its SUPERFAE! There is nothing mild about this new super hero who fights for truth, justice & the gay way!

Pg.34

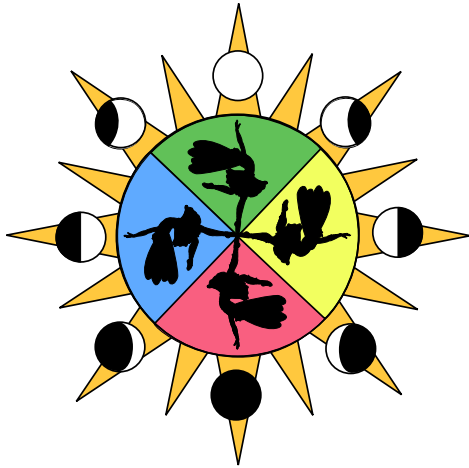
Plus Fae TV Listings

Complete local listings of all your favorite shows, news & sports.

Pg. 21-32



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Imoble 2011

The Airy Faerie is a publication of the
Denver Radical Faerie Tribe.

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Back issues can be found at:
www.radfae.org/arts#airyfaerie

Publisher's Notes

WOW! 2011 is off and kicking. Two months have already flown by and this is the first issue out the door. We are very sorry for being late with so many issues. It sometimes feels like the Airy Faerie Muses like to spend more time hiding from us then inspiring us. I think I have been starting off most of the pub notes with an apology. Please know that we appreciate your patience. We enjoy putting our little ezine together but sometimes it just takes longer than we want to. We do have an idea for next issue that should help get us back on schedule.

I had an idea of starting the New Year off with a birthday celebration, and presenting you with an Airy Faerie Birthday Card which you can take out on your birthday and know that we at the Airy Faerie wish you a FAB-U-LOUS birthday! Unfortunately two months flew by before the issue did, so for some of you it maybe a belated birthday wish, but we have kept the birthday wishes in the issue. Maybe we should have gone with an "Un-Birthday". (That is any day that is not your birthday, and just as important to celebrate.) Who knows, we may celebrate un-birthdays in the next issue. I will have to see where the muse will take me. For this issue I have finally finished a merry-go-round horse that I have been working on for years. I love Merry-go-round animals. There is something magical about them, and not just the ones in Mary Poppins. They are whimsical and artistically beautiful links to the past. The mastery and craftsmanship that go into creating what will become a child's fantasy is amazing. I can loose myself for hours looking at them. I had better stop here before I get too carried away and it is another month before the issue goes out the door.

Along with wanting to share childhood treasures and faerie wishes on your birthday, we found a few things to help fill in the pages. We continue with the "Story Game" sharing a little more of the fantastic journey of our slightly confused hero. Speaking of heroes on fantastic journeys, Prince Apollo shares his fairy tale adventure with us. Well, at least one more chapter of it anyway. Raven Bear Paws gives us a rare treat as he tells the tale of the origin of the world. We also have one more of the Four F Tarot cards for you. This card was taken right out of real life. Just when we think we can relax, BAM! I'll let Phoenix fill in the details on that one.

Phoenix asked if I could create a little extra something for filler, so I did. I took another of his ideas to have teasing body shots and created little bite size teasing art. I hope you enjoy the little teases scattered though out the issue. Speaking of teasing art, don't think for a moment that we forgot to throw in some naked men doing what faeries like to do best. The standard ADULT WARNING is required for this issue of the Airy Faerie, just like most of them. Please be careful where and with whom you share the Airy Faerie. Work and public computers tend to frown on adult gay men having fun. And not everyone shares the same taste we have. With that I will stop writing about the issue and let you go enjoy our little gift to you. We hope you have many blessings this coming year, and much laughter and celebrations.

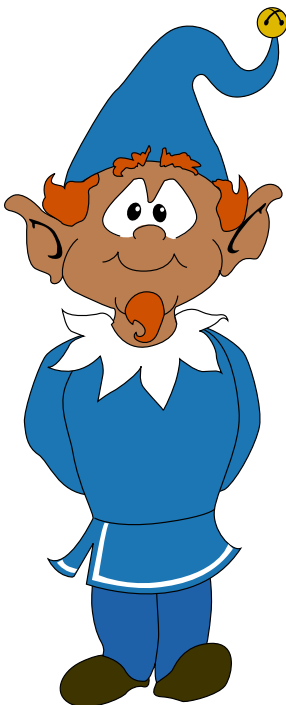
Naked Hugs and Faerie Blessings,
DragonSwan



Moon Over the Berkshires

By Hermes Polyandros

I remember well that night in the Berkshires.
 The stars paled by the new risen Moon.
 We had been around the camp fire,
 And it still glowed in the wood
 Across the stream,
 The field was silvered under the light.
 The Moon rising higher,
 As I watched it from the tree line emerges
 And glides slowly, gracefully upwards
 Into the sky, overpowering stars and planets
 With its pearly light.
 I stood transfixed at the sight
 Though many nights I have seen it;
 But there, that night, it moved me with its might.
 The Muse inspiring to speaking
 Though I wanted to howl, the primeaval urge;
 But instead came words poetic
 Of you, O Moon, so bright, yet pale;
 Argent regina of the sky.
 I was heard as I spoke,
 Mananan did listen
 As moved by the sight,
 That glorious sight,
 Inspired me to ancient singing.
 Those words once spoken
 Forever lost in the night,
 A gift to that beautiful sight
 But not the memory,
 Itâ€™s still here,
 Though words I spoke took wing
 And went flying to that celestial orb.



Moonrise

By Hermes Polyandros

I have seen the rising of the stars.
 I have seen the rising of the Sun.
 I have seen the rising of the Moon.
 Those stars seem so insignificant,
 Even the brightest, so far, remote.
 The Sun so bright, it hurts my eyes;
 Still bright though I close my eyes,
 Burned into my inner sight.
 But no rising is more gentle,
 No rising is like that of the Full Moon.
 I see the glow, paling the stars
 Long before I see it.
 Pearly against the darkness,
 The light fills the sky with its pearly essence.
 Yet near the East it grows stronger yet.
 I hold my breath, watching for that first peek.
 I watch in anticipation,
 The glow growing brighter,
 I watch in anticipation,
 For that first peek, that first edge,
 Gleam, silver-white, over the edge of the mountain ridge
 Trees etched in black against the limb;
 Gleam, silver-white, over the edge of the sea.
 Not piercing like the Sun;
 Gentle, illuminating, silvering, quiet,
 Unheralded but by me,
 As I watch it rise from the trees,
 As I watch it rises from the sea,
 A glorious orb,
 That, though I know the science,
 Does not steal the miracle.

The Great Mother's Child

By Raven Bear Paws

Long ago when the universe was young, The Great Mother laid content amongst the stars. With the wave of her hand she created the first planets and the constellations and all was well.

As time passed she began to grow restless. The Great Mother longed for what all mothers wanted; a child. She called forth her love The Great Father. She explained to him that she wished to have a child to help grow to love and nurture. With that said The Great Father took her into his arms and began the Great Rite. All was good.

As time trickled by The Great Mother grew and rounded with child. Her heart swelled with joy beyond all that she ever known. She could not have been happier with the new life that grew inside her. As her child grew so did her heart; as it filled with so much love she was able to take a piece, a glowing ember, and placed it amongst the stars to grow and brighten. She called it the Sun. It was to be the hearth that would shine on her child and keep the child safe and warm. With loving hands rubbing her belly all was good.

The blessed moment came when The Great Mother groaned with pain. That let her know that her beautiful child would soon arrive into the universe. Like a mighty wave her child sprang forth new and unformed, she nestled her child to her breast. "Your name," The Great Mother whispered. "will be Earth." as the child suckled all the nutrients from The Great Mother that she could. With her child cradled in her arms all was good.

Earth grew and grew as she danced around in the safety and warmth of the sun. The Great Mother watched as Earth began to mature, with the grace of her heart she blessed her daughter with gifts. She gave Earth the gifts of blue skies, green grass, trees and plants, oceans, seas, rivers, creeks and streams. The Great Mother was pleased when she stood back and looked at what she had bestowed upon her child. With the added beauty all was good.

The Great Father gazed upon his daughter and a single tear of joy fell from his eye. From that tear he formed a large silver orb. My daughter for you I give this tear. May it forever remind you of my love. I shall call it the Moon. This is my gift so that you will always know that I am with you. The Great Mother in all her wisdom decided to create day and night. She did not want Earth to grow tired of looking at the gift bestowed by The Great Father. During the day she would have the Sun to warm her and at night she would have the light of The Great Father's love. With Earth protected by her parents at all times all was good.

Fearing that her daughter would grow lonely The Great Mother created beasts of all different kinds, large and small, timid and fierce, four legged and winged, but she was still not satisfied. So she also bestowed the gift of aquatic beasts as well as the insects. All had their purpose and all would live within the circle of life. They would

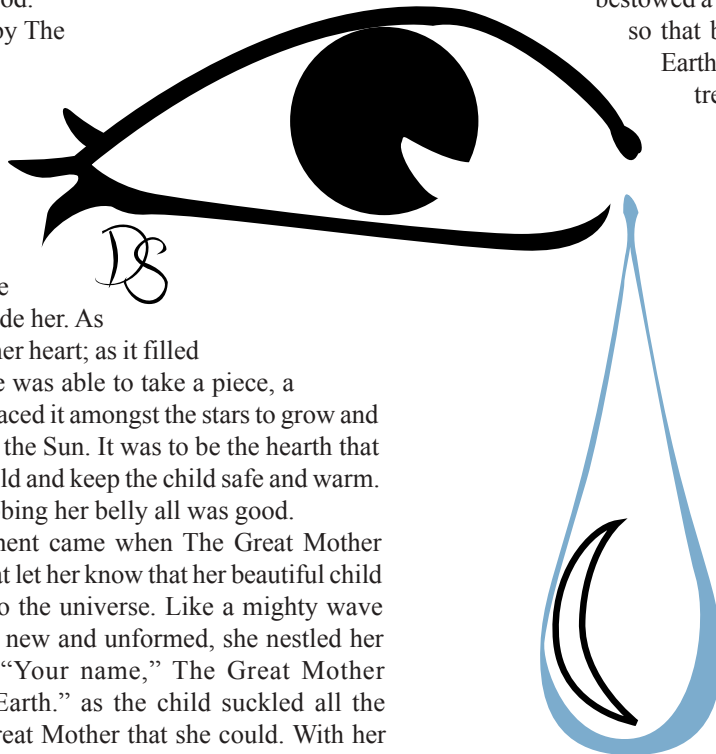
live and thrive and they would die so that all could return to her.

Many, many years had passed and Earth still grew. From her surface grew hills and mountains, islands formed in the oceans and seas. The circle of life continued The Great Mother took and returned those who deserved it. She was happy with her child and hugged Earth. The joy overwhelmed her so much that she began to cry, and in that act of love she created the rains and all was good.

The Great Father was pleased with his child he again bestowed a gift upon her. He gave Earth the gift of seasons so that boredom for her would not be. With this gift Earth would always be changing. The Great Mother's trees and plants would sleep in the winter and awoken again in the spring. The beasts would mate in the spring and give birth in the summer. In the autumn all would be happy. The seasons would begin again with winter. With all this beauty and change all was good.

The Great Mother still longed for more, she felt that her child was still not complete. So from her head she pulled a feather a leaf from the trees water from the oceans and dirt from Earth. With these things that she had gathered she molded man and woman. With her very breath she gave them life. The Great Mother placed them upon her beloved daughter's surface and spoke to them. I am The Great Mother and on my child you stand. I have given her to you so that you may love and cherish her as I do. Honor and care for my beautiful daughter and I will be forever grateful to you. Man and woman bowed before The Great Mother and swore

to be forever respectful of her child. And now for The Great Mother all was finally perfect.



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Pieces Left Behind

By Phoenix

Our home seems so empty without you
To the casual eye,
It might appear that you were never here
But I know those pieces of you
That you left behind.

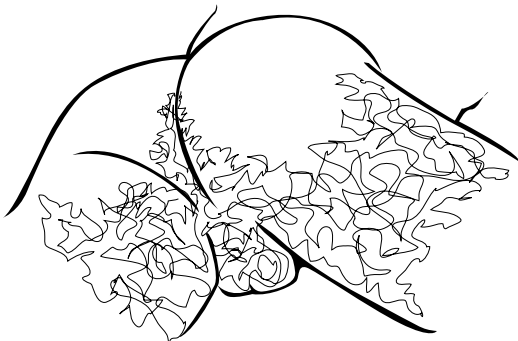
The second can of shaving cream on the shelf.
I don't know how many times
I've been tempted to squirt some in my hand
To have that scent fill my nostrils
But alas, I already know that
It doesn't smell the same as when
It combines with your musky manliness.

The bag of coffee beans in the freezer.
I don't know how many times
I've been tempted to brew a pot
Even though I don't drink the stuff.
Would the aroma that fills the air
Be enough to keep me company
While I sip my morning juice?
And will I remember to turn it off
Before it boils into sludge like last time?

The carefully discarded sock in the corner
I long ago gave up the temptation of picking it up.
You always know where it is
I learned that it was your first way
Of letting me know that you planned to come back
You'd go home to your place and call
"Did I leave..." and then tell me what and where to find it.

The giant teddy bear you brought to keep me company
Something to wrap my arms around when your aren't near
I love to hold him but have to confess
I love how you hold me better
He snuggles but like me, he misses you

I look around and see all these
Pieces of you left behind for me to find
But somehow when put together
They never fill the piece of me you took with you.



The Unwanted Cupid

By Raven Bear Paws

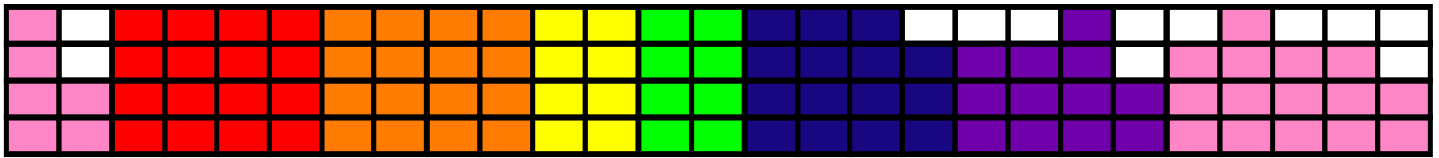
Cupid do not draw your bow on me,
For I do not want love can't you see.

I do not want the chocolate hearts,
for I am truly fat enough.
I do not want the champagne kisses,
for they are empty and dismissive.
I do not want the cuddly teddy bear,
for they look at me strange when they stare,
and I do not want the lovers card,
for they are just words for the mobs.

Cupid why do you stand there so,
ready to fire with your bow?
Can you not see
I do not want this gift!
A waste of time,
A waste of breath
Can you not see I am at my best?
Probably not you diapered pest!

Lay down your arms
and take to flight,
or you and I will have a fight!
I will pull the feathers from your wings
and shove those arrows where the suns not seen.

I will not be a slave to you
not now ,not here
Or ever will
Find another
that's what I say
OH,DAMN! HE JUST SHOT ME!



The 4-F Tarot: One Step Forward

by Phoenix

The Kween of Water has evolved multiple times since we first envisioned her. She started off as a Bathing Beauty in a classic 1940's pinup girl pose in her one-piece bathing suit, hair wrapped up in a towel. She ditched the towel and joined her sisters in the pool for an afternoon practice of synchronized swimming. It was a bit of teamwork to her brother's solo antics on his surfboard. She decided to take a day off at the spa. Oops, she's not on a day off, she's working as the stylist/barber at the spa. No, she's back at the pool but like Goldilocks trying to decide if the temperature is just right. Not really, it's the bathtub temperature that she's trying to get right. Ah, now she's settled in for a nice relaxing evening.

Then I look up at the hole in my ceiling. It's the cut out from the latest plumbing disaster at my house - the leak caused by the combination of a frozen outdoor faucet and corroded kitchen pipe. And I looked at the growing spots of the signs of the next repair job - the final parts of the repairs related to the plumbing disaster from two years ago. And in that moment, I knew what our Kween was experiencing. She was all set for that nice relaxing moment and walks into the scene you see on the right. Add to that the broken washing machine where the repairs would have been \$800-1,000 while a new machine is only \$600. So afternoons spent shopping, days at the laundromat instead of multi-tasking laundry with computer time and you can start to see some of the distractions that have kept us away for so long. Did I mention all the leaks with our furnace where after multiple visits by our handymen and replaced

valves they finally gave up and told us to call the furnace experts? One visit later the problem was fixed. I have a feeling our Airy Faerie Muses are afraid we are going to put them to work which is why they have been taking their vacation elsewhere.

Back to the Kween - what is next for her? Is she going to break down with that "straw that broke the camel's back?" Is she going to bury her head in the sand like the ostrich and back away, close the door and hope the problem disappears when she opens it again? Or better still, leave it for her lover to find and it will be his problem not hers? Maybe it's a sign from above that she should go ahead with her plans to put in a skylight. Draw the next card in the spread to see. Maybe it will be Lifeguard who will sweep her off her feet and take her away to a better life. Or is it the fireman who will help with the damage but will he do repairs? Perhaps it's the carpenter who can actually help. Maybe it's the comforting friend who can only pat her on the shoulder saying "well, it could be worse." Or is it the Shark who is circling outside waiting to take advantage of the situation?

Or was the carpenter the card you picked prior to this one, so this card is really a warning about doubling checking their work before sending them on their way? I can point to the repairs where we had that problem.

It doesn't take much to see why I'm shying away from writing "the book" when it comes to this deck. It really is a matter of stepping inside the cards and seeing the situation from that perspective. For our Kween - what if she hadn't gotten that phone call and had already been relaxing in the tub when disaster struck? What if we are seeing her just after finishing her soak and the sound of the crashing ceiling is what made her turn around? What kind of support was going into and coming out of this moment? What kind of mental attitude prepared you for dealing with this moment?

No matter how you interpret this card, this is the moment when you bring your abilities into the reading. How quickly can you step into that scene and grab a meaning to the reading? Does it matter what the disaster is or simply that everything is falling apart? Or maybe it is more literal and the "sky is falling" becomes an important part of the message. Are the next words uttered "What else can go wrong?" (don't ever ask me that question - I'm usually tempted to answer) or are they "Oh F%*@"? Any of those thoughts are the gift you bring to the table when doing a reading.

What's next? As DragonSwan said in his Pub Note, we have plans for next issue to help get us back on track. Check out the announcement at the end of this issue's Story Game chapters (pages 18-19). Raven Bear Paws has already thrown down the gauntlet for Story Game 2, so we'll be spending some time in the near future getting at rolling. And we'll see if we can color in a few more squares on the tarot meter. Slowly but surely we are making progress. As long as we keep moving forward, we'll eventually cross the finish line - which makes me think I need to hide a tortoise and hare somewhere on one of the cards.





Quest for the Crystal Phoenix

Chapter 42: After the Ball is Over

by Orpheus

Apollo watched Iris Angelica limp toward her father. “Hey twinkle toes, I didn’t think you were that bad,” said Johnny who was watching the prince watching the wolf princess. “What were you doing? Dancing on her feet?”

Apollo admitted that he had worried about the same thing and had tried to give her some healing energy. After it became obvious that it was something more than stepped on toes, Iris Angelica confessed that it had been a long time since she had spent so much time in human form, let alone in such strenuous activity as dancing. At most, she had been spending an hour a day practicing for the ball but hadn’t thought about the effects of dance after dance. She asked to leave the dance floor so she could seek out her father’s advise on handling her human body.

“That explains a lot,” said the faerie. “Belkaro has spent most of his time sitting at one of the tables with Viola and Lily playing the role of servants fetching fresh food and drink for him. He probably isn’t used to walking and the girls are quick to win the favor of the new prince in town.”

Apollo searched the room and saw where Belkaro was seated. He stifled a laugh as he watched the contortions on the wolf’s face as he tried eating various human foods. They were many of the same looks that he remembered on Laika’s face when he was first at court. Laika always preferred his fresh kill but did finally learn to appreciate some of the cooked foods that couldn’t be found in raw form in the wild such as breads and pastries.

“It seems funny that they are so eager to please him,” commented the prince. “When they are around me they seem to have an expectation that I’m supposed to be catering to their needs.”

“That may be true,” said Johnny, “but he has something going for him that you don’t.”

“Oh? The fact that he’s a wolf?”

“No, his father. Lily decided why settle for a mere mortal who just happens to be heir to the kingdom when she could have the son of a god? And naturally, if Lily wants something then Viola has to have it too. He convinced them that honoring him would be the same as honoring his father.”

Apollo watched the two faeries for a moment and realized that was exactly what they were doing – offering gifts to a god in order to please him. If he didn’t like their gift, they quickly left to fetch something else. If he was pleased he gave them a look that left

them fanning themselves. The prince couldn’t resist a laugh when Lily earned a look of approval for a dish that had earned Viola a grimace earlier while Viola earned the disapproval for something that had been praised when Lily brought it. Apollo realized that Belkaro was just playing a game and didn’t really care what they brought. He just wanted their attention.

“Why isn’t Cory vying for his affection as are the others?” asked Apollo.

Johnny nodded toward a corner where the prince saw Cory sitting alone. Her back was slightly turned to him. She wasn’t looking at anything in particular but Apollo could sense that she was deliberately trying to not look at him.

“Please excuse me,” said Apollo as he started to walk away from his friend.

Cory felt someone approaching and turned. “I said I want to be alone,” she said before she realized who was standing there. “Oh! I’m sorry. That came out wrong.”

“I was going to ask you to dance, but if you want to be alone...” he half started to turn to walk away.

“You were? Shouldn’t you be dancing with your Rainbow Queen?”

“How do you know I wouldn’t be?” He sat down on the bench beside her. “I was doomed by any choice I made. Each of the maidens presented as choices did a lot to help put together the celebration.

Without watching you at your tasks, how was I to truly judge one over

another? And who can argue my selection of the exotic princess who entered at just the right moment to capture the prince’s attention? It was a moment that will long live in memories; far longer than any dance or cocktail.”

“You are right about that. It was something right out of a faerie tale.”

“And knowing how things go, it will likely become one.”

“If I may ask, if Princess Iris Angelica hadn’t arrived at that moment, who would you have named?”

“I would have picked you over Lily and Viola as you had to do your task without my help,” he admitted. Cory’s face brightened. “However, for the same reasons I picked the new arrival, I wasn’t going to name any of the dance maidens. I was about to name Princess Myrtle Thornwood as the Rainbow Queen.”

“But...” she gasped, “Johnny’s mother? She’s no maiden.”

“That may be true in years, but she’s the one who did all



the work getting the feast organized and ensured all the food came out in the right order and cooked to perfection. And for all that effort she deserved a moment of recognition and earned the honor of being named the Rainbow Queen."

"You're being evasive again aren't you?" asked Cory. "Just like when you picked your grandmother over one of us."

"You caught me there," he admitted. "I've learned from the mistakes of those early princes and won't reveal my choice until I'm absolutely certain that it is the one that works best for both the kingdom and me." He stood up and offered his hand to her. "Meanwhile, I believe your name was next on my dance card. Shall we?"

She exaggerated the batting of her eyes as she stood. "I thought you would never ask."

They danced two songs before Apollo escorted Cory off the floor. No sooner had they started to walk towards the side when Viola and Lily appeared from nowhere. Apollo figured their sudden appearance meant that they had flown across the room, literally, in order to get through the moving crowd. Almost in unison, "Dance with me, please," they begged. "Belkaro doesn't dance," added Lily.

"I thought you two had forgotten me. I don't recall the last time when you brought me food and drink. I believe your normal expectation is for me to cater to your needs. Why this sudden interest in a mortal when you have a demi-god to worship?"

Lily pouted, "That's not true. Just last week I brought you..." she paused as she thought.

"He's got us there, cousin," admitted Viola.

"I'll make you a deal," offered Apollo. "I'm parched after all that dancing. The first person to bring me something to drink will be my next dance partner."

"I thought you might like something to drink." Everyone turned and saw Manin standing there with two glasses in his hand. The group started laughing and they had to fill Manin in on what had just been said.

Apollo realized that this might be his one moment to be with his lover, so he quickly downed the beverage. "A deal is a deal, shall we?"

"It's a good thing Amaranth made me learn how to dance both parts," said Manin.

"It makes it easier if both partners know what the other partner is supposed to do." They all laughed as they simultaneously quoted the late faerie queen.

"I guess I now know where grandmother got that," added Apollo as he waved Manin to proceed him to the dance floor.

Same gendered couples were not uncommon on the dance floor so the only people staring at them were Viola, Lily and Cory. Before the initial figure of the dance was complete, Apollo noticed that Viola and Lily had paired up in the dance. He thought they must have decided that dancing together would be better than dancing alone. But the dance was a mixer which forced everyone to trade partners, so soon Apollo found himself with Lily while Manin was partnered with Viola. He caught an extra motion and they had changed to standard gendered positions. Others near him started doing the same and by some unknown miracle, everyone ended up with their original partners at the end of the dance.

"That was fun," said Apollo as the group of them went to get a drink. Cory was waiting there with a fresh glass for everyone.

"I believe it's my turn again."

"What's this dancing with others?" came Iris Angelica's raised voice as she approached the group. "I thought I was your chosen dance partner for the evening."

"I'm afraid that I have been selfish in that choice. In that selfishness I neglected my promises to my friends. But I think I have a way to honor both the Rainbow Queen and my promises." Suddenly, there were four Prince Apollos standing there. Each offering his hand to a different girl. "Shall we?" they said in unison.

As the group moved out to the dance floor, a stately woman with deep auburn hair approached. Her dress was jet black with crimson trim. The collar of her cloak flared upwards to frame her face. "Well done, young man."

"I beg your pardon," questioned Manin.

"Oh, I wasn't talking to you," she said suddenly noticing Manin. "I was talking to your companion." Talking to the air, she added, "When you pull yourself together, we'll chat." With that, she turned and walked away.

"Curious," said Manin.

"How did she know I was here?" whispered Apollo.

"What?"

Manin felt a tap on his shoulder and a pulse of earth energy. "Meet me in the hall."

Realizing what Apollo must have done, Manin did as asked and headed away from the dance floor. As he got to the doorway, Apollo was already visible.

"I can't go too far otherwise I won't be able to see myself to control the dancing but this was the only way I could think of to take a break and still make everyone happy."

"Isn't that sort of like using magic for personal gain?"

"I'm thinking this is more like managing royal obligations while conserving energy."

"Ah, spoken like a true Charming," said the stately woman as she approached. "Ever finding the way to justify a position when it runs counter to their teachings." She locked eyes with Apollo. "But I would find you a very engaging student. You listen to your teachers, a rare treat that it is, and then do the unheard of, think for yourself and do it better than your teachers." Several screams could be heard from the dance floor. "I seem to have broken your concentration and you will have some explaining to do. I'll be back." The crowd parted at her departure. As they returned to their conversations, all signs of the mysterious woman disappeared with her.

Indeed it took several minutes to calm everyone down. Each of the girls had sworn that they had been dancing with the real prince. "While I have to applaud your application of magic to your situation, it probably wasn't the most practical time to do so," commented the prince's faerie godfather.

"You used magic on me?" gasped Iris Angelica.

"Not exactly," offered Apollo. "I didn't use it 'on' you. I used it on me to try to do more than I could do without it."

"And that is supposed to make me trust that you are really with me?" asked Cory. "How would I know that the real you is with me and not out with one of the maids like those princes of old? Come ladies, let us freshen ourselves so we may find a gentleman who would give us his sole attention."

"And since you are so good at making copies of yourself," added Lily, "why don't you dance with yourself for a while?"

Johnny stared at them as they disappeared into the crowd.

"Well, I never thought I would see this day."

"What day is that?" asked Apollo.

"That those girls would agree on anything."

"And that is supposed to make me feel better? I was only trying to make them all happy and now they're all mad at me."

"The road to Hades is paved with the best intentions. But even so, what were you thinking? With all of the activity it wouldn't take much to lose the concentration maintaining the projections."

"I know but I figured that the constant pattern of the dance would work to my advantage. Everything was going well until that mysterious woman approached a couple of times. She seemed to know exactly what I had been doing."

"What mysterious woman? As far as I know, you should already know everyone at the celebration."

Apollo described her stately manner and dark dress. "She felt as old as time but looked younger than my grandmother."

Johnny gasped. "That sounds like...I mean that could only be...oh Gods! The queen is going to have a fit when she finds out that *She's* here." Johnny zipped to flying size and created a mini-portal to hasten his exit.

"What got him all worked up?" wondered Manin as he stared at the faerie's departure.

"You seem to have some very excitable companions," said the mysterious woman at her approach. She was escorted by Belkaro. "This young man tells me that you are his...what did he say? ah yes...pack leader. I could tell that he was a member of the Charming Royal bloodline but couldn't connect him to any of the families currently on the thrones. He said that you would have the words to explain it better than he could."

"His grandmother was Iris Angelica, daughter of Queen Daisy Amaryllis."

"Ah, that explains his wolfish nature. Wasn't she the one who ran with wolves?"

"Yes, she was," said Rowan as he quickly joined them. "Mandragora, how pleasant it is to see you." (*'surprised to see you alive that is'* were the words that were projected into Apollo's mind.)

"Likewise, dear cousin. I had heard that you were dead. Jade Rose was devastated at your death."

"You know my mother and how she liked to exaggerate everything" offered the former faerie. "If it is not life as a faerie, then you must be dead."

"Indeed. It appears that you are living proof that there is life after death. Too bad mother couldn't have had an equal resurrection. Do you know someone who can introduce me to this charming young man I've been encountering this evening? I've been trying to find someone all evening with sufficient rank to do the honors but, alas, I have lost contact with everyone here at the palace who might know who that would be. I certainly wouldn't want to impose on your niece with everything else on her hands tonight. I would hate to distract her and find out all this loveliness is just an illusion."

"No fear on that score. Illusion was something that ran stronger on your side of the family. Mother's children did better at reshaping reality." The two locked eyes a moment before he continued. "I may not be up to your standards, but for lack of anyone your senior being present (*'or alive'* echoed in Apollo's mind), I shall do my humble best," offered Rowan. "Lady Mandragora, allow me to present Apollo Phoenix, son of Queen Iris

Angelica of Adbalm, grandson of Queen Rose Hyacinth of Rianglet and great-grandson of Twice Named Queen Amaranth Morningstar of Rysbal and the Faerie Lands. Through the generations he is the child of Queens Oceana of Oceanica, Iris Angelica of Wobnair and Jade Rose of the Faerie Lands."

Apollo bowed respectfully to the woman before him, partially to hide his surprise at how Rowan had featured his matriarchal heritage.

"Please forgive me for my earlier approaches without proper introduction. If I had realized that you had such a rich heritage I would have been more aggressive in finding a suitable source of introduction first. As it was, I had hoped that this young man," she patted Belkaro's arm which she was still clutching, "would be able to do so once I learned of your connection."

"No need to apologize, my lady. As evidenced by that unfortunate scene you witnessed earlier, I have not been in my best form either this evening. Shall we start fresh with these introductions?"

"It would be my pleasure." Apollo could almost hear the sound of a cat purring as she drew out the final sound of 'pleasure.'

"In which case, Prince Apollo please allow me the honor of introducing Lady Mandragora, daughter of Queen's Sister Lucrezia Nicotiana and pre-King Willow Stoneheart of the Faerie Lands."

Mandragora stared at her cousin. "My cousin does well to honor my humble nature by not giving my mother her regal title as Queen of Wobnair."

"I am sure he meant no slur on your character by that omission," offered Apollo as he glanced at his friend for support of his statement.

"None indeed," responded Rowan. "I simply did as protocol demanded. Aunt Lucrezia was not named queen at the time of my cousin's birth and tradition does not allow the honor to flow backwards in time."

"What did you mean by pre-King? I have not heard that in introductions before," asked Manin.

"Ah, my inquisitive young friend, that is something which I think is unique to my cousin." Mandragora's eyes were just short of flaming as he talked. "And a topic not suitable for conversation outside the pages of the *Vidalia Gazette*." A loud clap of thunder could be heard across the hall. "Ah, I believe my niece has just learned of the late arrival of one of her guests. I wouldn't be surprised..."

"How dare you show your face within these walls," shouted Holly as she appeared out of a portal. The nine Hilda's quickly surrounded them with spears aimed at Mandragora's heart. "You were banished from court."

"What manners," gasped Mandragora. "Is that any way to greet your favorite aunt?"

"You are not my favorite aunt by any stretch of the imagination," replied Holly.

"Don't strain what little you have. As you are your mother's daughter, you are neither niece nor favorite so obviously I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to Hilda. But since you so kindly reminded everyone of those dark years, I do believe that Amaranth's exact words were 'You will never step foot in these halls again while I'm alive.' As it has been well over a year since she made her final

transition that command from my queen no longer holds sway over me. It was long past time for me to visit my ancestral home.” Mandragora sighed. “But alas, the memory of beauty surpasses the gaucheness of reality.”

“You should have kept it a memory,” said Holly.

“True, but one won’t know that until they try.” She bowed slightly to Apollo. “I am sorry that we won’t have more of a chance to visit but I know when I’m not welcome.” She glanced at Holly, “And here I thought only the losers carried grudges that lasted for centuries on end.”

She started to depart but turned back to face Apollo. “You are brimming with power which you are eager to use. Please use caution when combining the gifts of your faerie heritage with those of your mortal nature. Something like the faerie portal which my queen used to make her dramatic entrance momentarily separates the user from the mortal world. For a faerie who spends half their life in the air, that is no issue. But for someone as gifted with Earth Magic as you appear to be, the effects could be tragic.”

“In what way?” asked the prince.

“Craters, earthquakes, sudden storms perhaps. If something unexpected happens after you use your faerie gifts, then you will know that you have caused a tear in your connection to the earth energies. Do that often enough and you will lose that connection all together. Now, I must bid you farewell before my queen kills me with the daggers from her eyes. Now be a dear, Holly, and cast one of your mother’s favorite OOSOOM spells and you can forget I ever soiled your festivities” She raised her arms over her head and brought down quickly. A bright flash surrounded her as her hands connected with her sides and the smell of sulfur rose. When eyes had a chance to adjust after the flash Mandragora was nowhere to be seen.

“I don’t trust her,” said Holly. “She could be hiding in this room watching us.”

The Hildas quickly spread out and started a search. “I don’t sense her anywhere nearby,” offered Apollo. His face wrinkled with concentration. “She’s somewhere in the Heigh Mountains. I could take you there.”

“Not necessary, child. At least not right now. Later, I may have some choice words for my troublesome relative once I find a civil way to say them.”

“Who was she?” asked Apollo.

“In a nutshell, she was the bane of mother’s existence,” offered Holly.

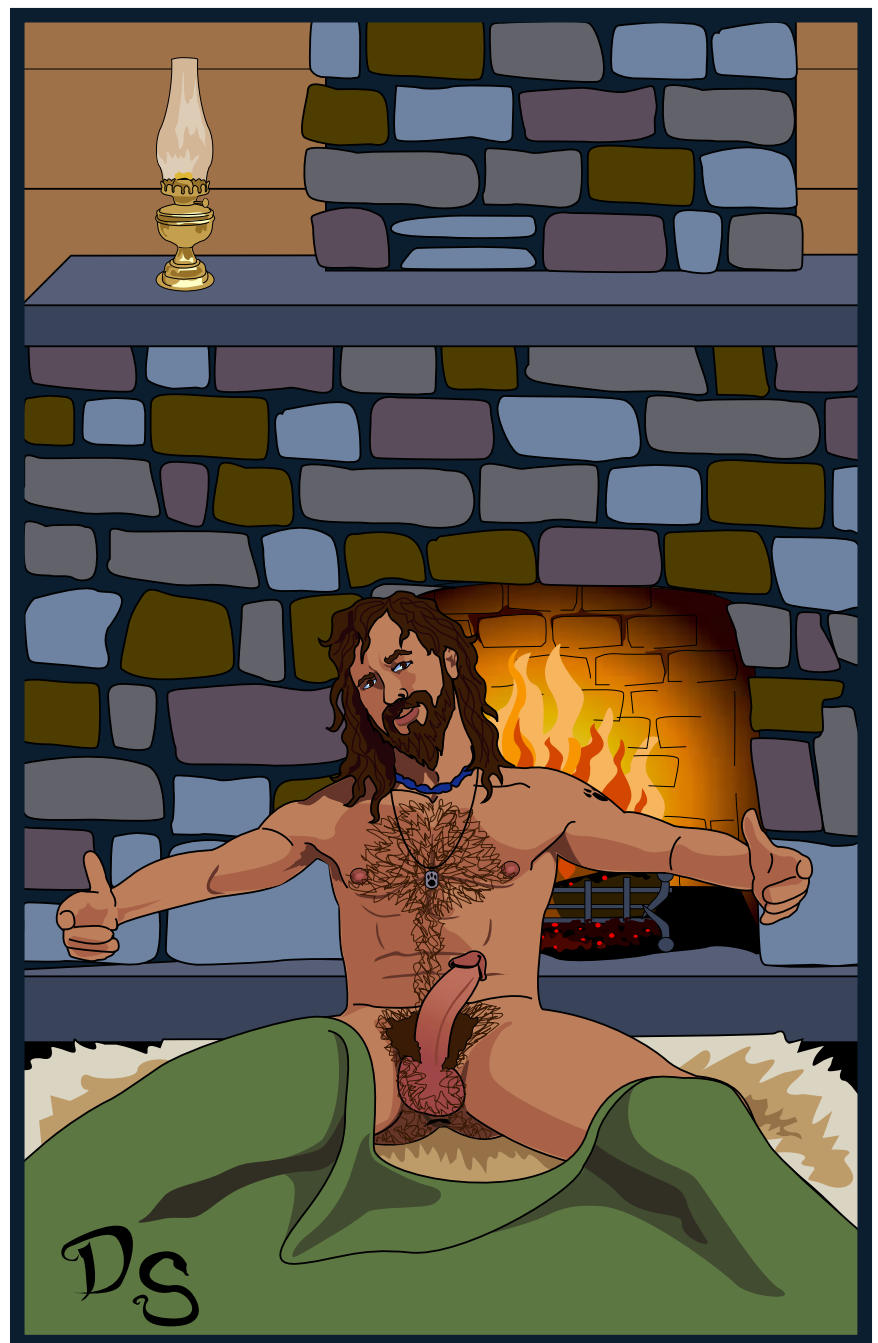
Rowan told them that Mandragora’s mother, Lucrezia, was Jade Rose’s twin sister. They shared tastes in everything which included their choice in bed partners. While Jade Rose was pregnant with his brother Ambrose, Willow Stoneheart slept with Lucrezia and Mandragora was born soon thereafter.

“So your mothers were sisters while you have the same father?” asked Apollo.

“Of my mother’s children, only Ambrose was a child of Willow Stoneheart. When mother became queen, it became obvious that her chosen king was a little too accommodating of the needs of the ladies of court so she freed him of his royal obligations and married my father.”

“Excuse me,” said Cetee who was hastily taking notes on a pad of paper. “I believe I heard Lady Mandragora say that her mother was Queen of Wobnair. How is that possible?”

“Lucrezia violated the basic rules of being a faerie godmother and had sex with one of her charges. When mother learned that Lucrezia was with child, she forced her sister to make a choice; either lose her child or lose her wings. Lucrezia chose to bring her child into the world and went mortal as I later did. After her husband’s unfortunate death, she married the recently widowed King William.”



"Are you saying that Belladonna's mother was once a faerie?" asked Apollo.

Rowan nodded. "Yes, but none of Lucrezia's faerie gifts were passed to that daughter. She was pregnant with Belladonna when she went mortal and the transformation burned out both mother's and daughter's gifts; something Belladonna never forgave her mother even though it gave her greater mastery over the magics taught her by Heca."

"What did Lady Mandragora do to get herself banished?" asked Cetee.

"Nothing bad," said Hilda Harbell who earned disproving looks from both Holly and Rowan. "It's true and you know it. My aunts disagreed regularly over many things. Mandragora challenged Amaranth's right to be queen after the death of Jade Rose. She argued that Amaranth did nothing to avenge the death of their queen. She constantly accused Amaranth of covering up her mistakes with the OOSOOM spells rather than dealing with the real issue. When Amaranth proposed to wipe out memories after Apollo's departure, Mandragora once again challenged the queen and lost."

"Both she and you talk about an OOSOOM spell as if I should know what it is," said Holly. "I know I've read through all of mother's books and I've never seen an OOSOOM spell recorded."

"You won't," offered Hilda. "While the faerie elders didn't side with Mandragora during her challenges, they did agree that Amaranth had been overusing the waters of the Lethe River in her memory spells and worried about the lasting effects of two such

major spells in such short time. She was ordered to put all record of how to create the 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' spells into a secure location so that others would not be able to use them without elder advisement."

"As queen I should have been told about this. Do you know where those records are?" demanded Holly.

"Yes," said the nine Hilda's in unison.

"Where are they?"

"I don't remember."

Everyone, including Holly laughed as they realized that Hilda was not going to reveal a secret that had been entrusted to her nearly five hundred years previously. A chime was heard from the musicians. One of the players stood up, thanked everyone for attending and announced the last dance of the evening. Apollo realized that he had not yet danced with Hilda that night.

"Shall we?"

"Which one of me gets the honor this evening?" she asked.

"Why choose?" Suddenly there were nine princes extending their hand to nine Hilda's.

"How will I know which one of you is real?"

"The same way I know which one of you is real." As each Hilda accepted the offered hand, the prince's attire changed color to perfectly match the hue of that Hilda's gown. At the end of the dance, the musicians started playing one more song. The Apollos and Hildas continued dancing, unaware that they were the only couples on the dance floor. A hearty applause filled the hall at the end of the song.

The Apollos blushed as he realized that the accolades were directed at them instead of the musicians.

"Exquisite," said Oliver. "As beautiful and enchanting as when they played that same *Charming Waltz* the night that Myron met Ashleigh at the masked ball."

Before Apollo could respond, Iris Angelica burst through the crowd. He could hear signs of a wolfish snarl as she yelled at him. "How dare you deceive these women in the same manner you deceived the rest of us earlier! I was foolish to believe Belkaro when he said that this generation of Charmings had risen higher than the loins of it's past."

"Young lady, you are mistaken in thinking I was deceived," said Hilda Myrtle. She stared into the wolf princess's eyes. "Just as I know that you are not everything you claim to be. You are your mother's true daughter."

"Then you are wrong." Suddenly a blond wolf was standing in pile of discarded clothing. "I am my father's daughter in every way." With that she leapt toward Hilda Myrtle, who grabbed the wolf and using her momentum hurled her into the air. Iris Angelica landed with a thump but kept running toward the exit.

The Hildas merged back into Hilda Harbell. She turned to face Rowan, who had an amused look on his face. "She was not just talking about you, dear uncle was she?"



"If you suspect that, then you have seen more over the years than you let on." Rowan turned into wolf form. "Go children," commanded Rowulfson. "You need to find your sister before she does something foolish. Let me know when you find her." The wearwolves all transformed and began to bound out of the hall. The wolf god strode over to Belkaro. "You know what you have been told to do." He looked around the room. "Alas, my cousin was right. The memory of this place is tarnished by the sad reality. I guess it is true. You can't go home again." He stepped into the hall and disappeared.

Apollo watched the wolves depart; trying to figure out what he was missing in the exchange between Rowan and Hilda. He started to follow but was stopped by Belkaro. "Father said to tell you to meet him at the pond."

"But what about Iris Angelica? I need to explain what was going on."

"My sister is beyond words now. In the pack it is the bitch who picks her mate. Woe to the male who rejects her. Should he be a leader he can expect a challenge from her other suitors to defend her honor. Even with all your power, it would not be safe for you to venture into the forest with the hurt fresh in the minds of her pack mates. Even I am not safe as they would use the fact that I am in your pack as a way to send the challenge to you."

"Then I need to talk to Rowulfson. He will know the true behind my actions."

"As you have seen, my sister is not always mindful of Father's words, but he anticipated your thoughts and said to tell you to meet him. He said you would know where."

The prince nodded as indeed he knew where to find his friend. He grabbed some bread from a nearby table before it was cleared away. Apollo was about to create a portal when he remembered Mandragora's warning. "That's inconvenient. Just when I need my gift, I dare not." A screech was heard and the fire phoenix zoomed through the room and disappeared into a portal. "Thank you. If you create the portal then it's not my faerie magic at work." The portal closed as he stepped through preventing anyone from following. As soon as stepped onto ground he sent some earth energy back to his father and Manin so they wouldn't worry.

As he suspected, Apollo found himself at the Swan's pond. Rowan was sitting on the side absently tossing pebbles into the dark waters."

"She doesn't know," he said as he stood to face Apollo. "She left my side to rule the kingdom and never looked back. I watched her grow old and cold. My darling wife barely talked to me while she was on the throne. She married a human who was pronounced the champion of the people. It was with a heavy heart I granted her request to bind her child's wolfish nature. He was not to know the joy of running with the pack. And later, when she grew old, she asked the boon granted to those with unfinished business."

"Are you saying that Iris Angelica not only looks like the princess I knew, she is the same person?"

Rowan nodded. "In each generation, one wearwolf is born with a special connection to my wife. Iris returns to this plane in that child. She knows she still has something to do but knows nothing of her earlier lives. Tonight was the happiest I had seen her. It was as if that business had been resolved. But in her sense of rejection, it returned and filled her as I have never seen before."

"What was that unfinished business?" asked Apollo. "There

is always something unfinished when we die. Words not spoken, tasks not completed. What would take five hundred years to finish?"

"I do not know," admitted Rowan. "It is not my place to ask but generally they will tell me when requesting the favor. Iris Angelica didn't. I knew it was important to her and that was all I needed to know. I had no reason to deny her."

"And every reason to hold on to her in any form," came Lady Swan's voice from the waters. "With each new life you hoped to have her back again."

"I won't lie and say that hadn't crossed my mind," said the wolf god. "I love her like no other. I was going to give her some of my blood so that she could join me for eternity. Instead, she turned away from me and has been so teasingly close all these years."

"Why haven't you told her?" Apollo tossed a piece of bread to the swan.

"You didn't forget. Thank you." She quickly ate the bread. "He loves her too much to risk her laughing at him."

"It is hard enough that her looks have run true through the centuries. But when I look into her soul and only see the hatred that is holding her to this world and none of the love we shared, I know that the Iris of my memory is no more."

"She may not remember you," offered the swan, "but something in her soul does. In each of those generations, I have met your daughter. She sits in the very spot you do, sometimes relaxing in human form just for a view minutes. Something draws her back to where she was happy."

"I can only hope that is true," Rowan said softly. "After her mother was killed I never saw her smile again. Tonight was the first time in centuries that I saw genuine joy in her face." He got a distant look in his eyes for a moment. "Ah, she's allowed the others to find her. I need to go calm her down and see if I can find out once and for all what keeps her holding on to the pain of the past. Apollo, you always brought light to her eyes when you came to the castle. Help her with that unfinished business so she can run with the Great Pack." With that he leapt into the shadows and disappeared.

"Why are you still here, my lady?" asked Apollo.

"That should be obvious. I have unfinished business of my own."

"But why here?" He gestured at the pond and surrounding area. "Shouldn't you be off on some grand quest to free you from your curse?"

"Curse? This form, a curse?" She laughed. "I am timeless. I am beautiful. What more could I have wished for stuck in my human form. No, in whatever misguided manner Amaranth decided that this was the way to save me, I think it worked out for the better."

"Amaranth was the evil enchantress who put the spell on you?"

"Once upon a time, I might have said that but the beauty of longevity is that you have time to think everything through. You asked why I was here and not out on a quest. Like the maiden in a tower, I await my prince to come and unlock the spell. Unlike that maiden, I'm not hidden away or locked up. I am free to fly where I may. But if I wander, who is to say that won't be the day my prince comes looking for me?"

"After all these years, do you still believe that he will come?"

It was a brief moment before she spoke. "I will admit there have been times when I had my doubts. But then you came to this shore and gave me hope. Little did I know how long I would have to wait, but seeing you again, I know the day is coming near."

"What do you think is Iris Angelica's unfinished business?"

"At a guess, it is the same as yours and mine."

"Belladonna?"

"After all, she was responsible for the death of my... well, the death of many of the people I loved, even her own daughter. For all her wolfish heritage, Iris Angelica was too full of love to understand what was needed to deal with the black hearted witch who called herself a queen. She's been coming back in order to cleanse herself of that human weakness. In that, dear misguided Rowan will never see what he has been longing to see in her eyes."

"While you hold on to hope for yourself, it sounds like you have given up hope for her. I'm going to give it back to her."

"I almost believe you. You have that air of confidence that my husband never had." She started to turn to leave. "Prove me wrong and we will all win in the end. Prove me right and there is no hope for any of us."

Apollo was left alone with his thoughts as he watched the swan swim into the darkness. As the last ripple faded, leaving no sign that she had been there, he felt a stirring in the energy behind him.

"Here again?" said Johnny stepping out of a portal. "Why do you keep torturing yourself by coming here? He's gone and won't be bounding down the hill to join you."

"It seems like I'm not the only one drawn to this place. In this case, it was your uncle who came here and the phoenix led me to him." He looked around and in that brief moment relived a multitude of memories. "I know why I'm here. What brings you here?"

"Your presence has been requested in Queen Holly's chambers. After Mandragora's off the cuff warning, it was felt that it would be better for me to handle getting you there until we find out the truth of her words."

"Did she say what she wanted?"

"Her mood was damp, if you know what I mean."

Apollo nodded and stepped into Johnny's portal.

Indeed, there were signs of the queen's infamous cloud bursts in her quarters. Holly was pacing between the window and her chair. "Where is he? What is taking that imp so long?"

"You wouldn't want me to go through a portal without grounding before and after would you?" asked Apollo bringing her attention to him.

"Grounding?! Don't talk to me about grounding!" Little sparks of lightning punctuated her words. "If you were one of my children you would be grounded for the rest of your natural life and into the next one. How dare you flaunt your powers in public without permission! How dare you break all tradition and name a stranger, let alone a non-faerie as Rainbow Queen."

"How dare I?" asked a stunned prince at her tirade. "If you value a purest faerie only tradition as Rainbow Queen, what instruction did you give me to that fact? Why present a non-faerie in the group of hopefuls gathered in front of me? Why even give the honor of selecting the Rainbow Queen to a non-faerie? For all of my heritage, I'm not a faerie." The two stared at each other, each daring the other to say something.



"My queen, please forgive my ignorance," begged Johnny breaking the silence, "but when was the last time we had a Rainbow Queen? There has not been one in my lifetime and I'm not aware of any tradition that states that honors of that nature must only be bestowed on a faerie."

"It has been a while, I admit, but representatives of all of the councils came to me with the long list of past winners and pointed out the fact that every one of them had been a faerie. Therefore, it was argued, it violated tradition for Apollo to select a non-faerie."

"So you are holding me to a standard which you only learned of after I made the selection?" questioned Apollo, "Well, you can rest assured that I did not violate some precious tradition when I selected Iris Angelica over Lady Cory. At least she does trace her lineage to Queen Jade Rose."

"How would that be possible?"

"Did you not hear your uncle announce that the wearwolves were his children?"

Holly nodded. "Yes, but that was figurative. In his role as a god, all those creatures were his children."

"I had thought that as well until I looked at them when they arrived. They all shared his blood energy as only a true family would."

Holly sat down in her chair with a thud. "That child is my cousin however many times removed?"

"In this particular case, from what I'm guessing that would be first cousin. Rowan takes direct interest in Belkaro and her as only a father would do."

"Oh, dear! That could make matters worse for Belkaro. I cast the spell at full strength thinking he was pure wearwolf. With faerie blood, that could mean some long lasting effects to the spell."

"Such as?"

"Being permanent if I don't do something. Please leave me. I need to think about this." She waved her hand dismissing him. As he started to leave, she stopped him. "Don't think for a minute that we have finished the rest of this conversation."

"I will never forget but we have finished the conversation." Apollo straightened up his stance as he faced the faerie queen. "I made a bad decision which seemed like the right choice at the time. I will now have to live with the consequences. But it was my decision to make and you will not be there to approve or disapprove my actions at the time of them, nor will I always have time to seek council prior to making them." He paused a moment to let his words

sink in. “While I may not always have your permission on the decisions made, I will always welcome your advise on how to improve upon them to avoid repeat performances.”

She stood up from her chair. “You are right. It is ever the burden of the monarch to make their decisions on their own. Why did you do it?”

“I was trying to make everyone happy. I figured that if each of them had their wish, then I could have a moment for myself.”

“Child, for all of your talent and heritage, as you say, you are not a true faerie. Leave the wishes to us. For you, the advice is simple. If you want to make everyone happy, then you must start with yourself. Magic is a great gift but it is not the answer to everything. Misuse it and you will find that I have the ability to bind it so you can never use it again.”

“But would you dare try? How would that impact my ability to rule the reunited kingdom?”

"I'm not sure so don't give me a reason to find out," she warned.

“Is it true what Lady Mandragora said; that I break connection with my earth magic when I go through a portal?”

"I have to admit that what I know about your earth magic would barely fill a thimble," Holly responded. "And what I know about how that interacts with the greater magics wouldn't even cover the bottom of the thimble."

“Is she the next teacher you saw for me?” asked Apollo.

Holly shuttered. “I don’t know but for all our sakes, I hope not. Mother always feared her talent in the magical arts. Whether it was the methods which she employed to gather her energy or the ways she used it for personal gain, mother never said.”

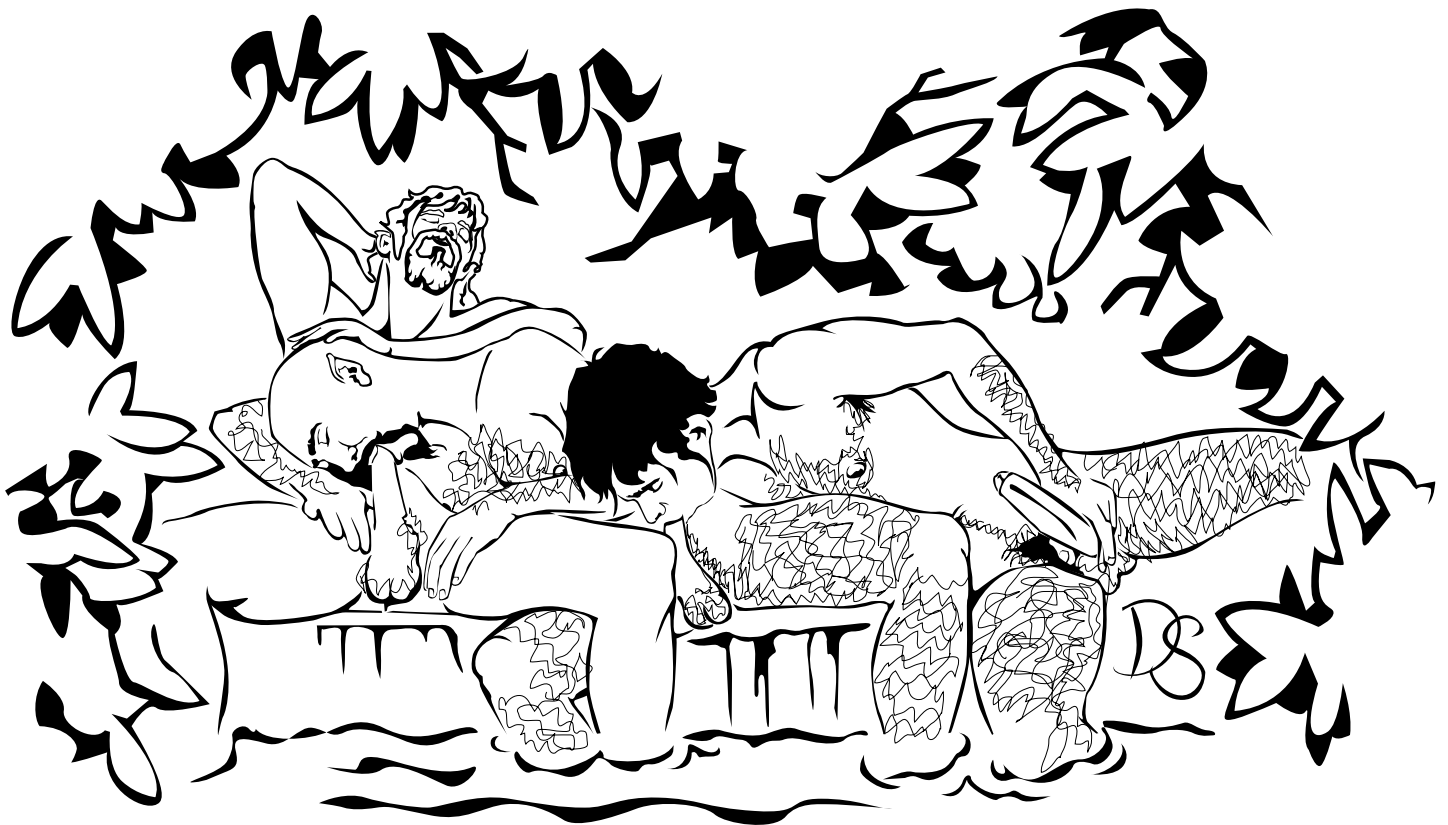
“My queen,” said Hilda Harbell stepping from the darkness of her corner. It was only then that Apollo realized that she had been standing there the whole time. “I have never found cause to doubt Lady Mandragora. She taught me offensive uses of magic when others only felt that magic should be used to encourage a vine to grow in such a way to spell their lover’s name on a wall. Amaranth never understood that but without her training I would never been able to fend off so many attacks on her. She was also a frequent visitor to Princess Lilac when she was locked in her tower. Perhaps it is through her that my aunt learned more of human magic than the rest of us.”

“There you go; another opinion for you to consider,” offered Holly. “Will she be your next teacher? That will be for you to decide. Now, please leave me to ponder the ramifications of my hastily cast spell this evening.” She opened her arms in an invitation of a hug, which Apollo accepted before he departed.

When Apollo arrived at his room, he opened the door slowly as to not disturb Manin's sleep. He needn't have been so cautious as Manin was standing at the window, staring at the forest. He waved for Apollo to join him. "I think the forest wants to tell you something. The phoenix symbol just flashed as you opened the door."

Apollo crossed the room and gave Manin a quick kiss before glancing out the window. All color drained from him face and he had to brace himself on the window sill lest he fell. Even in the darkness of the night, Apollo knew that sign. Staring at him from the depths of the canopy was a bloody axe.

As the symbol registered in his brain and the flood of memories that came with it overtook his mind, the sounds of wolf howls and screams filled the corridors of the faerie castle.



Carousel of Dreams

By Okapi

The haunting melodies of the calliope drew me to the ancient wheel. Mesmerized, I watched the steady parade pass by in perfect rhythm – Up and Down – Round and Round. I was lost in the ancient dance but one of the dancers held my interest more than the others. I don't know how long I was watching before my reverie was broken.

"Magnificent, isn't he?" came the ancient voice on the rail next to me. "My father hand carved each of them down to the finest detail but that one was his finest." He boasted how his father had created each horse from a single block of wood, including all of the harnesses and chains. He sighed. "But uncaring hands have made it necessary to replace those delicate carvings with solid pieces of brass and chrome."

He pointed at the plumage on the high stepping white horses who pranced in front of the Swan Carriage. "That's Prima and the other is Donna. You can still see how fine the carvings are on those feathers, just out of reach of grabbing young hands." Indeed, it took little imagination to pluck one of those headdresses and caress someone's neck with the feathery strands.

"Heya, Spice, old girl," he waved as a pretty palomino raced

by. "She's the best at the fox hunt, you know." He never won a hunt when he rode one of the others. She bent lower to the ground than the rest which gave her a distinct advantage. Try as I might, I could not see her dip to give her rider the edge when scooping up the errant fox. The old man assured me that you can tell when you ride her.

Just as Nellie, the grey mare, was best for catching the brass ring. "She may look like she's ready to be put out to pasture but she has a spring to her step," he claimed. "Fifteen times in a row, but only on Nellie."

The calliope starting playing a lively tune. "Ah, the race. Quick place your bet. Which horse is going to cross the finish line," he gestured at the post nearest us, "when the ride comes to a stop?" His enthusiasm was infectious so I chose the chestnut. "Ah, Morgana. That's a spirited gal if ever you ride her. Good choice but I think today is Sunny's lucky day." We watched in silent anticipation as the racers thundered past us. As the carousel slowed down we moved to put the finish line directly in front of us. For a brief moment my heart raced as it looked like Morgana was going to be crowned champion but the carousel inched forward until Nellie crossed the line moving Morgana into last place.

"You're a sly one, Nellie. Sneaking across the finish line right at the last second." It must have been a trick of the light but it almost seemed like she winked at his taunt. "I told you that she still had it in her."

We watched for hours. I learned all their names except for the one that caught my attention at the start. I watched as he circled out of site and mysteriously not appearing when the racers rounded the track. His jet black mane framed his equine face. His eyes were black coals waiting to ignite on those rare chances I could stare into their depths unobserved. Even when I didn't see him, I knew he was watching; judging if I could ride him or would I be another to be trampled at his feet.

The sound of the old tower bells penetrated the refrains. "Is it that time already," said my friend as he studied his watch, hoping it was wrong. "Join me for a ride before I have to head home." It seemed silly for an adult to ride the carousel without benefit of escorting a child but the way his eyes begged, it wasn't that far off. He wanted a reason to say near his beloved horses just a while longer. As we approached, a small stair was placed in front of him to help him get on the carousel. He walked the line, inspecting each horse; calling it by name; patting it on the neck and reaching into his pocket pantomiming giving it a carrot. One more than one occasion it appeared that the horse



Carousel Tidbits

By DragonSwan

While horses are the most popular animal on a carousel, there is a wide variety of animals on carousels. The non horse animals are referred to as Menagerie Figures. As in "The carousel has horses and menagerie figures." To say it only had menagerie figures would mean there are no horses.

A Jumper is an animal that has all four feet off the platform and moves up and down during the ride.

A Prancer is a stationary animal with its hind legs on the platform and its front legs in the air.

A Stander is a stationary animal with at least three legs on the platform.

The Lead Horse, the fanciest horse, is always on the outside ring, and sometimes is the one inscribed with the maker's signature or initials.

The golden age of the carousel is from the early 1800s to the early 1930. During that time, there were 3,000 produced in the US alone. Today less than 175 of them are still in operation. A lot of them were destroyed in fires or floods.



Carousel of Dreams continued

nudged his hand hoping for seconds. "Greedy as always, aren't you Flame? I should start calling you FatBottom, I should." He reached in his pocket and pulled out the insides. "Satisfied? No more to spare."

He climbed the small stairs next to Sugar. "Excellent day for a hunt." As he mounted his steed, the years melted away, cares disappeared and a child's heart shone through ancient eyes. I started to mount Spice, next to him, but was led away. "He's been waiting for you all day." I could feel the pent up power waiting as I mounted. The music started and off I rode. I broke off the pole and leapt off the platform and galloped into the forest. I gathered my four hooves beneath me and jumped the ravine. The wind caressed my bare chest as I raced the wind. I was not one with my steed. I was an ancient centaur running with the herd. It was a championship race and I knew I was going to win. It was only when I reached the finish line that I realized the music had stopped.

I looked around and it was dark. How long had I been lost in that dream? "Welcome back, my friend." For the first time all day, I allowed myself to stare into the dark eyes in front of me. The god who had been teasing me all day stood before me. All thoughts of the horses faded from my mind. What little breath I had after that exhilarating run was taken from me. His bare arm reached out to steady me. "You need a cool down after that ride. Walk with me."

We walked around the empty park for a few minutes before heading back to the carousel. He told me his grandfather never looked happier to have someone listen to all his stories. I stared at the black stallion I had ridden. "Shadow. The one horse grandfather never talks about. He scares him. He only wants to ride the pretty horses." He ran his fingers in my hair, pulling me close to him in the same gesture. "He never wanted to be one."

He led me to Silver and I mounted. He ran to his controls and the music started. As the great wheel started turning, I felt him mount behind me, arms reaching around me. I melted into his embrace and settled in for a moonlight ride across the prairie.

Black Rice Pudding

Submitted by P'chE

- 1 cup black rice
- 2 cup water
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 very ripe banana
- 1 orange
- 6 dates, pitted
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Put the water on to boil, rinse the rice to rid of hulls and any other impurities. When water comes to boil, add the rice, lower heat to simmer. Prepare banana, half of the orange and dates in processor to thick creamy consistency. Add zest of the orange before peeling and combining with banana and dates. Chop other half of orange into small bits and add with chopped pecans to banana, date, orange mixture. Check on rice. If cooking on low heat, should not stick to bottom of pan. When slightly wet on top, remove from heat, stir and let cool before adding banana mixture, fold in, mixing well. Serve with plain yogurt or sour cream. This will easily make six generous portions. Serve warm or cold, to preference.

The rice is sweet and the fruit and dates make it pleasantly sweet but not overly so. While it is called Black Rice it is actually a dark purple and can generally be found in Asian Markets. It has a sweet, nutty flavor.

Alternate: Substitute strawberries and raspberries for the oranges. Blend the strawberries and raspberries, reserve about a dozen strawberries to chop into mixture.

Story Game

Chapter 14: by DragonSwan

*"In the darkness we heard your cries,
A life alone filled with shame and lies.
With this dawn the God of Light does return,
In his fire your pains will burn.
New lives began with the sun's first light,
Stand tall and proud fear not the night.
Do not run to seek the truths that lie within.
Wait here for your next journey to begin."*

"Well this ain't no Hallmark card," Brian said out loud. "Wait here?" he thought shivering in the cold wind. "The plan was to find somewhere warmer than my apartment." He turned to look into the dark store. Maybe some faun or hunky god was waiting inside to lead him on his next journey. He felt a cold wind whip around him and hoped his next journey would start off with a hot cup of coffee.

"I take it they are not open yet," said a deep voice from behind him. Brian turned around expecting to see a hunky God to whisk him away again. Instead there stood a guy a little shorter than himself, wearing thin rimmed glasses. A tan knitted hat hid his ears and the top of his head from the cold. Tufts of brown hair stuck out from under the hat. His round face had a well trimmed mustache and goatee. His long blue winter coat made it hard to judge what his build was like. He was very cute, just not the Greek God Brian had been expecting. The man smiled, "Are you by chance waiting for someone?" he asked.

"Yeah, well, no not really, it's..." Brian's words seemed as jumbled as his thoughts.

"Are you waiting for the journey to begin?" the stranger asked.

"Yes!" Brian said with new excitement. "What do you know about it?"

"Just what it says on the card a blond faun gave me before disappearing." The man pulled a card from his coat pocket. "Did he give you one as well?"

"Yes," he replied as the two men exchanged notes. The new note read the same except for the last two lines:

*"To Midnight Magic go, but do not go in.
For waiting there is a new journey to begin."*

"So what is the new journey?" Brian asked, handing the card back to the man.

"Well I was hoping you knew," the man gave a friendly smile that made Brian smile as well. "You look as cold as I feel. Look I live close by, why don't we go over to my place and we can see if we can figure this out together."

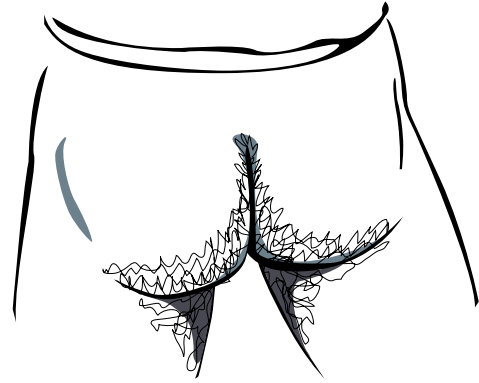
"That sound like a great idea," Brian agreed.

"I'm Paul Clarke," the stranger said offering his hand.

"I am Brian Mahr," he replied, shaking hands.

"Brian Mahr, I am glad to know the name of my next journey," Paul said with a sly smile that made Brian think that there were two horns hiding under the knitted hat.

Paul was right about living close by. After a short walk the two men were walking into a red stone high rise building. They took the elevator up to the eighteenth floor; a few more steps brought them to number 1803. Paul unlocked the door held it open for Brian. When he was inside and looking around he felt like the dream was



beginning. All the new furniture that the young maiden had gifted him in the dream was sitting here in Paul's home.

"You already look like you have seen a ghost," Paul said removing his coat and hat. No horns Brian noticed.

"It's nothing," Brian said trying to convince himself of that as well.

"Look if we are going to figure this stuff out together we have to be honest. You saw something in a strange dream and something here reminded you." Paul looked deep into Brian's eyes as if trying to read his soul. "If your dreams are anything like the ones I have been having I can understand why it is hard to talk about them." Paul paused, "As my mother always said, a good meal will make any difficult time better. How about some blueberry pancakes and hot coffee?"

"That sounds good to me. Your mom sounds like a wise woman." Brian said taking off his coat.

"She was, but her ideas of food in times of trouble, have not been good for my waist." Paul said as he grabbed his belly.

"I don't know you look pretty good to me," Brian said with a smile.

"Thanks, but breakfast and dream talk first, then we can see where that wicked smile of yours will lead."

Paul led Brian to his kitchen, and as Paul began making the pancakes they started talking. The two men talked all through breakfast. By the time the dishes were put in the dishwasher all that was understood was that they had shared similar dreams. The only noted difference was that Paul was being led by Hermes, as Brian's lead was Apollo.

Brian pulled the card from his pocket and reread it. "What does this all mean? *'Do not run to seek the truths that lie within.'*"

"I wish I knew," Paul said, and then looked over at Brian with a wicked grin. "We didn't solve any mysteries, but are you still up for a little play?"

Brian felt the warmth of the Pan under his shirt and said, "I am always ready to..."

BAM BAM BAM

A loud knock stopped both men in their tracks.

"OH FUCK!" both men cried. They looked at each other and almost laughed.

BAM BAM BAM

The two men walked to the door, Paul reached for the door as Brian stood close behind him, holding tightly to Paul's left arm. Paul opened the door and...

Story Game

Chapter 15: by Phoenix

...no one was there.

Paul thought he heard the sound of a door being closed down the hall so the two stepped into the hallway to listen for more signs of the person who knocked. As soon as they were both out of the apartment, they heard the sound of another door being slammed shut, Paul's! In the silence that followed they could hear the sounds of the deadbolt being locked.

"Shit!" said Paul, fumbling for the keys he knew were on the table next to the door. He pounded on the door. "Who's in there?"

Brian tapped him on the shoulder and got Paul to turn around. Standing in the hallway was a tall, thin older gentleman dressed in wizard's robes of midnight blue with golden suns and moons embroidered throughout its folds.

"Ah, there you are boys. We have been looking all over for you. Didn't you get my message to wait at Midnight Magik?"

"Do you mean these cryptic notes?" asked Brian, holding up the pair of notes that he still had in his hand.

"Fauns!" said the man in an exasperated tone. "Can't trust them to deliver a simple message."

"What's going on?" demanded Paul.

"We need to hurry as we have lost precious time already. I'll have to explain on the way."

He started to push them towards the elevator. Paul started to protest that they needed their coats and the wizard said that everything would be provided and they had to trust him. Brian felt a wave of warmth from his pan necklace. He knew that Paul must have been getting a similar something from whatever amulet had been given to him during his dreams. Brian grabbed Paul's hand and asked, "Ready for our journey?" Paul simply nodded his response.

The wizard smiled as he noticed the looks exchanged between the two as they held hands and followed him into the elevator. "Yes, you will do very well."

As they stepped into the lobby of Paul's building, a pair of gentlemen dressed in fancy livery of midnight blue and gold. Each held a cloak for Paul and Brian to put on. The soft wool felt warm against Brian's bare skin. "Bare skin? What happened to his clothes?" he thought but then he noticed the pair of gentlemen walking away with their clothes. He had a feeling that he wouldn't get an answer if he asked how they did that. Instead he felt his cock stirring at the thought of walking around town with just a cloak on.

Paul placed his hands on Brian ass. "A penis for your thoughts," he said as he nuzzled Brian's neck.

"And an ass to put it in," he responded as he turned to give Paul a kiss. "Why don't we skip the journey and go back upstairs?"

"Why don't we get you two Masters of the House of the Rising Pan into the carriage and you can make out in the back seat?"

They were ushered out the front door and into an enormous golden carriage. A team of six palominos, with the coats nearly matching the color of the carriage, were hitched in front. As soon as the door of the carriage closed, Brian barely had time to notice the whistle of the driver to get the team moving for Paul's hand was already exploring the opening in Brian's cloak. Brian was pleasantly surprised by Paul's bold passion since he had been so tentative in his beginning exploration when they were in the

apartment.

"Ah, the ardor of the House of the Rising Pan is legendary," said the wizard. "But do you think I could have a moment of your time?" The two stopped kissing and settled into the seat. "Thank you" he said.

He explained that the prince had been rescued from the dungeons of the Dark Lord, Boytoikus. But something had changed in the prince while in those evil clutches. He had no love for his people. He had no passion for anything. The king had tried everything to help get the fire in his son's heart rekindled but to no avail. Finally, he called his council together and it was agreed to call for help from the Masters of the House of the Rising Pan. They were the last chance for hope to return the prince to his former self.

There was no time for them to ask questions. At the conclusion of the wizard's tale, the whistle to halt the team could be heard and the door opened. The wizard led them to the front gate of the castle. The gates were opened at their approach and without pause the wizard continued leading them into the castle itself.

The doors to the Great Hall were opened by two beefy guards, both with goatees and long hair. One was redheaded and the other was black haired. Brian thought he saw a wink from the darker haired guard as he gave thought that the two reminded him of Apollo and Hermes. He didn't have much time to think about that for the scene before him was a carnal delight. The entire Great Hall was filled with naked people engaged in what had to be the world best attended orgy. A quick survey of the orgy led Brian to belief that the prince must be gay since all participants were male.

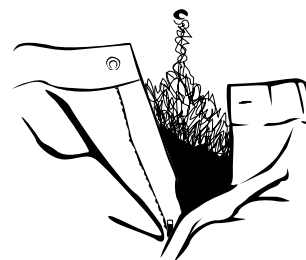
Paul came to the same conclusion and said, "This must be why they didn't call upon the Vestal Virgins of Venus to help out."

The two spotted the prince on his throne on the far side of the room. Even at that distance they could see him yawning at his disinterest. That is until he saw two strangers dressed in robes enter the room. He stood up and started to head into the crowd. Paul and Brian moved toward him, people kissing the hem of their robes as they passed. It was slow progress weaving through the undulating bodies. The prince must have been having an equally difficult time for when they looked for him, it seemed like he as always in a mirrored position as if they were spiraling in toward each other and would only meet in the center the odd labyrinth that was created by the bodies.

In what seemed like hours, the three finally arrived at the center of the hall. Paul and Brian could finally see the face of the prince they were to help.

"Jeffery!" they said in unison.

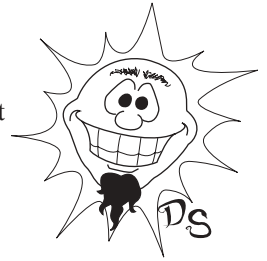
Tune in next issue for the Story Game marathon as we present the full story leading into the conclusion of Brian's tale



Let the Sunshine In

By Professor Percival "Perry" Grinn

What began as a tribute to the newborn Sun King at Yule, gave way to praying for heat during the deep freeze at Imbolc and is now thanks for the lengthening days. By what ever name you praise the sun, let it shine brightly! You know the drill - words can be found vertically, horizontally or diagonally, forward or backwards.



G	C	H	O	R	S	H	N	C	A	W	U	P	E	Z	Z	H	I	T	B
O	J	T	N	X	H	S	H	A	D	R	A	M	M	E	L	E	C	H	V
B	Q	E	P	A	E	A	E	Q	A	T	I	A	K	E	W	A	U	E	W
S	U	R	Z	G	L	P	J	K	S	P	R	N	N	K	W	I	I	Z	A
Z	A	A	G	U	I	A	A	J	L	U	R	A	N	U	T	J	L	D	K
A	F	U	I	Y	O	H	B	R	W	G	U	I	H	A	I	V	T	J	A
D	O	B	L	J	S	S	A	M	M	U	V	A	N	J	P	E	H	A	H
V	K	S	L	E	B	N	E	C	C	U	V	O	L	S	Z	W	C	R	I
N	U	J	U	J	Y	G	G	E	U	V	T	N	X	H	N	I	A	I	R
F	R	A	K	A	U	B	I	A	N	I	L	A	M	R	G	K	P	N	U
N	I	S	N	A	H	L	A	Q	G	N	A	H	L	Z	E	U	O	I	M
T	H	W	I	G	I	A	A	B	E	K	U	O	H	H	D	N	L	I	E
S	U	P	H	A	N	U	H	N	B	I	S	S	A	N	S	A	I	T	Y
A	Q	M	N	K	T	O	E	C	X	A	N	T	E	O	K	L	Z	T	C
G	U	Z	I	U	I	F	W	K	I	T	R	L	N	V	T	E	T	I	K
O	A	C	V	R	E	M	X	E	F	N	I	R	I	E	E	N	I	Q	L
D	H	D	T	R	J	F	H	B	E	I	I	E	M	L	A	U	U	W	A
A	M	A	T	E	R	A	S	U	N	V	C	K	E	U	G	A	H	S	P
R	H	U	A	P	O	L	L	O	L	H	W	Q	E	P	M	A	F	A	N
D	M	Y	A	R	I	K	H	E	B	E	L	E	N	U	S	U	R	Y	A

ADRAMMELECH (Mesopotomian)

AKEWA (Argentinian) *

AMATERASU (Japanese) *

ANYANWU (African) *

APOLLO (Greek and Roman)

ARINNA (Samaritan) *

ARINNITTI (Hittites) *

ATUM RA (Egyptian)

BABBAR (Sumerian)

BELENUS (Celtic)

CHORS (Slavic)

DAZSBOG (Slavic)

DHATRI (Hindu)

GNOWEE (Australia) *

HAENIM (Korean)

HELIOS (Roman)

HIRUKO (Japanese)

HUITZILOPACHTLI (Aztec)

HUNAHPU (Mayan)

INTI (Incan)

KINICH-AHAU (Mayan)

LIZA (West African)

LUGH (Celtic)

MALINA (Inuit) *

NEFERTUM (Egyptian)

PALK (Korean)

PUGU (Siberian)

RAA (Maori)

RADOGAST (Slavic)

SAULE (Latvian) *

SHAKARU (Pawnee) *

SHAPASH (Ugantic) *

SOL (Norse and Roman) **

SUNNE (German)

SURYA (Hindu)

TONATIUH (Aztec)

TSOHANOAI (Navajo)

UNELANUKI (Cherokee) *

UPULEVO (Timorese)

UTU (Sumerian)

WAKAHIRU-ME (Japanese) *

YARIKH (Sumerian) *

* Goddess **Sol is a Norse Goddess and/or a Roman God. Anyone notice that Denmark lies between those areas?