

2001

## Mythic Circle #24

Gwenyth E. Hood

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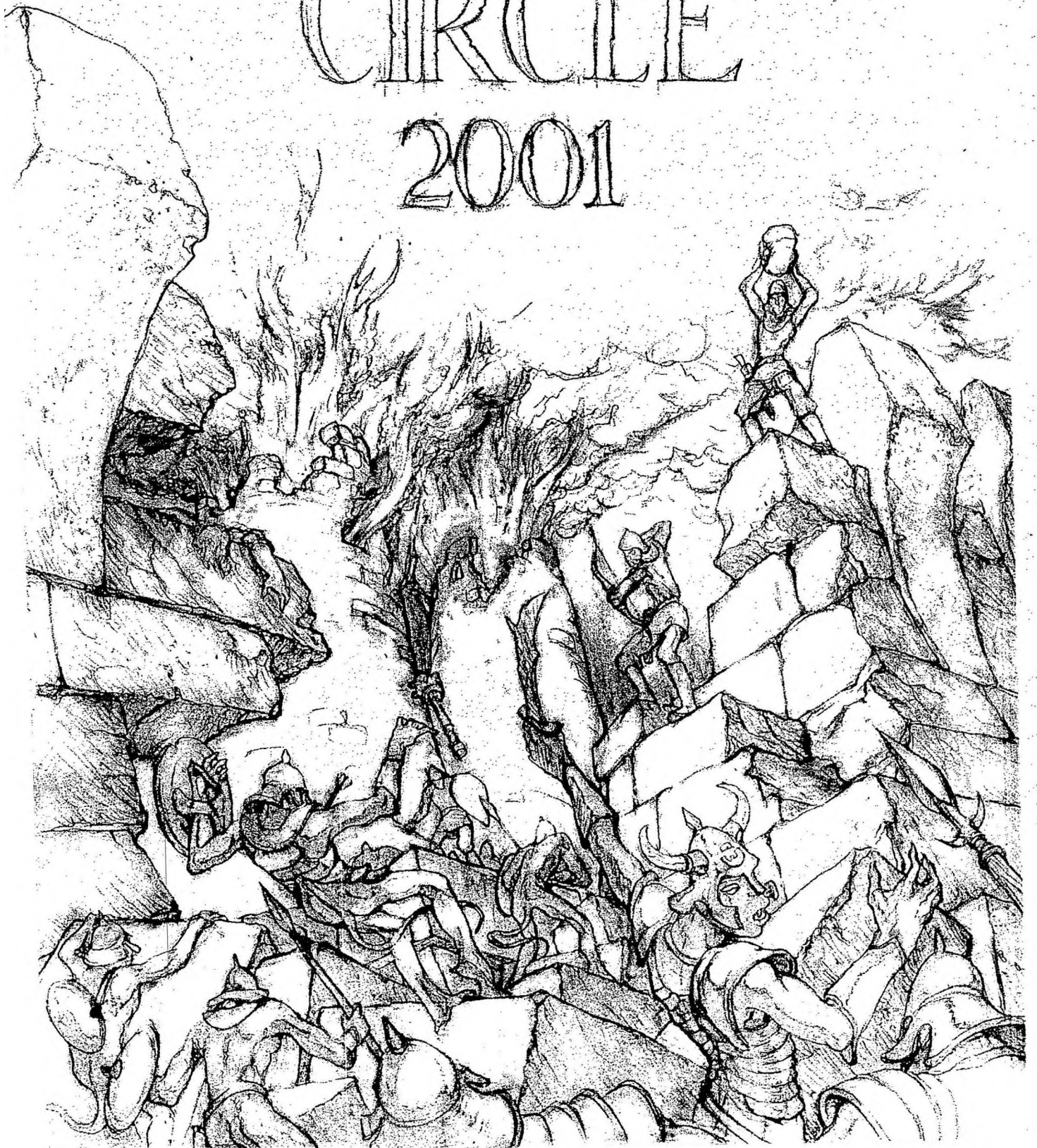
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# MYTHIC

# CIRCLE

# 2001



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Editor: Gwenyth E. Hood

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## EDITORIAL

The 2001 issue of *Mythic Circle* is somewhat late. I have all the usual excuses and some unusual ones too. My job, as usual, keeps me busy. Besides that, I no longer of the energetic help of Trent Walters, who, preoccupied with medical school and his own writing, resigned as co-editor. I had to muddle through by myself as best I could. However, Trent did contribute a short story and a review, which appear within these pages.

A more unusual drain on my time was the need to revise a book for publication: *Snow Wolf: Book I of the Living Sword Series*, with is due out in April 2002, from OWL Press. It will be my first published novel since *The Coming of the Demons* (Morrow, 1982). This largely explains why I did not finish #24 in the summer of 2001, as I had hoped, though this was a happy problem.

Then came the tragic events of September 11. Here in Huntington we remembered all those who died, all who lost loved ones, and all who would soon face death and danger in defending our country. On the Marshall campus there was special mourning for a colleague's promising son who was killed along with Barbara Olson and many others when Hani Hanjour and his fellow assassins slammed American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon.

Weeks went by when I hardly thought of *The Mythic Circle*. In happier times, something less horrible might have delayed *Mythic Circle* # 24 just as much. In that case, I would write something frothy and humorous about it. Not now.

But though these shockwaves disturb our society, deep realities remain the same and Mythopoeic writers reach out for them. So

here, at last, is *Mythic Circle* #24. Many thanks to the authors for their patience in waiting to see their work come out, and to the artists who worked diligently and sometimes on short notice to do the illustrations.

The authors and artists presented in this issue show great variety in approach and subject matter. Nevertheless, their works fall naturally into three themes, like different movements of a symphony. J. M. R. Harrison's "The Master Juggler" opens on a positive note. In the pieces that follow, the forces of creation battle with destruction and seem near victory, sometimes defeat. Ed Cates' poem, "The Story" sounds the rallying cry again. The battle shifts back and forth, until the evil powers are driven back at least temporarily. The symphony reaches a harmonious conclusion with tributes to some pioneers in the Mythopoeic tradition. Nicholas Ozment's poem, "Narnian Spring," ties all the themes together--creation, destruction, and a tribute to a Mythopoeic master-- thus providing a suitable close to the issue.

We would have liked more Science Fiction, though the short story by Trent Walters and Joe Christopher's rueful salute to Ursula K. Leguin's *Left Hand of Darkness* ("What Mr. Ai Didn't Learn") at least pointed in that direction.

*Mythic Circle* #25 will, I hope, be published before 2002 ends. Send in your stories and poems and letters of comment if you have them. The livelier the commentary, the more benefit this publication can be to Mythopoeic artists who are developing their talent. May the Mythopoeic tradition continue to thrive.

# The Master Juggler

by

J. M. R. Harrison

His Pride and reputation rested  
on a rare set of blown glass balls  
imported at great cost and trouble  
from a harsh and desert land across the sea.  
The glass was as delicate as sea-foam  
streaked with all the colors of the world.  
When he traveled, he carried the balls  
wrapped in silk, buried in goose down,  
securely locked in a cedar wood chest.  
When he juggled in a sunlit courtyard,  
rainbows stained his hands  
and scattered in uneven patterns  
on the uneven paving stones.  
The piercing beauty of his act was rivaled  
only by perfect sunsets and other echoes  
of the star-spanning play of the mighty angels  
when they and creation were newly fledged.  
Now witness was indifferent;  
no spectator forgot.

He was performing before  
a king and two emperors,  
their sons and daughters,  
friends and servants,  
when he was stung by a sullen wasp,  
and dropped one priceless glass ball.  
With a sound like windchimes,

an exquisite butterfly shook itself free  
of the glittering glass shards,  
and the juggler beheld  
one of the undisclosed longings  
of his inmost heart.

When the enchanted insect took flight,  
he felt abandoned and ashamed.  
Slowly, one by one, he dropped  
the other balls, which shattered  
and released visions and wonders,  
all winged and glorious in the sun.  
He wept for the freedom and the loss.  
He was transformed.  
He was bereft.  
He dropped the final ball.  
A tiny crystalline dragon emerged,  
wings shot with molten gold and  
iridescence.  
She landed on his hand  
and watched the struggle in his eyes.  
She spoke words of fire and reassurance:  
They will return.  
Then, still flaming, she flew into his heart,  
which her gentle forge would burnish  
and renew.



# For Eustace

by

John Savoie

I, too, have been a dragon  
And slept among jewels  
Dappled like a chill stream  
Flowing all green and gold  
Over my jeweled skin.

I, too, have touched the ones  
I love, tenderly, with claws,  
with eyes of hoard and cave,  
coughed my thoughts in fumes  
and chased us into solitude.

I, too, kept my light within  
till it pressed upon itself  
like a diamond smoldering deep  
in earth, the golden breeze  
shrunk to fierce black flame.

I, too, have beaten the air  
with leathery wings yet never  
flown outside my dragon skin;  
hated the hateful dragon glaring  
from the steep mountain pool;

turned teeth and claws on self  
to strip the mocking scales;  
dug and sloughed and dug  
again, but always I was  
dragon's heart in dragon skin.

And I, too, have known the Lion,  
felt Lion claw and Lion breath  
(a dragon seems so small),  
taken the stark half-blind plunge  
and died the sweet dragon death.

## Trolls At Teatime

by J. M. R. Harrison

Five trolls came to tea  
and stayed for dinner.  
when I went to bed  
I found them in my room,  
snoring.

The windowpanes rattled.  
I spent an uncomfortable night  
on the sofa.

Within a week, I decided  
I had to move  
but at my new place  
I found one hanging pictures  
and another unpacking silverware.

I went into the kitchen and bluntly asked,  
“What would it take  
“to get you to go home at last?”

“Don’t worry, dear,” she said,  
her smile a jagged toothed grimace,  
on tombstone-heavy hand patting my arm,  
“You may stay as long as you like.”

## The Unexplained Plague Of Laryngitis Among The Mermaids

by

J. M. R. Harrison

The palsied, blind fisherman whose hut this once was  
claimed only the mermaids singing made bearable the grief:  
never again to watch sunsets, ships under sail,  
the proud, swaying walk of the firm breasted women,  
the nimble, half-naked children on the shore mending nets,  
the night sky splattered with stars and the full moon rising  
with stately grace over the turbulent sea. He died smiling.  
But now I wake in terror in the night, flailing in the bed,  
straining to hear the familiar slap of the waves on the shore.  
The unexplained plague of laryngitis among the mermaids  
has spread to the seabirds. Once strident, now they dive and soar  
and quarrel over fish heads with a mute, fierce concentration.  
Hourly sounds vanish; the storm wind dwindles to sigh.  
I fear the problem goes deeper than speech, beyond mere silence.  
I fear meaning is being drained for the world,  
sense lost dropwise like juice from a squeezed orange,



and the rind case away to attract ants and dry in the sun.  
I fear I and all men will be struck dumb and stumbling,  
bereft of name and memory in a lightless, soundless voice,  
or worse, left to wander locked in a manic leering psychosis.

I fear . .



## The Bridge

by

Richard Reilly

There once was a troll who lived beneath a bridge, charging a fee for its use. That is not unusual, but how he came to be there is. That is the story I will tell today.

Now the first thing you must understand about the troll is that he wasn't very bright. Second, you must know he wasn't happy. Why wasn't he happy? Because he was a troll, of course. He had scabby green skin, his body was crooked and thin, and his limbs were bent at odd angles. His breath smelled like dead fish, his teeth were sharp as needles, and he could not help biting his cheeks with his misaligned jaws. His eyes bulged out so far that he couldn't shut his eyelids. He was so ugly that even other trolls wouldn't look at him. And he could never see the sun, for sunlight turns trolls to stone. The troll of our story hated all that he was. He longed for a way to change.

But that was before he built the bridge.

One night he was walking in the mountains beside a lake, slowly to avoid tripping over his legs. The mountains were silhouetted against the light of the rising moon. The troll stopped to watch as the moon slowly appeared. There is no sun at night, he thought, only the reflection of its light. The sun, 'twas said, was a thousand times brighter. It must therefore, he reasoned, be a thousand times more beautiful as well. But he knew he would never see it.

Grumpily he sat down, idly scratching crooked lines in the sand with his fingers. He bowed his head, bit his lip, and because it hurt, because everything in his life hurt so much, he began to cry.

Suddenly a voice spoke beside him.

"Why are you sad, good troll?"

Startled, the troll looked up. Beside him, floating in the air, was a tiny man with long golden hair and glowing translucent wings: a fairy. He had never seen a fairy before; it was very beautiful, and he stared. Then, realizing he was staring, he said:

"You scared me."

"I'm sorry," said the fairy. "It is difficult not to sneak upon people, since I fly. If you would rather be alone, please say so. But if you are sad, and would like someone to confide in, please consider me a friend. My name is Tom."

Slowly the words sank into the troll's sluggish brain. He did not understand all the fairy had said: it had spoken too fast, and some of its words, like "confide", were new to him. But he understood the fairy's general intent: this beautiful glowing creature wanted to be his friend. The troll began to cry again.

"Why are you crying?" Tom asked.

The troll snuffled his nose on his knuckles, and said: "I am a troll. Is that not reason enough?"

"But I have seen other trolls, and they were not all crying. In fact, you are the first crying troll I've ever seen."

"They must not be as wretched as I am." the troll replied.

"Well, why are you wretched?"

Then the troll began reciting a whole litany of troll-wretchedness, a complete list of every pain he'd ever suffered. He may not have been smart, but he had a good memory. From the cut he'd received by his

mother's claws while suckling sour milk from her breast, to the lip still bleeding from the bite just moments before, he told all. At last he concluded:

"But that is not the worst of it. I could live with the pain and the ugliness, I could live with it all, except for one thing."

"What's that?" the fairy asked.

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, but not just you. You, and the moon, and the stars, and trees, and singing birds and flowers, all things beautiful. When I see you, when I think of you, and myself, and how far I am from you. . . when I think of how I will never be like you. . . that is the greatest pain of all."

The two gazed at each other silently for a moment, then both bowed their heads.

"If only I could see the sun," the troll muttered.

"What's that? The sun?"

"Yes. I have heard it is very beautiful. But I am a troll, I can never see it: its light falling on me would turn me to stone." He was quiet a moment, then added: "Though sometimes I think it would be worth it."

"But wouldn't its beauty cause you more pain?" Tom asked.

"I know," said the troll. "Yet I long to see it still. For each morning I hear the birds chirping joyously to greet it. I've seen the trees and animals and flowers which grow from its light. I've felt its warmth: the air it warms seeps into my cave and feels good on my creaking bones. And I've sometimes thought that perhaps, if I could only see it . . ." he hesitated.

"Go on."

"I thought it might change me, somehow," the troll said quietly, then looked away across the lake.

For several moments Tom studied him, thoughtfully. At last he said: "My dear troll, I know a way you can see it."

"What?"

"I said, I know a way you can see it."

"Oh, do not joke with me, please. I am in enough pain."

"But I'm not joking, troll. There is a place--a cave--in which the sun shines at mid-day on a pool which lies at its center. You could go to that cave and see the sun's reflection! It is not quite the same as seeing it directly, but the pool is perfectly still, and you would not have to turn to stone seeing it."

The troll was excited. "This cave. Where is it?"

"Why, not far at all! Do you see that island out there?" he pointed across the lake.

"Yes," the troll nodded.

"It is there. Not even a mile from here. You see how it is rocky, kind of a hill? The cave is inside. It is the lake water itself that forms the pool."

"But how will I get there? I cannot swim."

"Hmm. That is a problem." The fairy considered a moment. "You could perhaps build a boat."

"Yes?"

"But boats are dangerous, especially if not built well, or handled by a . . . well, clumsy creature. You could fall in the lake and drown. There must be a better way."

The troll looked down, discouraged. "I don't suppose You could . . ."

"Carry you?"

The troll looked at him hopefully.

"Certainly not. You are much too heavy for my small wings. But say, here's an idea. Why don't you build a bridge?"

"A bridge?"



"Yes, of course, a bridge. After all, you are a troll, and bridge-building does seem the one thing you trolls are naturally good at. I mean, you do know how to build a bridge, don't you?"

"Yes, my father taught me. But it is so far."

"All the more reason to do it!" the fairy exclaimed. "Think of it. It would be the biggest bridge a troll had ever built--biggest I'd know of anyway. And it would be a bridge to the sun! Why, you could tell all the other trolls about it, and they'd all come to see. You'd be a hero."

"Yes!" decided the troll. "I will do it."

And so began the biggest bridge-building project a troll did ever embark upon. He began that very night, circling the lake, to find where the island was closest to shore. For three nights he planned the bridge, scratching a blueprint on the side of a rock. He examined the trees, finding those that were long and straight. He made himself tools from stone and wood. And then he began to build. Each night, from sunset to sunrise, he toiled to construct his bridge. And every night Tom came to encourage him.

"It is a wonderful bridge!" the fairy shouted one night, while the troll fitted a log into place. "Your father taught you well."

"My mother taught me too," the troll replied, grunting.

"They both would have been proud."

On and on the troll labored. Weeks passed, and the bridge slowly stretched across the water. The troll's muscles grew strong, his joints were creaking less, but he hardly noticed. Twice there were mishaps. A soft spot on the lake's bottom gave way and half of the bridge collapsed, delaying its completion by several weeks. Another time the troll tripped, falling into the water, and would have drowned had the fairy not

thrown him a rope. Each time the troll was discouraged and considered quitting, but the fairy said, "No troll who gave up was ever remembered for anything."

And so the troll continued.

As the bridge neared the island's shore the troll grew more excited. He felt almost that the sun was calling to him. All this time he'd been imagining it, glorifying it in his daydreams. He wanted to embrace it, to melt into it, consumed by its light and warmth. Of course he knew he would only be seeing its reflection, but its beauty, he was sure, was a million times that of the moon. He would fill his senses with that beauty and forget himself entirely.

Sometimes it was all he could do to keep from throwing himself into the lake and floundering his way toward shore. Once he even had the bright idea of tossing a log in the water to support himself while he paddled. But Tom discouraged him.

"Finish the bridge first," he said. "It will only be a few more days. You'll live until then. Think of the story you'll be able to tell. 'I built a bridge to the island of the sun,' you'll say."

The bridge took nearly a year to build.

When at last it reached the shallows near the island the troll could no longer wait. On a night when Tom was not there to restrain him, he jumped. The icy water froze his skin, sharp rocks stabbed his feet, but he hardly noticed as he ran toward shore.

"I did it. I did it," he shouted, racing up among the trees. He did not even pause to look back but charged up the rocky slope. "Where is it? Where is it?" He looked left and right, up and down, for a cave, a crevice, a hole in the ground. He climbed to the top of the island but saw nothing. "He said it was at the center," the troll gasped. "But the way in, where is it?"

A dark shadow caught his eye and he ran toward it, but it was no more than that. He raced up and down the island on all sides and found nothing. At last he stopped at the lake's edge and shouted: "Tom! I can't find it!" His call echoed back from the distant mountains.

"Tom!"

All was quiet. A suspicion wormed its way into the back of the troll's brain and lodged itself there.

"No," he said, and again started to run. He ran a spiral path around the island, climbing a little higher with each circuit. Still he found nothing. When he reached the top, he stood gasping, and cried: "No!"

But no one seemed to hear.

He fell to the ground, crying. He could hardly bear it. All that work, for what? Nothing! Why had the fairy tricked him? Why? Why?

Exhausted, he fell asleep.

He awoke to the sound of chirping birds: sunrise. The sun would be up soon. He had no place to hide here. If he stayed, he would be turned to stone. But he didn't care. He wanted to see the sun, didn't he? He didn't have anything else to live for. He rolled over and lay on his back, thinking: I will lie here, watch the sun come up, and die.

And there floating above him was Tom.

"You!" the troll said, leaping up and grabbing for him. "You tricked me! There's no cave of the sun here!"

"I'm sorry," said the fairy, dodging. "It was a lie, I admit. You just seemed so . . . unhappy."

"Unhappy?! You think I'm happy now? If I could get my hand on you, I'd tear your wings off!"

"Then it's a good thing you can't catch me!" called the fairy, as he was chased down the hill by the troll. "But think about

it a moment, will you? Do you really have reason to be unhappy?"

"I just wasted a year building a bridge that goes nowhere!"

"That's right," Tom replied, moving out over the water. "There it is now. Finest bridge I've ever seen, although it's not quite finished."

The troll splashed into the water, then stopped and looked at the bridge--his bridge--spanning the still water in the light of dawn. It was indeed a fine bridge.

"But it goes nowhere," he protested.

"So what?" said the fairy. "Most bridges go nowhere when you come right down to it. People think they go somewhere and spend all their time crossing back and forth, and they're always building new ones. But when you come right down to it, most of them would've been happier if they'd just stayed home."

"Are you trying to say that I didn't waste my time?" growled the troll, having the strange feeling he was being taught something, though he didn't know what.

"You built a fine bridge. No, not just fine . . . a beautiful bridge. Look at the way it arcs over the water. It's a work of art really. And besides, it doesn't go nowhere. This island is real pretty, if you'd stop to take a look at it. So you tell me: did you waste your time?"

The troll looked at the bridge, following its length from the lake's outer shore to the island, and he looked at the island: 'twas pretty, as the fairy said. But then he saw the light of dawn through the trees, and remembered the sun he'd come to see. In a few moments it would rise and, if he did not run fast, turn him to stone.

He turned back toward the fairy and glared at him.

"I am going to kill you," he said, and lunged.





The fairy, of course, was too fast for him, and raced away across the water. The troll pursued on the bridge, shouting: "I'll kill you. I'll kill you!" But the fairy was soon out of sight. The troll, however, kept running. He ran into the forest and entered his cave just moments before the sun's rays could find him. There he sat, rocking in anger for hours. If he could just get his hands on that fairy. . .

He never saw Tom again, however.

After a few weeks of searching, his anger began to subside, and he returned to the lakeside to look at the bridge. He was thinking about tearing it down, just to show the fairy how angry he was. But then he noticed something: there were trolls on his bridge, with fishing poles.

"Hey!" he shouted, running toward them. "What are you doing out there? This is my bridge!"

The trolls quavered at the sight of the huge muscular troll running toward them. "We're sorry," they said. "We didn't know. We would've paid you, but no one was here."

The troll stopped. "Well, you shouldn't have used it at all then. But I guess you can pay me now."

"Of course," they said. "What is the price?"

The troll thought back. His parents had charged a silver, but their bridge was tiny compared to this, and that was a long time ago.

"One gold coin each," he announced.

In a few moments, he held three gold coins in his hand. He fingered them idly as he walked back to shore, a scheme forming slowly in his brain. Three gold coins! That was quite a profit. If he made that much each night he would soon be a wealthy troll. He wondered what he might do with that wealth. Perhaps he could hire doctors; they might cure his arthritis, straighten his limbs and jaw. A little surgery might even make him look nice. And clothes, he could afford good clothes, and a comfortable bed, and food.

In the next few weeks he finished the bridge. Beneath one end he built a house, and a gate which he could control from inside, so that he could charge fees both day and night. On the island he built a park--swing-sets and picnic tables--then he traveled around the forest putting signs up to advertise. He called it the bridge to Sunny Island.

He died a wealthy troll.

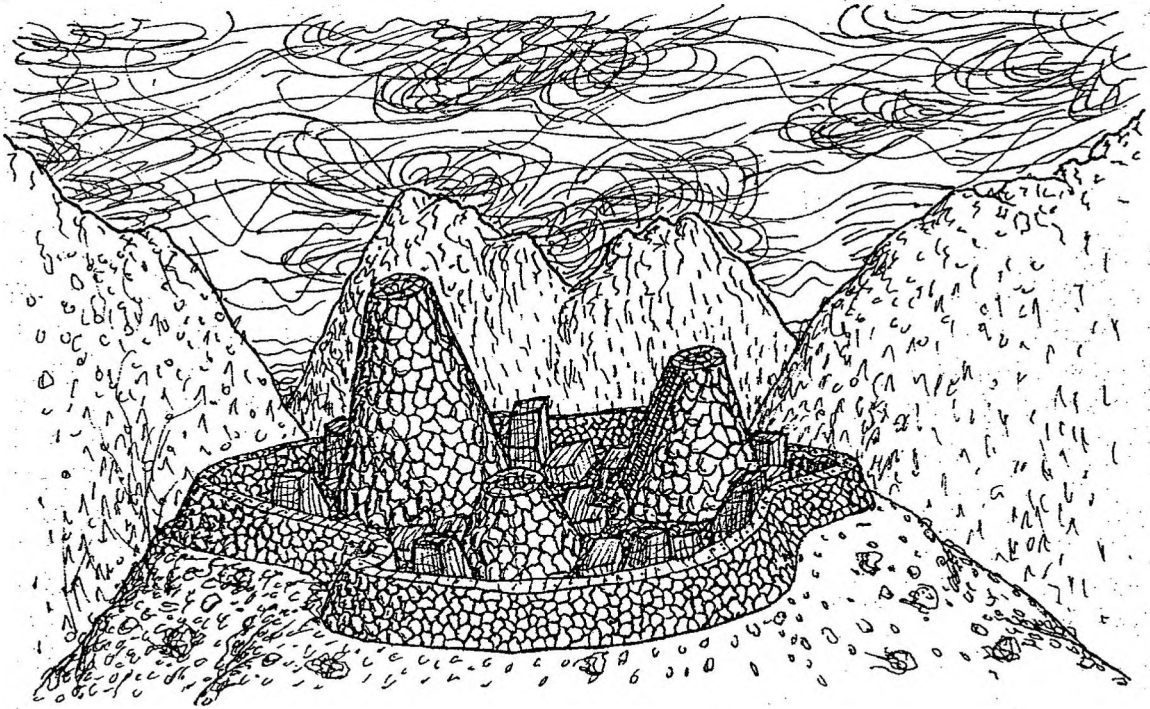
# The High Priest Of Turmiz

by

Lee Clark Zumpe

Deep in the Northern Mountains in the city called Turmiz, the altar upon which the necromancer Ak Khun Khan shed the blood of infants to appease the young and hungry gods still stands enshrouded by hoary shadows. Though few would venture into the subterranean corridors which lead to the Old One's sacred temple, the Priesthood maintains an access point through which pilgrims wishing to make an offering may pass. In those tunnels beneath that highland sanctuary, slinking through dismal and abandoned burrows, it is rumored that the raspy voice of the long-interred High Priest

echoes down the ages whispering invocations. Turmiz, the city purportedly built by dragonkind before men conquered these lands, is hard-featured and terrible to behold. Tall, black, windowless towers stab skyward ungraciously. The city walls are ominous and impenetrable, and the city itself seems to intimate that it is both as old and as undying as the mountains surrounding it. At first sight, it appears that the rock vomited up this geometric monstrosity and that men simply infest its honeycomb caverns.





The Scroll of Zahkmuur tells that Ak Khun Khan first stumbled upon this place in the Dark Ages before Amoroz disbanded the Sect of the Black Goat. In those ancient days, the gods still attended this divine highland, still walked upon the consecrated ground of the Plateau of Uddath Angk, and still delivered their word directly unto the apostles. There was no need for divination nor interpretation of omens, and never arose a distortion of the gods' will by ignorant and self-absorbed members of the Priesthood.

In the Year of the Blood Moon, Xamol first journeyed to Turmiz with a dozen and one black-hooded acolytes. The Great Reformer in his youth vowed to reveal the wicked underpinnings of our heritage and -- during the course of his career -- promised to purge the Priesthood of all the depraved perversions of the Scripture that harkened back to the days of Ak Khun Khan. Xamol the Purifier came to Turmiz a vigorous, strong-willed, fervent revolutionary, eager to challenge the arcane mystics who swore allegiance to the legacy of Old One.

The followers of Ak Khun Khan's disciplines entertained Xamol's party and attended his exhortation on the malignancy of derivative dogma. In their lavish shrine set deep in the very mountain they gave ear to the Great Reformer as he admonished the assembly of Turmiz for deifying the image of the Old One, for praising him in hymns and for making sacrifices in his name. Respectfully, they feasted with their presumptuous guests, shared ivory-yellow wine served in golden goblets, and even prayed together at the feet of the idol of Rahtu.

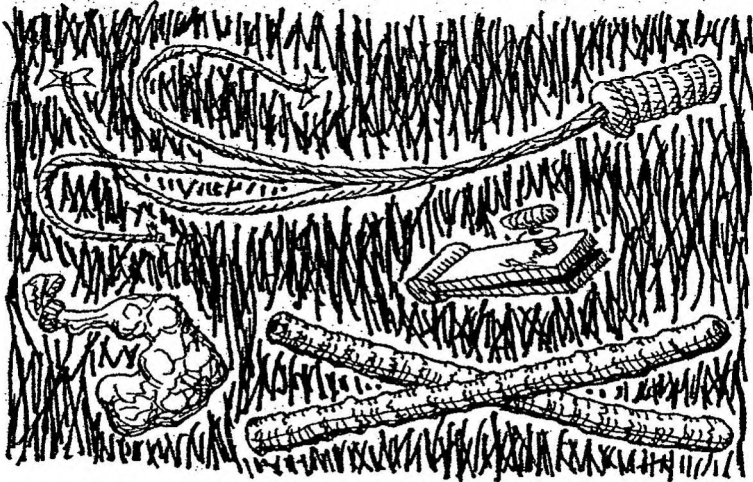
Yet, never once did the Priesthood of Turmiz yield to Xamol the Purifier's insistence that they renounce the name of Ak Khun Khan.

And so it was that Xamol, acting under the authority of the Yharim Dynasty and a vassal of emperor, dismissed the acting High Priest of Turmiz and detained other high-ranking adherents of the Old One's teachings. Soldiers stood guard outside temples to ensure that improper worship could not take place, and all known entrances to the network of tunnels beneath the city were either sealed or secured. Xamol even ordered the city guard to confiscate religious icons related to the worship of the Old One, and popular fetishes of Ak Khun Khan were collected from merchants and destroyed.

An inquisition convened, and Xamol selected a dozen and one errant priests to interview. These he assigned to his hooded acolytes with the instructions that all means be employed to secure from each an acknowledgment of iniquity and a detailed confession of the profane ceremonies relative to the blasphemous idolatry of Ak Khun Khan. The Great Reformer taught torture as a potent tool of persuasion, and his subordinates had grown adept in the unconventional techniques their master favored.

Appropriating the governor's palace, Xamol banished the nobles -- whose support of the zealots in Turmiz was well known -- to the streets. While outside a hoard of commoners gathered to protest the persecution, in darkened chambers within the palace the instruments of tortures were revealed one by one: Flesh-tearers, thumbscrews, shin-crushers, skull-crackers, three-thonged scourges, cudgels and cords all crept into the candlelight under the knowing hands of the ardent inquisitors. The mere sight of such atrocious contrivances had been known to break many a man's

resolution; but the followers of Ak Khun Khan were dedicated to their faith.



For days, the corridors of that place were flooded with the wailings of the accused, and by night their pitiful weeping spilled into the streets where their patrons huddled. Occasionally the assemblage vented shuddering groans in sympathy.

On the fifth day of torture, the hooded acolytes of Xamol came before him to report the last of the priests had died under the inquisition. Not one had conceded indiscretions, not one had confessed to abominations, and not one had declared the adoration of the Old One amounted to blasphemy. They stood silently, their faces obscured by their vestments, their expressions hidden from their master, as they awaited chastisement and direction.

Xamol, the Great Reformer, fumed. He considered apprehending another handful of priests, but suspected that torture would prove ineffective on them as well. To crop this putrescent branch of worship, Xamol realized he would have to venture into the

subterranean corridors and search out Ak Khun Khan's sacred temple deep in the heart of the mountain. Upon finding the repellent lair of the wretched Old One, he would oversee the destruction of all traces of this man's filthy existence.

Long after the black tide of night had browned the high country in darkness; after the angry masses of the peasantry had taken their leave of the streets outside the palace to hurry back to their cave-like dwellings in the ancient city, Xamol and his company retired from the halls of the governor's residence and sped to a secluded passage under strict guard. Past a dozen sacrificial stones they marched, glancing at dragontail wisps of incense dancing in the torchlight. Down, they sped, through cobweb-draped channels where shadow seemed to hold sway and the icy air bit at exposed flesh unceasingly. Beyond the cryptic pictographs of the prehistoric mountain clans they passed at length, and further still until the cave had dwindled into a narrow shaft and the floor threatened to meet the ceiling.

On his hands and knees Xamol pushed onward, certain his persistence would prove meritorious.

Then, finally, the constricted crawlway opened into a vast chamber. Xamol's torch burned a patch of comfortless illumination into the primeval gloom. Its flickering flames begot twisting shadows which alluded to faceless horrors just outside the circle of light. He froze at the sight before him. At the center of the room, the infamous altar stood waiting -- the Old One's own book of profane writings silently anticipating the rebirth of its application. A thousand dormant candles encircled the place, and as the Great Reformer moved forward, he wordlessly implored his followers to use their torches to light the candles.



He alone approached the altar. His fingers drifted hesitantly across the text for a moment, then he drew back fearfully as though touching the words might make him believe. Yet, once his gaze fell upon the lines he could not turn away; and as he read the ancient verses he could hear Ak Khun Khan's voice murmur in his head.

Finally, Xamol wrenched himself free from the accursed tome. The candles now burned brightly, and the extent of the chamber was revealed. In every corner there loomed the face of a dragon, gaping maws ringed by grisly fangs, hideous talons clenched, narrow eyes glaring mercilessly. The Great Reformer shivered at the fearsome renderings in stone, even though he knew them to be nothing more than sculptures.

These were Ak Khun Khan's gods -- the false gods of Turmiz. The Old One taught that men are little more than pawns to the descendants of the dragonkind, and that someday their kin would rise again from secreted caverns to lord it over the kingdoms forged by the lesser race. The Priesthood of Turmiz echoed his beliefs in their sermons; and the people of Turmiz had been corrupted by these lies.

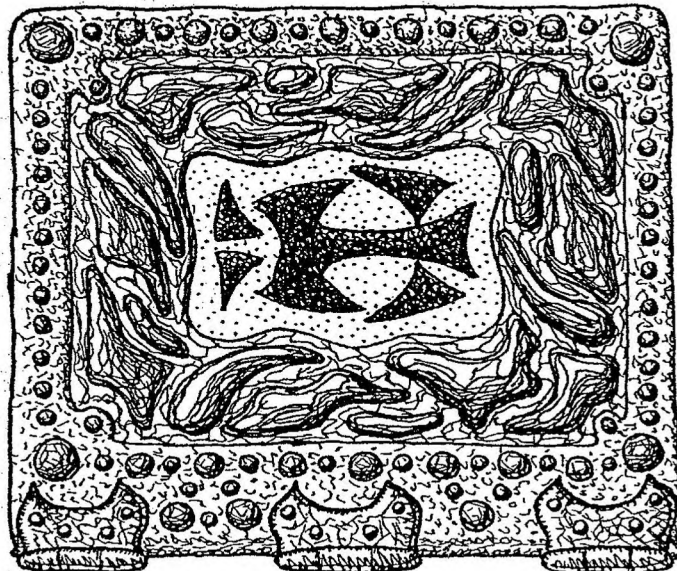
No longer could such defilement of the truth be allowed. Xamol the Purifier would not permit it.

"Burn the book," the Great Reformer said, turning to his acolytes, "And return with hammers to deface these awful icons. Nevermore shall the people of Turmiz speak of the dragonkind!"

He awaited the execution of his orders, but found his subordinates unmoving. He repeated his mandate, shaking his fists and cursing the spirit of Ak Khun Khan with considerable passion. Still, the hooded acolytes stood motionless as though his words had not reached them.

Then, one by one, they drew back their hoods and revealed their faces. Xamol staggered backwards as he gazed upon the scaly green flesh of a dozen and one descendants of the dragonkind. His heart raced as their serpent-eyes regarded him angrily, and he whimpered as they encircled him. When their grisly fangs bore down on him, when their hideous talons raked his flesh, his scream echoed through the subterranean corridors and rang out through the streets.

And after a moment all was quiet again in the city called Turmiz.



## THE LADY WEARS GLOVES

by

Lala Heine-Koehn

Careful of his skin, she wears gloves  
touching him. Not having seen the colour  
of her nails, he began to wonder.  
*Lady of my heart, flesh of my flesh,*  
he whispered one night, feeling  
the warmth of her fingers on his back  
let me kiss your naked fingers.  
Her hands began to flutter like butterflies.  
*Tomorrow. . .* she replied, closing her eyes.

The next night, lying beside her he turned  
her wrists gently, began to peel off her  
gloves. The room dark with moonless night,  
he did not see her hands slipping out.  
The gloves began to stroke, caress him,  
the smooth cloth rubbing against his skin,  
speaking the language he wanted to hear.  
That night he dreamed of clouds, dandelion fluff,  
soft things like that.

*Lady of my heart, you made me happy last  
night,* he said in the morning, here is a token  
of my love to nourish you. He placed a bowl  
of precious stones upon her coverlet.  
She picked the stones, and one by one  
putting them into her mouth, swallowing  
them whole.  
*What treasure I have in you,* he said,  
enthralled, gazing into her blue, blue  
eyes. *Let me kiss your fingertips.*

she extended her hands to him,  
*may I keep the gloves for one more day?*  
looking down at the empty bowl.  
*I will wait* he said, remembering last night.

By nightfall the moon came out,  
pale light lacing her pale hair  
spread like a coat around her body  
Taking her hands into his, he pressed  
their palms together, measuring  
their hands against each other.  
*My love, your hands seem to be larger  
than mine. Let me remove your gloves  
to compare them better.* He began  
to pull them from her fingers.  
*How white your skin is, how perfectly  
the halfmoons of your nails are shaped,*  
he whispered.

That was many years ago. Holding on  
to the fingers of her gloves he is still  
pulling them off. Inside the cloth,  
her spiraling nails stretching, slowly  
uncurling, taking him farther and farther  
from where they used to live together.  
Today, for the first time, he has caught  
a glimpse of the end of her left-hand  
little finger, the nail pointed and sharp  
as a tip of a blade.

## THE STORY

by

Ed Cates

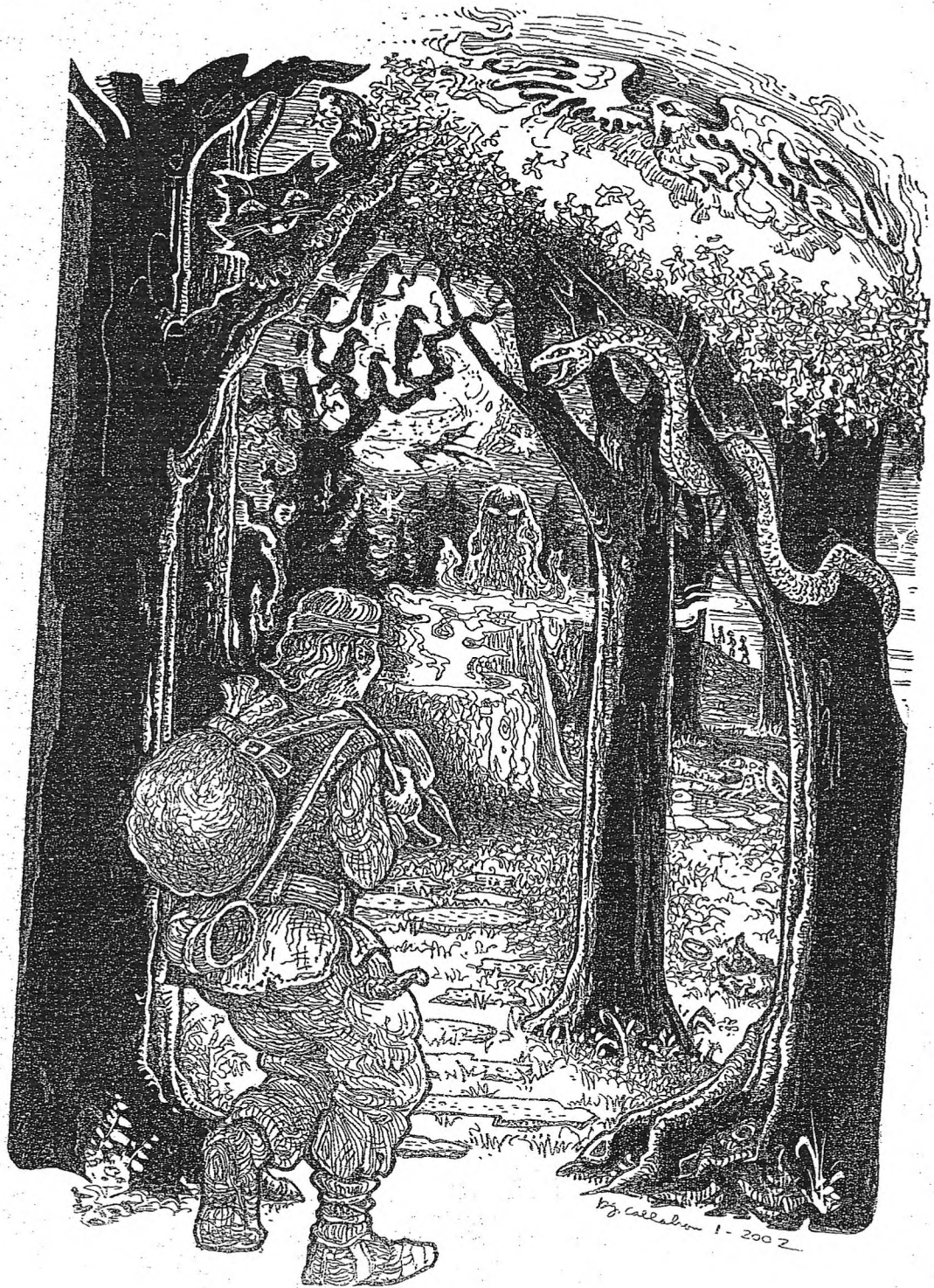
--for Robert Callahan

Now I understand it; how the story begins.  
With a knapsack, a hat and a horn  
Like those straight out of a Corot.  
With a nail, a riddle, and seven ravens.  
How three brothers will go out as if they were one,  
To the well, to the wall, to find the blue light;  
How six men got on in the world,  
And who returned by night.

I understand how the story starts off,  
To see its fortune among strange musicians, good strangers,  
I know the story of the Boy Who Went Forth  
To Learn what Fear Is, and as soon as he set off  
Learned the language of animals.

And there will be  
A Woman Without Hands, Godfather Death, or a White Snake  
Someone ill searching for the waters of life,  
A toad singing beside a well, waiting for a golden ball  
To rise. Now I understand the story, now I sleep  
With eyes open to recognize the dream when it arrives,  
And shudder to think about all those who shudder to think.

In this history of once-upon-a time  
Set in the future, there will be a wishing table,  
A valiant little tailor, a singing bone.  
In the story, and in the story of the story.  
And in the story's end. Amen.





### **Under Cloak of Night**

by D. John Gangnagel

Sweet Nyx, you have descended once again  
to hide mistakes which Ate has inspired.  
For you have seen the who, the what, the when  
of every malady which has transpired.  
You hide my wrongs within your cloak of night  
and keep my sins safe from the light of day.  
Apollo watched both you and I in spite;  
he's jealous of the sin that's born of clay.  
So underneath your cover I chase dreams,  
with hope that Eros will point out the one  
whose love for me is always as it seems.  
Nyx, your good heart shines brighter than the sun!  
With help, I'll someday find my destined love,  
and You will not need guard me from above.

### **DIRECTION**

by D. John Gangnagel

Litai, why have you not repaired the path  
of damage and destruction Ate made?  
Your sister revels in the blood she hath  
drawn from this broken soul of debt unpaid.  
She set my heart upon the wind of lust,  
to land on all touched by the breath of fate;  
and whom-so-ever was touched by the dust  
would own my heart, but ne'er become my mate.  
So, please, Litai, correct the wrong she's done.  
Your sibling's game has gotten out of hand.  
If I am ever to find the right one,  
I cannot chase blind impulse 'cross the land.  
She needs to stand her trial for every deed  
before she plants another troubled seed.



## TO THE FATES

by D. John Gangnagel

Good Clotho, I have lived the yarn you've spun  
and never once complained of what's unfair.  
In life, in love, I'm still without someone -  
I beg you to, my tattered thread, repair.  
Lachesis, you have strung me right along  
and forced a life to live without a cause.  
Each day I live, my thread becomes less strong  
as I look forward to eternal pause.  
And, dear Atropos, how you weigh my mind!  
I sometimes find I look toward your knife  
in hope that in my final hour I'll find  
the reason I have spent this wasted life.  
You Fates have been as cruel as you can be,  
pushing me to an unknown destiny.

## The One-Eyed Rooster

by

Lala Heine-Koehn

She feels harboured in his arms  
but her eyes are somewhere else.  
He would build castles for her,  
each room inlaid with amber,  
on each gargoyle carve a smile for  
doves and other gentle birds to come.  
Fill the gardens with peacocks and swans.  
He would give her all these and more  
if she would only tell him, who has  
captured her eyes.

She dreams of other things. Blue-winged,

blue-necked swans that sing, birds  
that dance instead of fly. And the castle?  
She has one. Rambling rose and vine-  
entwined. Silk damask on chairs  
and cushions, pink and plump with the softest  
plumules. Her eyes belong to a one-eyed  
rooster with one swollen female breast.  
She listens to the rooster crow sad and happy  
children song, haunting airs, all day long,  
all night long. She feels harboured cradled in  
his wings, suckled by a swollen breast.

## It Was Rather Strange

by Lala Heine-Koehn

She lost her head, could not  
remember where. Worried many  
times about the weight of her thoughts,  
she felt suddenly light as a feather.  
Even her heart began to jump  
like a child skipping rope. *Good*  
the heart said full of glee.

She took to wearing large floppy  
hats, with long silk scarves tied  
around her neck (which was intact  
and just a tinge lighter than the silk  
around it). No one noticed that her head  
was missing. She began to do all sorts  
of things she had never done before.  
Every two weeks she fell in love.  
For the whole fourteen days she enjoyed  
the man she had chosen, intriguing  
each one by insisting on making love with  
her hat on. And it was rather strange, it did  
fall off a few times at the most delicate moments  
but none of her lovers ever noticed it, busy  
with other things.

She bought a red cabriolet, and zoomed  
around town and country with the roof  
down, her silk scarves flying around her.  
*There goes Isadora* people would say,  
*let's hope she won't get strangled*  
*a second time.* She just smiled,  
so did her heart.

She took lessons in parachuting.  
Holding the ends of her scarf,  
hat above, she sailed across the sky,  
over meadows, forests, landing always  
on her two feet. She was happy and free  
of care the first time since she was a child.  
I saw her last on Good Friday in the church  
where I go. She was kneeling down beside  
me, I wanted to lean over and whisper:  
*I wish I could be you* but the Mass had just  
begun. Her hat bowed in deep reverie, her  
white neck peeking through years of silk



## Cumal

by

Debra A. Kemp

Gwenhywfar surveyed the busy scene in what would be the Great Hall of Camelot. An army of servants chattered and laughed as they arranged furnishings and hung tapestries. Soon, the place would be splendid. Fit for Britain's Pendragon and his queen.

His son, too. The babe within the young queen's womb gave a mighty kick, as though to remind her. Gwenhywfar smiled, patting her swollen belly. She was glad the warrior she carried--Arthur's heir--would be born in the cheerful confines of Camelot rather than the austere military surroundings of Caerleon. Time enough for that when the prince grew older and left for fosterage. Arthur had planned everything months ago. Their son's name would be Llacheu and only Lancelot was worthy to teach the Pendragon's son war-craft. If only you could be home from the war campaign for our son's birth, Arthur. The Queen sighed with that unlikely prospect. She slid her hands from her belly to rub her lower back. She had wakened before cockcrow with same dull ache, but it had subsided quickly so she had put it from her mind. Yet it seemed to be persisting. She would sit as

soon as the thrones were uncrated and settled on the dais.

"My lady?"

Gwenhywfar turned to her husband's seneschal.

"Yes, Cai?"

"Visitors have arrived."

"Visitors? Who?"

"Morgause of Orkney."

Arthur's half-sister? But Arthur had banished her years ago, although he had never confided why to Gwenhywfar. And now, here she was in Camelot with Arthur gone. What to do?

"She says she has come with a peace offering. Another of her sons for Arthur's army. Shall I send her away?"

"Arthur has built Camelot as a symbol of the unity he dreams for Britain, Cai. It would be discourteous to refuse her a welcome. I shall receive her in the audience room. Have refreshments sent and see to rooms for them."

"But, my lady. Arthur's banishment still stands. At least have Lancelot deal with her."

"My dear Cai. I shall cope with Arthur's wrath, if needed. What can be the harm? She is his sister. Surely he cannot hold a grudge forever."

Cai frowned before trudging off.

Caught in her excitement, Gwenhywfar dismissed the dour man and his caution. Here was one more reason to celebrate, along with Camelot's inauguration, Arthur's victory over the Saxons and the birth of his son. How could he not be pleased with her efforts to reconcile him with his sister?

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Morgause, Queen of Orkney, appraised her surroundings as she awaited Queen Gwenhywfar. Her younger brother had done well these past six years. A fortress of

his own. One he could pass to his son. Modred, his first born, not the brat fattening his wife's womb. The door opened behind her. Morgause dropped the fold of the tapestry she had been aimlessly perusing. A pregnant woman shambled into the room and to Morgause's side. The child rode low in its mother's belly. Morgause prided herself on her impeccable timing.

"Sister, well come to Camelot. I am Gwenhywfar. I must apologize for the jumble. You have caught us in the midst of settling in." Morgause wore her warmest smile as they embraced.

"But my dear. Your confinement is any moment," Morgause said. "You should not be on your feet." She assisted her sister by law to a chair, then poured wine for them both. Gwenhywfar nodded as she took the cup.

"Tis a mountainous task, moving into a fortress. I feel as though I must be everywhere at once," she said.

"It would seem my arrival is most propitious. I shall be happy to help any way I can, my dear."

"I would beware of such a generous offer, Morgause. I might be tempted to set you to a task right now."

The Queen of Orkney regarded her prey. How the frivolous creature tittered. In his choice of a wife, Arthur was like his father. Their mother had been gay before Uther had plundered Dunn Y'Lloc and its lady. Then after getting Igraine with child, Uther had set his sights upon the nubile body of her eldest daughter. Morgause managed another smile as she watched Gwenhywfar shift in her chair for the fifth time. Best to leave the smile tacked on for the duration.

"I trust your journey from Orkney went well," Gwenhywfar asked.

"In spite of Agravaine's excitement."

*The Mythic Circle #24, pg. 25*



"How old is the boy now?"

"A man of thirteen summers."

"Ah, the confidence of youth. I am sorry Gawain is not here to see you. He is with Arthur and the army. Did you bring your other sons as well?"

"They are too young. Modred is only five."

"He is your youngest?"

Morgause nodded. So, it would seem from Gwenhywfar's innocence that Arthur had kept his secret from his wife. Delicious.

Gwenhywfar found it difficult to sit comfortably in her chair. She rose and paced the room, trying to relieve the near constant pressure on her back. Odd, this restlessness within her.

"Are you unwell, my dear?"

"Nae, my sister. This ache in my back will pass soon. It has been thus throughout the morn."

"My guess is that is no mere back ache. My dear, your labour has begun. Come."

Morgause was more experienced in the ways of childbearing, Gwenhywfar had to admit. But she had not been expecting the babe for another fortnight. Could her calculation be off by so much? Strong arms enfolded Gwenhywfar's shoulders and guided her to the door. She did not resist. In the corridor, her sister by law called for serving women, towels, water, as another pain began, grew, peaked. It took longer to subside.

"Which way to your chamber, sister?"

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"Oh, Gwen. You have a beautiful daughter. How fortunate for you." Morgause cooed as she placed the newly swaddled babe into Gwenhywfar's arms hours later. She had already dismissed the serving women and the mid-wife. "And

such an easy time you had. Mine were never so smooth."

"She is beautiful, is she not?" Gwenhywfar asked.

"What will you name the wee one?" Morgause wiped the young queen's brow with a cool cloth. She had come to Camelot prepared to snuff the life from Arthur's second son. A daughter was so much more interesting. Gwenhywfar stroked the down of her daughter's tiny head.

"We had nothing planned for a daughter, Morgause."

"I pray Arthur will not be angry with you for birthing a daughter rather than a son." Morgause had to have the child, Modred's half-sister. And she would use Gwenhywfar's exhaustion to have her way.

"I doubt Arthur will be angry, Morgause."

"You know best, Gwen. What a clever girl. She is rooting already." Gwenhywfar stared.

"For your breast, my dear. The new princess is hungry. Here." Morgause showed the new mother how to guide her nipple to the babe's mouth.

"My little one," Gwenhywfar crooned. "You have been my light since your father has been away. So your name shall be Helin."

"A fine name. I have an idea, Gwen. One never knows how men will react to news of a daughter when they expect a son. Let me take the child. I know Orkney is dreadfully far, but she would be safe there, should Arthur . . . And I have always longed for a girl I could teach to sew and weave, all those things we women need to know. And my boys will adore her." The Queen of Orkney allowed her sister by law to clutch her sleeve, her features stoic.

"Do you think Arthur would hurt his own child?"



Morgause shrugged, watching as the doubt took over the younger woman's thoughts. It was too easy. She patted the moist hand on her arm before removing it from her person. I only ask that you think on my offer. For now, you need rest. Let me settle Helin into her cradle so you can sleep."

Gwenhywfar yawned, her head deep in the pillows, and relinquished her child. "You have been so helpful to me, Morgause. And kind. A true sister. I do not understand how Arthur can still harbour his anger against you. Stay until he comes home. I know he will forgive you now."

Morgause stifled a laugh at the chit's naifness. 'Twas never his forgiveness she sought. She knew now what she would do with the brat. Morgause shivered from the delectable thought. How better to avenge herself and her mother for the suffering they

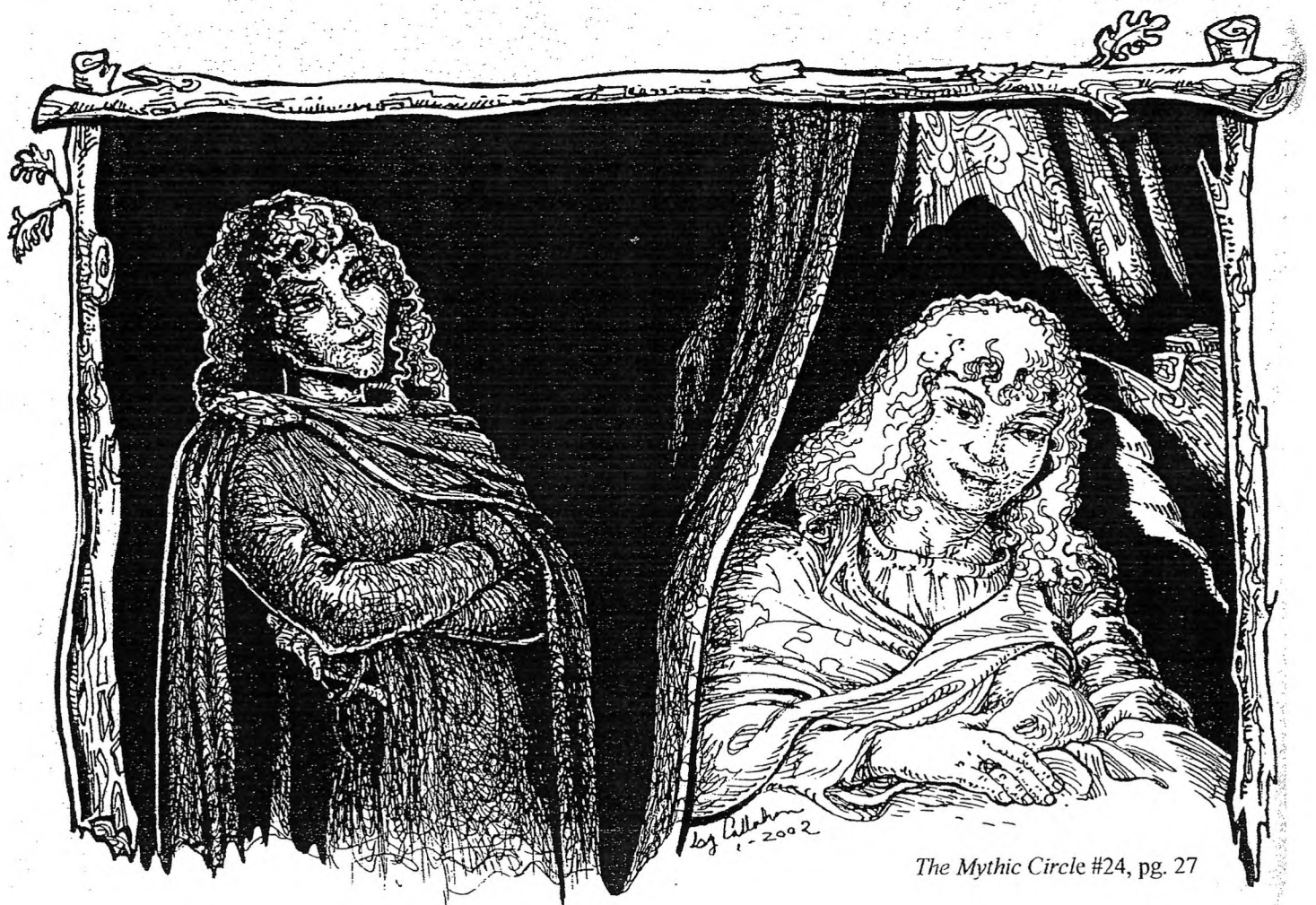
had endured at the hands of Uther than by rendering the same upon her half-brother's precious daughter? Arthur would pay dearly for his father's crimes through his daughter's own slavery. She stood over the cradle, watching her niece sleep.

"I doubt Arthur would be pleased to find me here when he comes home," she said.

"Best I did not place you at odds with him over my banishment."

"But-Oh! If he would banish his own sister, he might . . . Morgause? Keep Helin safe for me?"

Morgause's smile was true for the first time since arriving in her brother's fortress. It was all she needed for her plan to fall into place. "Of course I shall, my dear. Of course I shall. And my Modred will be more than willing to assist."



## THE WHITE QUEEN SOLILOQUY

by Lala Heine-Koehn

A trumpet wakes her from her sleep.  
The long wailing notes disturb the heavy  
folds of her bed curtains; the lace on  
her pillows flutters like wings  
of a bird in flight.

The staccato beat of hooves against  
stone, the sputter and snort of reined  
horses drifts in from the outside.

On each horse, on black, one white,  
a knight is sitting, his raised lance  
piercing the dawn; black on white,  
white on black, the square flagstones  
pave the court.

She knows the pattern by heart.  
The stables boys in grey garb resemble  
sparrows; herd together under the turrets.  
Pointed shadows reach like fingers  
touching her windows..  
All are waiting to greet the master.

She has a white lamb tied to her bed  
post, a long pink ribbon knotted  
around its neck. It walks to and fro,  
as far as the ribbon allows.  
*Open the door*, she orders the lamb.  
Obediently it walks toward it,  
stretching the ribbon taut, nuzzles  
the door handle, swinging it open.  
Three men come in, each one carrying  
a pheasant on a silver platter, their twisting  
beaks and wings tied with red ribbons.  
They arrange the birds on her bed,  
then disappear on silent feet.

Avoiding their eyes, she begins to pluck  
the birds, placing the feathers one by one  
upon her coverlet.

*Open the window*, she orders the lamb.  
In her bare feet she walks toward it,  
tossing the feathers into the breeze.  
They flutter, float, spiralling in the early  
mist. She picks up the birds.  
With gentle fingers she tightens  
their knotted ribbons, sit them upon  
the stone breastwall, pointing their beaks  
toward the meadows and woods.

*Fly my lovelies, fly* she whispers,  
pushing a silver arrow into her hair,  
coiling her plans around it.  
She too is ready to greet her master.



# Walentyna

by

Maria Ott Tatham

I suppose that no one would believe it of me now, in my world or yours, but once I got into some serious trouble. It all began one Midsummer's Eve -- yes, how appropriate for a fairy, but the one who ended up with donkey ears was me! My name is Gossmerian Walentyna (that's W as

V) -- but let me begin my story again properly. Once not so very long ago...

I was on my way with Father to the trial of Albrecht Fichter. Phlox, or Phloxie as I sometimes call him, was the chief jurist in the case. He had invited me to come along, but chiefly to try to get me married. He had been pulling out his hair in handfuls over my



behavior, and he knew just the fellow for me.

Our conversation went like this, "I dreamed I solved an incredible mystery," I said waking up from a nap in our carriage.

"You were smiling in your sleep," said my father. "I had hoped you were dreaming of marriage!"

"I'd rather just be as I am for now, and going on an adventure with you!"

"Perhaps you'll find this trial not to be such an adventure, thumbkin," he said.

I stood up, gripping the window post and looking about us. The dusk had filled with lamplight from the fairy carriages hastening to Quiltdown on the Sea. "How do you think I would do, my Phloxie, if I could sit as a jurist in this case?"

"You'd be a bit too self-assured, I think. If you're going to fall on your nose, Gossmerian, I'd prefer it wasn't over such an important matter."

I posed a question that had been bothering me. "Father, have you considered that the accused might be innocent?"

"Most fairies would consider this question irrational when posed of a man."

"Would Master Dash, the one you've recommended to me as a husband, think so?"

"Dash will sit with the Tribunal and judge the matter fairly, I believe."

I couldn't help asking if Dash could dance.

Phlox scratched his beard and said, "You'll have to ask himself!"

Quiltdown at Midsummer was a romantic setting for my first meeting with Dash, but as he helped me out of the carriage he treated me more like a second cousin. There was no hint in his open smile that there was any understanding between Father, him and me.

*Well, all right then,* I thought, took a deep breath and looked around. But Dash was still standing nose to nose with me (he's rather short!) and all I could see were his gray philosophical eyes as he said, "Well met, Master Phlox and fair Gossmerian!" An exasperating fairy but interesting.

Soon the other folk of Quiltdown arrived and the introductions were made between newcomers and Quiltdowners by an old friend of my Father's, the jurist Snowberry. He it was who first introduced us to the infamous Master Foxglove and his nephew Chaff.

When Chaff took my hand he kissed it. His eyes were green and his mustache gold, and I turned away to hide the fact that my wings were trembling. Dash stood by, taking a measure of the moment and me.

When the moon rose we folk went to meet the prison ship. It had a large raft in tow and the prisoner, Albrecht Fichter, lay prone upon it in bonds. When the ship dropped anchor, the sailors cut the raft loose and rode it over the swells toward shore.

Albrecht was an old man and weak from his journey. Once on the beach he couldn't easily get to his feet, and as he knelt there on his hands and knees, many of the folk crowded around him reviling him and cursing.

I gripped my Father's arm.

"Beware of expressing your pity here," he said.

I wiped my nose on my sleeve and asked, "Father, don't you ever tire of being prudent?"

Phlox's answer was to put his arms around me.

This trouble had come to Albrecht Fichter because he was a painter of the fantastic, and had thereby made himself our



enemy. Man has the power to harm us in Faerie, for here his imaginations come to life.

Now as we watched Albrecht's ordeal, some of us fairies kept silent, though I saw no sympathetic looks on their faces, only a fearful sobriety. And Master Foxglove, he was shining like a star on high, for it was his scheme which had led to Albrecht's capture!

Later we all met to celebrate this event in the old rose garden in Quilt-down. I kept myself from falling under the spell of the moment and of the sea and its perfumed mists by thinking of Albrecht's suffering.

"A toast!" shouted the jurist Bantam,

"To more roses and less weeds!

"To more scent and less sneeze!

"To more fairy and less Man --  
forever!"

I frowned into my cup of nectar.

Others took turns proposing toasts. At last they persuaded Father to speak. He lifted his cup toward Fair Elven and said,

"Sweet be the night

"that harbors Faerie and is its haven,

"bright be the stars

"that light her from the heavens,

"soft be the seas and salty

"that wash her,

"long be the life

"she lives and better!"

As Dash lifted his glass he looked into my eyes, right down into my childish soul. His seriousness was unnerving and I quickly tipped up my cup of nectar. Chaff, who was seated beside me, leaned closer now, and his closeness was like a draught of wine. Under its influence I began to think everything possible -- for Albrecht, for Faerie, for me!

The celebration lasted until the moon had set. In a quiet moment Dash was overheard saying, "Should Man, though guilty of crimes against Faerie, be blamed for all of its evils?"

"Friend Dash," said Snowberry, "these thoughts may seem reasonable, but in light of our injuries, aren't they really disloyal?"

"Never disloyal," Dash replied, "to the true reasonableness of Faerie, to Trillium's world, to his example and words."

I watched with fascination. This diminutive fairy had principles.

"Demagoguery!" said Foxglove.

"Dash," asked Bantam, "has anyone said that we fairies are perfect? It's just that we have good reason to believe that without Man and his causing trouble--"

Dash finished for him, "Life in Faerie would be idyllic! Your optimism is sad, Bantam."

"Why argue?" said Foxglove. "It's obvious Dash favors the accused."

"It's obvious that you've already condemned him!" Dash replied.

Not surprisingly, as a result of this disagreement Dash stepped down as jurist. Most of the fairies believed that he should. I admired Dash, but I lost no time in filing for his vacant place on the Tribunal. The Tribunal granted it to me without asking too many questions -- it helped that my father was Phlox -- and I gave my solemn pledge. Single-minded devotion to the case until its completion, under penalty of death. Phlox, knowing me as he did, began to suffer the moment I pledged.

Justice functions in Faerie by determining the weightiness of rhetorical questions, then calculating that weight in pollen grains. When the scales of justice had been carefully calibrated by Bantam, the Tribunal commenced. After Phlox had reminded us jurists of the seriousness of our

charge, Snowberry began the arguments, pointing at Albrecht and saying,

"Citizens of Faerie, we will prove that the accused, Mr. Albrecht Fichter, has been painting a mural of Faerie and that he has peopled his work with at least one wicked witch that we know of!"

In the uproar that followed Bantam shouted for silence.

Snowberry continued, "Is there any question that all of the creatures which have suddenly appeared to terrorize our world have first come to life in the literary and artistic works of Man?"

Someone in the gallery cried, "Death to all his kind!"

"Have we not always found in Man a definite, yes, a most essential wrongness? And in Albrecht Fichter we find his prototype! When have we not been overrun in Man's wars of fancy? How many millennia suffered? How many millennia been saddened or made afraid? Made to cohabit with the brainchildren of his madness!" He took a breath, "Indeed, have we not been made to despair of the true life of Faerie, that of endless joy and delight?"

When Snowberry came to a stop I said, "Shouldn't we ask, Master Snowberry, how we can know that the true life of Faerie is this presumed bliss? Isn't it reasonable to wonder if the opposite isn't true?"

Phlox brought down the gavel and said, "Fellow jurists, I must ask you to return to the question of Mr. Fichter's guilt or innocence. Has he, or has he not, endangered us by this painting of his?"

Everyone looked at Albrecht. His beret was on crooked.

The truth is that Albrecht had indeed been painting a mural of Faerie for the library at Miranda Cove. And that while it was lovely -- and to my mind the winged dolphins and talking vegetables were

improvements to our world -- in creating a likeness of Lewis' Witch Albrecht had endangered us all.

Snowberry began an examination of the prisoner.

"Mr. Fichter, is the mural in the library your own creative work?" he asked.

Albrecht looked too tired to continue standing, but no one asked him to sit down. "Yes, it is my own work," he said. "Please believe that I never meant any harm! Do such things as I painted really come to life here?"

"Do you think," Phlox asked, "that we would start such proceedings without good reason?"

"Can you be that naive?" asked Foxglove.

Albrecht looked thoughtful, then asked, "Do I understand you to say that everything that Man fancies, that he creates of this kind, comes to life here, both good and bad?"

"The prisoner," Foxglove objected, "is asking a question!"

"Simply answer the questions, Mr. Fichter," said Phlox, but the corners of his mouth were smiling.

"Allow just this one question -- Master Phlox," I interposed, "in the interests of justice!"

"This one question only," said Phlox.

I turned back to Albrecht. "Your answer is yes, Mr. Fichter, everything that Man fancies comes to life here! Would you describe for the Tribunal more of your creation?"

Slowly Albrecht rose to his feet and said, "As an artist, I can better show than tell you." He pointed with his hobbled hands.

Behind him was a new brick wall with its gate standing open, and a sign which read, "The imaginary garden of Albrecht Fichter." Everyone rushed forward to look inside.

It was a mix of unlikely and beautiful things, and in the cascading bougainvillea was a new fairy whose name, she said, was Mia Rosa. "Ouch!" she complained as we fairies stepped closer to look. Folding her wings, she sat down and looked at us as if we were the ones who were new and strange.

At the sight of Mia Rosa, the assembly was thrown into confusion and the scales of justice with all their pollen were overturned. As the Tribunal took Albrecht back into custody before adjourning, he kept shouting to us about his dolphins with wings and vegetables with legs and hats, but his garden had shown us what he could do, and now even I had begun to wonder what he might have done with a witch!

After this, despite the kindlier spirit shown toward Albrecht and the talk of dismissing his case, there was a sense of foreboding. The air had grown chilly and strange shadows passed beneath the leafy pergola. It wasn't long before the Witch's empty teacup was found in the garden summerhouse.

Enter my nemesis Foxglove and that splendid, two-faced Chaff. I've since learned that they had a conference then, and came up with a plan to undermine my defense of Albrecht, and to call the Witch as a witness against him.

During all the proceedings Dash had remained close and watchful. He now warned me that he thought there was danger from Foxglove's party, and admitted his distrust of Chaff.

"You're jealous," I said, and that's all that I made of his sound advice.

My favorite spot for thinking was the wood at Quilt-down. The problems of the case, and my own future, now took me there. I stood on tiptoe in the clearing and stretched up my arms to the stars. In the

midst of my thoughts, I heard a voice in my ear, whispering.

It was Chaff, his mustache curling over his smile. He was holding my dancing slippers.

I retreated a step and said to him, "We must wait till the trial is over."

"Will anyone know?" he asked.

Chaff was part of the weave of my folly and tremendously beautiful. Beguiled, I stepped closer. I've wanted to think it was the wood and the night and stars, but it was the sweetness of his faithless eyes.

The grapevine in Faerie has long tendrils, and just as my enemies hoped, the affair became quickly known. The Tribunal set aside Albrecht's case to deal with my broken pledge, for in breaking it I had endangered a capital case.

This had been my pledge:

*I, Gossmerian Walentyna, pledge myself as jurist in the case against Albrecht Fichter, to single-minded devotion until its completion. Because of the seriousness of my pledge which I make freely, and of the case itself, I stand under penalty of death should I break it.*

The law that applied was unforgiving.

When a pledge made freely is broken, what can annul it and exempt its maker from punishment? If it is a pledge forfeiting life, is it not more strictly to be honored?

The worst part of my trial was Phlox's suffering and knowing that Dash was looking on. The Tribunal quickly found me guilty and put me under guard in an old finch cage until the completion of Albrecht's trial. Chaff, of course, had fled.

The Tribunal reconvened and Foxglove called the Witch to the witness stand. When Albrecht saw her, he covered his face. She stole a look at him, conjured a chair out of air, and sat down.



Foxglove addressed her, "Madam Witch, do you know the accused, Mr. Albrecht Fichter?"

"I do, sir."

"Can you describe your relationship to him?"

She tapped her fingernails on the arm of her silvery chair. "Our relationship? I guess you might say that it was Mr. Fichter who 'brought me back.'"

"Are we to understand you to mean, Madam, that it was Mr. Fichter who brought you back to life?" asked Foxglove.

"Well, I'd rather say, back from that place of a beautiful white light at the end of a tunnel and sweet voices of love and assurance -- after the fiasco of Lewis' book!"

Foxglove smiled at her. "Thank you, Madam. Master Phlox, I have no further questions of this witness."

Albrecht hung his head.

I clung to the bars of my cage and looked at Phlox. I could see that he hadn't the heart to cross-examine the Witch himself.

"The witness is dismissed," he said.

The Witch hurried down to the summerhouse with her cloak drawn closely about her, for now the snow was falling.

Enter our heroine -- Mia Rosa! When the Tribunal adjourned to bring in its verdict, she set off to see the painter who had given her life.

The sight of Albrecht's distress was all that she needed to set him free. When she returned she brought me this message from him, "Tell Gossmerian Walentyna that I have work to do on the mural!"

Despite her serious mischief Mia Rosa was never prosecuted -- though she has made some enemies among us. And, the case against Albrecht Fichter was simply concluded by condemning him in absentia.

It was then that I met my fate.

By custom, capital punishment in Faerie is carried out at the sea cliffs where the condemned must run to the edge and cast himself down to his death on the stones and sand. All along this last trek the other fairies line up to hurl abuse.

So it was that on a chilly night in August I stood between two hooded guards at the start of my marathon, looking down that worn and ancient track. The fairies had gathered there, but no one spoke to me unkindly.

When the signal was given, wanting to run down my terror, I bolted into the wind and leaped out into the nothingness.

At that moment, they tell me, what looked like a star shot up over the heads of the fairies then plummeted, swept under me and broke my fall. I awoke with my hair filled with sand and Dash nearly driven into the beach beneath me. He smiled at me carefully through a split lip and I kissed him very gently.

Phlox rushed to the cliff's edge and cried, "Thanks be to Fair Elven!" Then he shouted, "Justice having been duly dispensed, must not justice be satisfied?"

The fairies shouted, "Hooray!" and hurried down to the beach.

Death had actually brushed my sleeve but safely passed me by, and Dash, who was willing to be driven into the sand for me, proposed. We pledged our love on a night in Indian Summer, for the storm clouds had been driven away and the sky had been brushed with vivid blue.

I stumbled over my vows, but Dash's smile never faltered and he kept hold of my hand.

"You love me!" I repeated in fresh amazement.

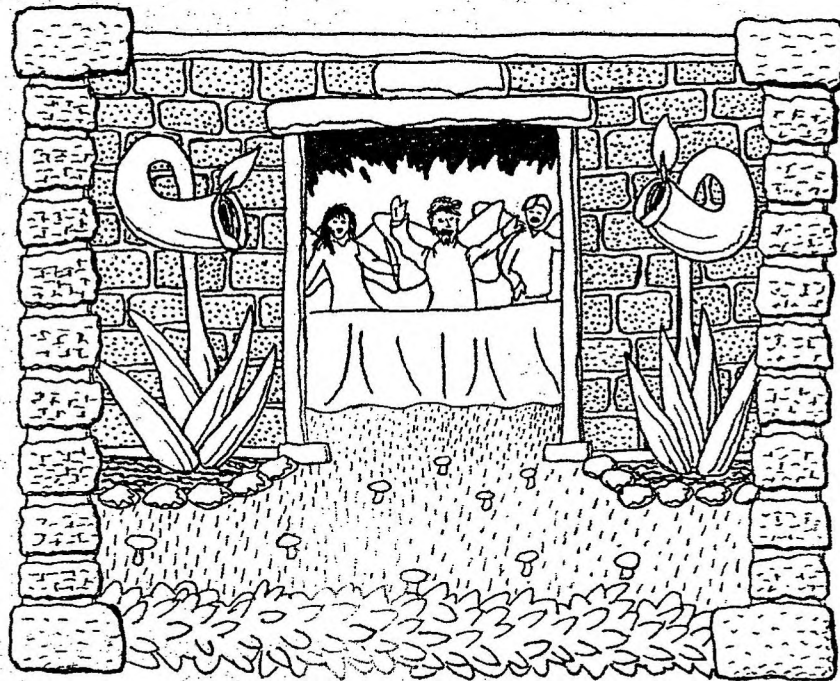
"Is there any question, Valentine?"



“Phlox would say, ‘Should fairies facing the prospect of happiness waste a moment on the unhappy past?’”

“No,” he said, “I completely agree, they mustn’t.”

And so it was that, to my Father’s great relief, Dash and I were married. Ah, you will want to know -- Albrecht has still been painting!



**2000 Year: The  
"In, Out, and Down"  
or  
"Another Future Passed"**

by

**Trent Walters**

*Here's to you, Mr. Robinson*

The cold morning rain turned into a hot, muggy afternoon. I left my raincoat in the car and tucked a case of assorted Campbell's soup cans under my arm. The weatherman had said it would be cool and cloudy all day; so, like a fool who believes the half-truths of a seer, I'd worn khakis and a turtleneck sweater. What else was I to do?

Michael, my alter ego in an army camouflage jacket, T-shirt and black jeans, had followed me all day, silent as a ghost. As the bus dropped us off at 17th and Q, he said suddenly, "There goes the neighborhood." I, on the other hand, thought that the majesty of these architectures had outlived their architects -- even in ruin -- but maybe I romanticized those old Ballard novels from my youth.

The constant wail of police sirens (the sound of which, I imagined, led boys to abandon their smashed-up joy-rides upon those concrete islands) could testify to the reasons why we had taken the bus. I promised Michael we wouldn't stay long though I hoped I was wrong. I stopped off at Lee Robbie's because he needed me, ostensibly, but more likely it was I who needed him. Robbie could talk a fruit bowl into a tale. But he could also talk your ear off.

The building Robbie lived in, though he could afford better, was run-down and littered with derelict drinks, drunks, and their aftermath spilled all over the ground level. Robbie called it security against cops. The stairwell leading up to Robbie's floor had collapsed. Michael and I had to leapfrog up, then from the second floor to a beam and swing ourselves onto the third. More security, Robbie had called it. We knocked at his apartment door. He opened, rolling a joint in one hand -- a multi-talented guy. "How's it goin'?" I asked.

Robbie stood aside. "How's it look like it's goin'?"

Michael and I took turns stepping over the hole in Robbie's threshold. He slipped me a ten, as if this were strictly a black market operation, and relieved me of the case. In the kitchenette he opened a can of tomato soup.

Michael and I snooped around. For as run-down as the building was, Robbie kept the place in decent shape. A couple of mattresses and a hot plate lined the north wall. In the window sills on the south and west sat potted marijuana plants -- reason enough for security. The eastern wall was stacked with any number of tattered paperbacks on Mars, mythology,

Antarctica, Zen Buddhism. Robbie had eclectic taste.

While his wife lay on one of the mattresses, feverish, Robbie stirred and sipped the soup simmering on the hot plate. The silence and suffocating heat intoxicated. "Well," I said, "how's it goin'?"

"Same since last you asked," he said but, to ease the tension, added, "except the world's dead and dying. There's no money, no jobs, no Star-Wars pie-in-the-sky, and no future but Mad Max." Robbie tended to speak in terms of movies -- the one luxury he allowed himself.

Michael meandered over to the east wall reading book titles, delicately prying a copy from between the teetering masses. He didn't much care for talking with eccentric famous people. Their fabrications made him nervous. A mechanic of the soul, Michael preferred to examine the stage props with which they enshrouded themselves. He was that rascally mutt who tore away the curtain while the rest of us paid no attention to the man behind it.

Earlier that morning at Clarke's penthouse, he'd looked over bookshelves of the latest in fantastic cosmic gizmos, shiny futuristic toys, computer hardware, and plush-doll robots that A.C. loved to show off to company. It was the day before the day of the new millennium, and A.C. was certain, when the calendar flipped over to two thousand and one, a space station would orbit Earth. I hadn't had the heart to tell him of the latest in government cutbacks.

"There will be rioting and The Grapes of Wrath against the Metropolis," Robbie went on, "but it's only as it should be. It's a Soy lent Green out there. Those fools in the Congress Senate White House don't have a Clue they're Gone With the Wind. See this? This kazoo is my livelihood. I tried to

apply for a dishwasher job at the Regency. They turned me down."

"Did you get spiffed up?"

"That's what I've been trying to tell you. Some fellows don't have the Richie Rich or the Robin Hood to get 'spiffed up' as you say. It costs money you can't spend if you don't earn, and you can't earn if you don't have a job. You follow?" I nodded. "The holy rolling mother government can't 1984 her children if she can't protect and nourish them. There will be rioting in the streets," he said, with such finality, it was hard not to believe.

We had argued this before. About the government I couldn't speak with much authority, but I did think he gave Michael's and my generation more activist credit than we deserved. Wouldn't activism arise with desperation upon the arrival of Mad Max and his ilk? Again, I lacked the authority, but then I didn't know what else to say.

I said, "Yeah, man."

"Soup's ready," he said. "I'd offer you fellows some but there's not world enough and time but for *The Swiss Family Robinson*." He must have thought I looked downcast, or maybe I did look downcast because he expected me to. Either way, he fished around in his back pocket and produced a dollar. "Here. Get yourselves a potato from that Vietnamese restaurant across the street. Tell the owner I sent you."

I demurred, but Robbie insisted. As per instruction I mumbled I'd stop by same time next week with another shipment. I said it the way he wanted because I respected him. And who was to say his future was any less likely than another?

Michael and I took the bus back to my car, a bare-bones VW convertible with AM radio. I flipped around between stations. On one station, a preacher preached

brimfire and hailstones descending from heaven. Another said that all the financial analysts predicted the DOW to break new record lows in the coming year. Another said the price of pigs allowed farmers to

make a profit for the first time in a decade. Another said the Middle East armistice fell through. I rubbed my eyes and my throbbing temples, turned the radio off and my attention on the road.

### **The Frog's Tale**

by

J. M. R. Harrison

I ate the fragile, rice-paper page  
with the spell to reverse the enchantment,  
gagging, pretending the spiky, black runes  
were succulent spiders and flies.  
Not that I'm enamoured of this clammy form  
I was cast into by yon sorcerer drowsing  
under the willow by the pond.  
Not at all: bloated, blotchy,  
ridiculous, bulging amphibian eyes,  
graceless, bumping locomotion, that tongue . . .  
. . . but this way I can forever believe  
that when the wizard yawns and wakes,  
he would remember  
and, in mercy, would restore me,  
if only he could.

### **What Mr. Ai Didn't Learn**

by

Joe R. Christopher

When on Gethen, oh! on Gethen,  
In the oldest kemmerhouses,  
Used and used again tomorrow,  
No one being barred from using,  
Who knows what the strange diseases,  
Microbes 'dapted to the cycle--  
Dire venereal diseases,  
Feeding on the triggered rutting,  
Growing through the dormant cycle,  
Ready to be spread in kemmer:  
When on Gethen, oh! on Gethen,  
Passion overwhelms discretion.





## Reviewing Peter Jackson's Movie

by Trent Walters

[This short review by Trent Walters is a response to a longer review by Michael Moorcock. J. R. R. Tolkien, as author of the essay "On Fairy-Stories," would appreciate the spirit in which it is written. G. H.]

This reviewer is now, in the words of Michael Moorcock, about to exit "that now familiar land that Thatcher and Reagan built, where people become afraid to speak because they might lose their jobs." Lucius Shepard [[www.sfsite.com/fm/show.html?rw,bestof2001-shepard,2](http://www.sfsite.com/fm/show.html?rw,bestof2001-shepard,2)] had already reviewed the greatest fantasy film of all time, *Lord of the Rings*, directed by Peter Jackson (who also directed the greatest movie of all time, *Heavenly Creatures*), so this reviewer backed off... until he received a link to a recent essay by Moorcock, "Christmas Editorial" [[www.sfsite.com/fm/show.html?ed,20011209,1](http://www.sfsite.com/fm/show.html?ed,20011209,1)], which changed everything.

Peter Jackson lovingly (the adverb isn't used lightly -- for comparison, view the jumbled narrative, the pulled special effects punches, Ron's four foot fall to unconsciousness, and the *deus ex machina* finale in the new Harry Potter movie) recreated the first book of Tolkien's trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, sticking close to the text and straying when necessary for time and drama. The drama and attention to detail overwhelmed any minor flaws critics may have voiced -- if there are any (though the drowning scene was a little melodramatic and lacked realism). If any vociferous critics exist, they, no doubt, sport corncocks out of their respective d erri eres,

incapable of appreciating metaphor if it isn't encrusted by tea-and-crumpet plots.

J.R.R. Tolkien was and is dangerous because he didn't write mainstream fiction. He wrote scathing reviews of humanity couched within a quaint, "sanitized... fairy tale." Certain literary cadres are still incapable of evaluating literature that doesn't conform to their sense of reality, i.e. they are incapable of evaluating metaphor. Lucius Shepard arguably wrote the best story of the decade in any genre with "The Beast of the Heartland," but it will go unremarked since he writes science fiction and "fairy tales." Even more importantly J.R.R. Tolkien was and is dangerous because of his views on humanity: too much power can corrupt *anyone* -- not just the politicians like George Bush, Tony Blair, Osama Bin Laden, Boromir, Gandalf, Galadriel, Sauron and Saruman but the simple peasant folk like Bilbo Baggins and you and me. Nobody gets off the hook in Tolkien -- as it should be. The reason churchgoers become hypocrites is not because they're Christians or what not, but because they think what they hear applies to others. Everyone else needs to change but themselves. Likewise, hypocrites exist in the literary realm when they decry censorship only when it applies to works they agree with or when the "open-minded" are only "open-minded" when it comes to their politics. Are we willing to read works, fight censorship and remain open-minded even when we (meaning you and me) disagree with their ideologies?

Is Tolkien really dangerous though? Wouldn't McCarthy be the dangerous vision since he blackballed communists, ruining careers and families? By the same token, wouldn't Stalin be dangerous since he actually killed his opponents? Or is McCarthy only dangerous because he wasn't Communist? Also to intimate socialist fiction like Steinbeck's is the only true art for fiction is ill-advised. Steinbeck's art had less to do with politics than an amalgam of applicability, power, and genius. . . Don't forget how important Tolkien (in addition to the non-Socialist Heinlein) was to the formation of the consciousness of the sixties and seventies, viewing the corruption of power not only within the Kennedys, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford but also, if the readers were honest, within themselves. This reviewer defends Tolkien not because he finds Tolkien the better writer. On the contrary, the reviewer is more heavily influenced by Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, Sladek and Moorcock than Tolkien despite the reviewer not having wholesale "socialist" values apart from education, which has been shown far more effective at increasing longevity than socialized medicine. Instead, the reviewer defends Tolkien because his work has been auctioned off at less than its actual value, just as other speculative writers have been at the hands of the literary.

Nor does this reviewer defend mediocrity or the lack of experimentation in the current status of science fiction. Experimentation is the lifeblood of any literature, which is sadly missing in much of current literary fiction as well. Instead, you will hear this reviewer's "Amen, brother!" among the congregation. Kudos to Fantastic

Metropolis and its efforts to reform SF [<http://www.sfsite.com/fm/>]. Yet, to advocate the devil once more, Shakespeare's literary contemporaries found him too popular. The crazy coot retold the old for a new vision and art, drawing off the twice-told tales, histories and mythologies and made them his own, made them new. A wise man once said that there's nothing new under the sun. A wise man also said to remove the log in your eye before removing the splinter in the other's, so without further ado please excuse the reviewer while he deforests his hundred-acre wood.

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#### LETTER:

Margaret L. Carter

Thanks for the contributor's copy of No. 23. It was a delight to see my work in it. I enjoyed reading the other stories. "A Storm in Gundrin" is enthralling; I really want to see more stories in this cycle. I also especially like "Light-Adapted Eye" and "Fruit and Consequences."

Alas, there is a letter missing from my web page URL, so nobody will be able to find me. Should be: <http://members.aol.com/MLCVamp/vampcrpt.htm> Maybe it could be corrected in the next issue.

[Sorry for the mistake. Here it is corrected. G. H.]

## Retirement: A Masque

Joe R. Christopher

*A small glade in a forest faces the audience. Nymphs and Satyrs enter excitedly.*

SATYRS:

Hooray! hooray! the centaur has retired!  
No longer will he tell at length of strings  
And choice of woods--when songs of love are lyred!  
No longer talk of tones when lover sings!

NYMPHS:

Hooray! hooray! the pedant has retired!  
Those centaurs study ever-moving stars,  
But do not know how love our souls has fired--  
Nor know how scholarship our loving mars!

BOTH:

Hooray! hooray! the scholar has retired!  
No longer do we suffer pedantry!  
Our books with all their notes this day we've pyred,  
For from such learning ever are we free!

*They dance a dance of book-throwing and book-trampling.*

*Enter a small goddess with the head of an ox, like a midget Hathor. She waves a minute tree branch with green leaves, carried in her right hand; and the Nymphs and Satyrs flee.*

BOSQUE:

Leave off! be gone! your antic-masque, away!  
Like wasps that raid the ripened pear, don't stay!  
The centaur who most dryly taught is gone,  
Unto the mountain pastures now withdrawn;



Iosephus, he, a student of the stars,  
 A devotee of Venus more than Mars,  
 Though given not to stallion-like excess--  
 He's gone, his psyche now is fetterless.  
 As Chiron, once, tutored Asclepius,  
 Jason, Achilles, and others of that class,  
 Iosephus taught--a democratic crew:  
 In this New World, what better thing to do?  
 But still, the Roman traits are handed down--  
 The Senators at the Capital still frown;  
 Jove's bird, the Eagle, on the seal is seen;  
 The federal buildings catch the Temples' mien.  
 Not there, but rural paths, my banks along,  
 This centaur strayed to meditate a song;  
 Beside my brother's stream, the Caney, born,  
 He learned the one who reads is never lorn.  
 Theocritus he read and Vergil too,  
 And learned the songs the simple shepherds knew.  
 Thus here he found the herders of the kine  
 And goddesses of the Cross Timbers line;  
 He learned their ways, their country-western songs,  
 And all the truth that to their path belongs.

*The goddess retreats to the trees and shrubs at the back of the clearing. Wearing bandanas around their necks, striped shirts with pearl buttons, jeans covered with decorated chaps, and carved boots (in other words, dressed for a party), Cowboys enter; from the opposite direction enter the Hamadryads of the Cross Timbers. Accompanying one group or the other are two older Satyrs, one with panpipes (or a harmonia); the other with a small bodhrán.*

MNASYLLUS:

Alas, our fellow cowboy, fixed to his horse,  
 Who ranged the fields with us in search of kine,  
 Has left the ranch, has left the pastoral course,  
 No longer by the campfire now to dine.

LEAFY:

Alas, that eater known for quantity,  
 Who ate to fill two stomachs--one, the man's,  
 The other, the horse's; he, we all agree,  
 No longer comes to join our merry dance.

*The first dance, accompanied by the panpipes and drum.*

DAMOETAS:

Oh woe, the dweller in the cave of scrolls,  
Who'd teach each esoteric prophecy,  
Who'd parse each sentence for all verbal roles,  
Has left the range, our ears, our jamboree.

GREEN:

Oh woe, the lover of the antique verse,  
Reciter of the ancient forms of words,  
Has left this land: his song is more than terse,  
Once like the mockingbird's, now long deferred.

*The second dance, likewise accompanied.*

ALPHESIBOEUS:

Alas, he's left us for the freer life;  
Oh woe, his hooves no more will strike our ground.

CHLOROPHYLL:

Alas, arboreal shade by river's rife,  
Oh woe, but not for him will it abound.

*The third, more general dance, after which the goddess comes forward.*

BOSQUE:

The evening's entertainment now has ended;  
We hope you've found the dance and song most splendid;  
But whether or not you have, I'd be amiss  
If I didn't state the moral emphasis.  
This world is fixed so generations pass--  
The sand runs quickly through the minute glass.  
One centaur or one scholar's not the be-all--  
Merely a slowed-down satellite in free fall.  
Each person is unique, but none can last--  
Like snowflakes drifting down to th' ocean vast.  
A pagan goddess, that is all I know--  
Life comes and goes; all life is flux and flow.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Tim Callahan** graduated from the Chouinard Art School with a degree in illustration. He has worked in the animation industry as a background designer and layout artist for over 20 years and has regularly contributed art for *Mythic Circle*. He and Bonnie met while working on the infamous Bakshi production of *Lord of the Rings*.

**Bonnie Callahan** has contributed art to Mythopoeic publications for over 3 decades. She was in on the premiere of *Mythlore*, *Mythprint*, *Mythril*, and *Parma Eldalamberon*. Bonnie has worked as a background stylist in the animation industry for over 20 years, and also designs logos, posters, and cards, as well as painting art on rocks.

**Ed Cates** lives and creates poetry in Massachusetts, where he has a number of projects in the works. He writes that when he wrote the story, he had in mind a painting by Corot called "The Hunter" which hung, when he saw it, in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He states "The Hunter is in darkness (subconscious)." More of his poetry can be viewed at <[www.soulspinning.org](http://www.soulspinning.org)>

**Joe R. Christopher** is a professor *emeritus* of English at Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas, having retired at the end of May 2001. He has had four books or chapbooks published commercially through the years: *A. Boucher Bibliography*, with Dean W. Dickensheet and Robert E. Briney (published with and preceded by *A Boucher Portrait: Anthony Boucher as Seen by his Friends and Colleagues*, by Leonore Glen Offord) (1969); *C. S. Lewis: An Annotated Checklist of Writings about Him and his Works*, with Joan K. Ostling (1974); *C. S. Lewis* (1987); and *Musings beneath a Tree of Amalion* (2nd ed., 1993). The last of these is a collection of Tolkienesque verse published by the New England Tolkien Society. As a member of the editorial board of *The Mythopoeic Press*, he has conceived of and/or compiled two of its books: Chad Walsh's *Chad Walsh reviews C. S. Lewis* (1998) and Dorothy L. Sayers' *Sayers on Holmes: Essays and Fiction on Sherlock Holmes* (2001). Since retiring, Christopher has read papers at four meetings, some of the papers on C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams, written an essay on Tolkien for an educational publisher, and is working on two books, one of them on Lewis.

**Kathleen Edwards** contributed the marvelous illustrations of Pegasus for *Mythic Circle* #23 and kindly responded to the editor's plea for more illustrations in this one. She writes:

*I must say I was pleased to be invited back. Nothing quite so ego building as having a request from an editor for your work. It also came at a pivotal moment in my life. I had just decided I was going*

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*to finally put my training to work and do some serious art. I am doubly pleased because Mythic Circle is worth reading.*

*The author painted the pictures well. The characters set themselves easily upon the page - and although fairies and dragons are my favorite, the troll demanded to be first. I am afraid I didn't do his ugliness justice. I also must thank the author for the inspiration. I like the fairy picture so well I am making a full sized painting of it in silks and satins. You can see more of my art work and writing at <http://home.att.net/~ekathy>.*

**Audie Hall** graduated from Oral Roberts in the December of 2000 and states, "Dr. Mark R. Hall introduced me to the Mythopoeic Society's publications, of which I used *Mythlore* extensively for research papers on the Inklings!"

**D. John Gangnagel** has been writing poetry for more than a decade. Much of his work is inspired by the characters, relationships, and lessons of Greek mythology. The three poems included in this issue of *The Mythic Circle* are examples of how he incorporates lesser-known deities, such as Ate (the personification of Ruin), the Litai (daughters of Zeus, the goddesses of prayer), and Nyx (goddess of the night), into his work. More of D. John Gangnagel's poetry can be found in his new book *Ephemera*, which is due to be released on Amazon.com, and both Borders' and Barnes & Nobles' websites by the second quarter of 2002.

**J. M. R. Harrison** writes poetry in West Virginia. One of his poems was published in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Antietam Review*.

**Timothy Hodge** is a young artist who kindly offered to illustrate some of our stories.

**Lala Heine-Koehn** was born in Poland but currently lives with her family in Victoria, British Columbia. Her published books of poetry include: *Portraits* (Thistledown Press, 1977) *Sandpoems* (Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1979) *Eyes in the Wind* (Turnstone Press, 1981) *Forest Full of Rain* (Sononis, 1982) *The Spell of the Chaste Tree* (Ekstasis Editions, 1984) *Through the Mashrabiya Screen* (Hawthorn Society, 1996), and *The Certain Days of Abstinence* (Ekstasis Editions, 1998). Literary magazines in which her work has appeared include *Writer's News*, *From an Island*, *Rattle Moon*, *Malahat Review*, *Poetry*, *Canada Review*, *Grain of Salt*, *Other Voices*, *Prairie Fire*, *Voices Israel* (Haifa), and *The Mythic Circle*.

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## NARNIAN SPRING

by

Nicholas Ozment

A feast is laid upon the table top.  
The bird will break the best-made carving knife.  
One feaster's fork held halfway to his mouth,  
His hoary hand is not endowed with life.  
In woods beneath a tall oak tree they sit,  
With frightened faces that seem carved from stone.  
A fox, a dwarf, two satyrs and some squirrels,  
Each day they gaze as if chilled to the bone.  
Though long has been the Winter Queen's cold rule,  
Frost is quickly melting from their clothes.  
The holly decorations are quite new.  
I think I saw one squirrel just twitch his nose.  
Fair spring has come to banish winter's death  
On a breeze that feels like Lion's breath.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS (continued from pg. 47)

**Debra Kemp's** interest in Arthuriana began as an innocent hobby after seeing the movie version of the musical, Camelot. It has grown into personal library of well over four hundred volumes. She has an Arthurian completed, yet to be published, and is working on the sequel. Her writing has garnered several awards in the past few years, including a third place in the 1998 Laura Bower VanNuys writing contest for "Cumal." Ms. Kemp holds the world's perfect "day" job--in a secondhand bookstore.

**Nicholas Ozment** is a writer, member of the Mythopoeic Society and an editor of a small literary magazine called *Mooreeffoc*.

**Richard Reilly** earned his Ph. D. in philosophy from Rice University, and now teaches philosophy at Blinn College, a community college in Bryan, Texas. "The Bridge" is one of several philosophical fables he wrote while still in graduate school. He is currently working on a series of "letters to students"--specifically, letters to HIS students, that he reads to them in class--explaining what philosophy is all about.

**John Savoie** recently completed his dissertation on seventeenth century poetry at Yale and currently teaches the great myths, from Homer to Milton and beyond, at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville.

**Trent Walters** is studying medicine at Creighton University. Recent and forthcoming publications include *Blood Samples*, *Carleton Arts Review*, *Darkness Rising* anthology, *Fantastical Visions* anthology, *42nd Parallel*, *Futures*, *Glyph*, *Vacancy* and *The Zone*.

**Lee Clark Zumpe** lives in Central Florida with his wife Tracey and a clan of condescending cats. His work has appeared in dozens of magazines and anthologies including *Black Petals*, *Parchment Symbols*, and *Dark Legacy*. 2002 will see the publication of *An Invisible Shimmer*, Lee's first chapbook of poetry from Anxiety Publications. In addition to writing and working for Sears Repair Service, Lee attends the University of South Florida in Tampa, where he recently received the Charles F. Brooks Award for Technical Writing.

## *The Mythic Circle*

*The Mythic Circle* is a small literary magazine published by *The Mythopoeic Society*, which celebrates the work of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and other writers in the mythic tradition. It has become an annual. The next issue, #25, will appear some time before the end of 2002. Copies of previous issues are available through the Mythopoeic Society Orders Department. The subscription price is \$8.00 a year (one issue). For subscriptions and past issues, write to: Mythopoeic Society Orders Department, 920 N. Atlantic Blvd. #E, Alhambra, CA 91801. Submissions and letters of comment should be sent to: Gwentyth Hood, English Department, Marshall University, Huntington WV 25701

We have, as yet, no hard and fast length limits, but we are a small publication. We have to think very well of a story 5000 words long to publish it, and shorter stories have a better chance. By editorial policy we favor our subscribers. We also favor those who show their desire to improve their work by revising their submissions and submitting them again, even if they do not exactly take our advice. Submissions should be double-spaced and should include stamped, self-addressed envelope for a swift reply. As a small publication, we do not pay money. We can only reward our authors and illustrators with one complimentary copy of the issue in which the accepted work appears. After first publication, all remaining rights revert to the author. As a small publication, we can only reward our authors and illustrators with one complimentary copy of the issue in which the accepted work appears. All remaining rights revert to the author on publication. We make no monetary payments. For more information about the Mythopoeic Society and its publications, see our web site, <[www.mythsoc.org](http://www.mythsoc.org)>

The 33rd Annual Convention of the Mythopoeic Society (Mythcon XXXIII) will be held at the Ramada Inn and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival's Mary Rippon Theatre. The theme is "A Midsummer Night's Dream: Shakespeare and Fantasy." The author Guest of Honor is Connie Willis; Scholar Guest of Honor is Alexei Kondratiev. For more information about the conference, contact:

Mythcon XXXIII  
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