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Enchantment Fades Away / Fantasist's Dreams

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He turned to Chac. "The Manito has released me and Supay beckons for me beyond that gate. The Manito says you are worthy. He will speak to you."

Naskone turned and walked through the rainbow gate. Another bell sounded and the gate closed.

The city became quiet. After a while, Chac decided the Manito had deceived him. There would be no gift. Chac gathered his blanket around him. He would wait until daylight to leave.

A stirring sound came from dead leaves, piled against the wall. A little jumping rat scurried out. With one quick leap it perched atop a nearby stone and stared at Chac. Chac held his breath. Was this the Manito?

"I am here to teach you man-child. What do you wish to know?" The rat's voice sounded low and clear, like the ringing of pebbles in a stream.

"Give me the power to raise fire," said Chac.

"You already possess the power," said the creature. "You only need to know the song." The rat jumped down and scurried through the sand, dragging its tail. The marks it left were musical symbols.

"This song will teach you how to raise fire," said the rat. It scuttled back under the pile of leaves, leaving the city quiet.

Chac looked down at the scribbled notes. A song

to teach him his first magic. A light breeze stirred the sand and Chac hastily reached for his flute. He played the melody to its completion.

He held his hand out over the dead embers and flames leaped up to warm his fingers. He almost shouted with triumph. He would leave tonight to tell Quelox of his success.

He scooped up a handful of sand to put out his fire and stopped in mid-gesture. For a moment he did not move. He could raise fire, but he must still use sand to quench it.

He looked out into the darkness, disappointment quelling his joy. He could call fire but he could not control it. He looked back at his fire and another revelation jolted him. He had learned a greater lesson. Knowledge was an endlessly unfolding flower, each petal revealing new mysteries beneath. His life would be filled with the anticipation of discovery and the excitement of new challenges.

He tossed the sand into the fire and walked to the edge of the cliff. Bright stars glittered in the dark sky and reflected in the black mirror of Red Water River. He raised his voice in wonder.

"You are my wisest teacher and my greatest mystery. Thank you, Mother Earth."

ENCHANTMENT FADES AWAY

by Janet P. Reedman

Elfland's enchantment fades away,
Leaving the world a bleak old place,
An unrelieved vista of grey
Where skyscrapers rear into space.

Where every tree is just a tree,
Untenanted by dryad or sprite,
And the only demons we must flee
Are thugs on the subway at night.

Where every hill is just a sod,
Instead of an elvish mound,
Where planners and scientists play God,
And boast of "wonders" they have found.

Where tales of Faery are decried
As unhealthy for our young,
Who drown in a video tide,
Elfland's deathknell having rung.

FANTASIST'S DREAMS

by Janet P. Reedman

At night when I slip into my bed,
Visions of fantasy dance in my head,
And instead of counting harmless sheep,
I count scaly dragons to make me sleep.
And my dreams are filled with faery lords,
Glittering armour and magical swords;
Wizards who dwell in dark-tiered towers,
And captive maidens in glassy bowers.
All haunt me when I'm deeply asleep,
Into my weary head they crawl and creep,
Telling me tales that won't fade away,
That last in fabled glory through the day;
Tales of heroes and tales of wise sages--
Waiting to be written in a book's pages.