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## *The Battle of the Trees / Seduction*

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Chac climbed slowly to his feet. Although his leg was stiff he was able to walk and the sickness was gone. The power of his song, sung clean and strong by his flute, had healed him.

With his heart full Chac walked to the edge of the mesa and looked to the mountains. He could see dark thunderclouds with grey threads of rain reaching for the earth. The tanks at Clearwater would be full of new rain and he could be there in one day of fast travel.

Chac smiled, filled his lungs with soft fragrant air and shouted. "Thank you brother snake for the powerful dreams you gave me. I have finished my dream quest and I will be Shaman." His words echoed down the cliffs and out onto the plain. There was no answer save the wild cry of a desert falcon.

## The Battle Of The Trees

by Janet P. Reedman

A maid walked the wood on a winter's eve,  
When the hush of snow lay on field and farm,  
And little birds alone were left to grieve  
For the forest's faded autumnal charm.

Her hair gleamed like copper, her lips glowed  
red,  
Her dancing gaze outshone the changeless  
skies;  
By morn one of two gods would lie dead.  
And she would be the survivor's fair prize.

She came to the foot of the holly tree  
Decked with sword-sharp leaves and berries  
blood-bright,  
She said, "Holly King you can now walk free,  
Your bride to win this icy winter night."

Holly King stepped forth from gnarly tree  
trunk  
Green-faced and bearing a holly-barbed sword,  
"May Queen, your gracious presence has me  
drunk,  
I want to battle and become your lord."

Out of the darkness another shape leapt:  
Alder-God cloaked in his green leafy boughs,  
He cried, "For many dreamy months I've slept,  
But now I shall battle and cease to drowse!"

They joined in bitter warfare with their  
blades;  
Berries tumbled to be crushed in the mud,  
Battlecries echoed through all the green  
glades  
As tree-sap squirted the snowdrifts like  
blood.

By morning's grey light, the Alder-God lay  
A noble forest king cruelly hewn down;  
Perennial holly had won the day,  
In Holly's boughs gleamed the May Queen's  
bright crown.



## SEDUCTION

by Mary-Lane Kamberg

*The first time he saw her, he knew her.*

He lay between his teddy bear and fire  
truck. She touched the damp washcloth on his  
forehead.

"Shall I read you a story?" she asked.

He smiled and nodded. Her gentle voice  
soothed him.

"Want me to lie with you until you fall  
asleep?"

He turned his firetruck sideways and  
moved his bear closer to the edge of the bed.

"There's no room," he said.

*The next time he saw her, he remembered  
her.*

His hospital gown reeked with the sweet  
smell of ether. Her bony fingers stroked his  
prickly beard. He saw desire in her ageless  
eyes and felt warm.

"Do you want me now?" she asked.

He turned away. "Not here."

*When she came again, he welcomed her.*

His joints ached in the humid night air.  
She patted his bald head playfully. Her long  
silver hair sparkled in the darkness.

He turned back the covers and motioned  
her to his side. She climbed into his bed,  
leaned over close to him and slowly pulled  
the sheet over their heads.