

Enchanted Tales

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(Founder, Editor-in-Chief)

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THE BIG GOOD-HEARTED WOLF

BY OLIVIA ARIETI

Once upon a time, in a faraway forest, stood a big good-hearted wolf quite troubled; a sad expression showed on his face and the tail hung down loosely; he didn't like what he heard. The head of the packs had just gathered them and said that they were considered a predatory and deceitful species. A dreadful prediction followed: all wolves would be hunted and eliminated.

During his wanderings the old wolf used to hide behind rocks, trees, haystacks and listen to men in front of campfires, women in the fields, grandmas on farmyards, to whoever was telling a story and realized that there was always a big bad wolf ready to eat humans and livestock alike.

"For no other reason, the saying, to cry wolf, is so wide spread," remarked the hoary animal and concluded, "Now you have the duty to destroy such a horrible belief, my dear friends; get down to work and do your best."

True, sometimes they were very hungry, but they weren't the monsters described in those tales, the big good-hearted wolf thought.

The image of his pups scampering in the snow before huddling under their mom's fur filled his eyes with tears. He had to save them at all costs.

The story of the girl with a red hooded cloak was the first to cross his mind; he would start with her and prove that they could be gentle and caring creatures too.

The wolf literally trod every path of the forest until he finally caught sight of Little Red Riding Hood racing towards her grandmother's hut.

A feeble wail replaced his usual howl to avoid scaring her.

The girl gazed at him and trembling, uttered, "Are you hurt?"

The fact that she didn't flee made him more confident; he moved nearer.

"What's in your basket, dear?"

"Cakes, butter and honey for my grandma; she's ill and I have to bring her some food."

"I'll be happy to carry the basket and to escort you so no one can harm you."

The girl was bewildered; her mom had always told her to run if ever she saw a wolf as they were very dangerous and now there was one right in front of her who apparently, had no intention of eating her up, but simply wanted to be kind and friendly.

“What big eyes you have,” she said still unconvinced.

“To keep watch on you better; I can also see very far away so if there is an upcoming peril, I’ll be able to put you in safe.”

“What big ears you have.”

“To hear you better and to hear all the sounds of the forest in order to distinguish the pleasant ones from the suspicious ones, most certainly warnings of imminent danger.”

Even more amazed, she exclaimed, “What big teeth you have.”

The wolf tried his best smile, “To carry your basket safely, so it won’t fall.”

“How nice of you,” the child replied and felt she could trust him.

The big good-hearted wolf did as promised and walked by Little Red Riding Hood’s side way up to her grandmother’s hut.

When the girl told about her encounter, the old woman was so incredulous that although weak, she got out of bed to see for herself, and there stood the wolf, his fur still glittering with dew and the deep eyes full of tenderness.

Suddenly, shots resounded all around.

“Oh, no, a hunter!” cried the child devastated; she rushed to the door and shouted to the animal to come in.

The wolf ran inside frightened; a bullet had almost reached him.

He curled up beside the fireplace just like a cat and patiently waited to accompany the girl back out of the forest where her mother was attending her.

Before the woman’s startled glance, Little Red Riding Hood hugged the animal and implored him to keep safe.

With a joyous heart, the wolf dashed to his pups sure that they would all have a better chance to live happily ever after.

HER FAERIE-TALE ENDING

BY MARIBEL C. PAGAN

Meet our princess
—the heroine of our story—
who no longer wears dresses, but breeches.
who no longer waits in a tower, but climbs down.
who no longer awaits a dragon to attack, but rides the dragon.
who no longer cries for a man, but rescues herself.
who no longer has to wear a curse in a locket around her neck, but finds her own
freedom.
who no longer marries, but rules as an Elizabeth.
who no longer foresees her faerie-tale ending, but creates it.

THE PRINCESS & THE DRAGON

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the princess
rode the dragon
to stop
kissing frogs

because often
women have to be
the heroes that
save themselves,

and angry knights
with the help of rejected
princes made her
out to be a villain;

but she was just a woman
who decided to be
queen of her own destiny
enslaved to the laws of no man—

sometimes the heroes
are the ones that don't follow
the rules but make their own
saving the world in the process.

CHANGING FATE

BY LINDA M. CRATE

rapunzel
threw down her hair
wanted an adventure
to carry her outside of those
castle walls
no one wants to be prisoner
to another person's needs,
and witches who build towers
so their daughters cannot escape
do not deserve their daughters
she thought;
and so one day as she left her
tower far behind her
she sang the songs of birds and thrushes
running through the trees
whisked off her feet by a prince
she grew to love—
& the witch lost her eyes
to white doves
her little black heart having withered and died
long ago there wasn't much for the vultures
to munch on,
and rapunzel got her happily ever after
because she decided to take a chance and be brave
life doesn't wait so she knew she had to change
her own fate.

A HEART FULL OF HOPE

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the little fairy
had little light left
flickering into
darkness
he considered no one believed
in fairies, any more!
but then she came
with heart full of love,
dreams, and hope;
and she believed so much
that he felt his light burning brighter than the
sun—
they became friends,
and they danced with the
flowers and the clouds;
with crows and rainbows
one day she decided that she would
leave behind her human life
to join him and together they flew through
every night and day together never spending
a day apart
because they had a connection
immortal as time.

THE MAKER

BY LINDA M. CRATE

there was a pink sky reflected on the koi as they swam, and she saw a kingdom of clouds in the sea; she painted a couple of turtles with wings and whispered light and life into everything she made so that it became real—her every scar was defeated with her dreams because she devoured darkness with her light, and one day she painted a prince but he didn't marry her; so she let go of the sharp edges of conformity and painted herself a mermaid's tail and swam into the ocean to begin again—whilst there she found a merman and he married her, and she couldn't see why the light felt warmer when she was singing with the waves than they ever did when she was land; and when she buried herself in the sand she saw turtles flying in the sky and carried the rose petals of days that weren't so heavy to free her bones.

NOT WHO THEY WERE

BY LINDA M. CRATE

the one winged faerie
knew life was hard,
but she flew anyway
for life was a beautiful journey
bittersweet but one could not
enjoy the sweet without the bitter,
and so she flew;
knowing one day she would
be stronger than her pain
one day her dreams would carry
her far—
the other faeries could be cruel,
but she paid them no mind
as she paved her heart with flames of stars
so she could burn bright even when
the darkness came;
and when the nightmares came
she was the hero that saved them all
and the faeries sang her praises and she forgave them
even knowing fame was a fickle friend
because she promised herself
she would not be the monsters that broke her
for she had to be who she was
not who they were.

THE CARVED CHEST AND THE BEARD OF BLUE

BY LAUREN WALSBURG

Talia shuddered away from Pete in his rage, but he didn't seem to notice. The smallest of things could set him off: a word, a movement, a look. She was never quite sure what it would be. Tonight, it had been dinner. The supermarket was crammed full of people frantically trying to stock up before the weekend. This had caused her to be late cooking his dinner and of course, he'd arrived home early from work. He'd poured himself a bourbon, and then another, and another. It was never good when he drank before dinner; Talia knew she was in for a rough night.

"I slave away at work all day, while you do God only knows what here, and then I come home and you haven't even made dinner," grumbled Pete. Talia didn't say anything; she knew it was better to stay quiet when he got like this.

"I have to deal with idiots all day long, just so I can give you whatever you want. But is that enough for you? No. Always wanting more. Never enough for you."

Talia could feel her chest tighten and her muscles constrict. She silently prayed for him to calm down but she knew it was useless. Her prayer would go unanswered, again.

Pete looked at Talia, his eyes wild. Then he turned away from her and poured another drink. Promptly, Talia put their dinner on the table. She knew he was still angry, she could feel his fury burning her skin, but he was subdued for now.

They ate their dinner without speaking. The only noise was the sharp sounds of their cutlery against their plates and the faint noise of cars in the distance.

"Humph," growled Pete. Talia looked up at him, another mistake.

"The meat is overcooked," said Pete. There was a shakiness in his voice; a warning. Though his steak was pink, Pete liked the blood to leak out when he cut into it.

"I'm sorry," mumbled Talia.

"Sorry, huh, more likely you were too busy fiddling about all day. How 'bout you make yourself useful for once in your life? Hey?"

Talia nervously pressed her fingers together under the table. She didn't say anything. This made him angrier. He stood up abruptly and towered over her.

She knew it was coming. She always knew.

*

Pete left for work the next morning without a saying a word. Talia was washing up the dishes from dinner and trying not to wince from the aching pain in her ribs. She had the television on and was half watching the news. There had been a string of murders over the past seven years. Twelve women had been found in abandoned buildings. Their dismembered body parts were found hanging from the ceiling on hooks over pools of blood. The police had gotten nowhere. There were no fingerprints, DNA, or any other trace of the murderer at the crime scenes. The victims were all women in their late twenties or early thirties, blond haired and blue eyed. It always sent a chill through Talia when she saw their photos plastered on the television screen or printed in the newspaper. She, like the victims, had blond hair and blue eyes. She had also just celebrated her twenty-ninth birthday.

She stared at the television and felt a tingling in her spine. She constantly felt as if she were being watched in the house. She knew she was being silly. She was the only one there, but this thought did not calm her. The reporter on the news was saying that there had been a development in the case. A man had been spotted getting fuel near where the victim was found on the night of the murder. The witness hadn't been able to give much of a description; a large man with a beard and dark eyes.

*

Over the next few weeks Pete was cantankerous. Talia was constantly on tenterhooks around him. She could sense he was irritated; with her or something else, she wasn't sure. He barely spoke, just a grunt here and there. On the odd occasion that he did speak, it was only to criticize his wife.

One afternoon, he sauntered into the house carrying a wooden chest. Decoratively carved into the lid was a pattern that resembled an eye. Talia watched him take the box to their bedroom. He came out to the kitchen after several moments and looked at her, his mouth forming into a cruel grin. She tried to smile back at him, but her face would not oblige.

"I saw you looking at my chest," he said with a glimmer of accusation in his voice.

Talia looked up at him, "It was beautifully carved," she said trying not to make eye contact.

His foul grin got bigger and his eyes darkened, "I'm sure you want to know what's in it."

"Only if you want to tell me," she said, struggling to get her voice louder than a whisper.

"A man's business is private," he said and Talia was surprised that he didn't seem angry. He was taunting her.

"Of course."

"If you ever look in it, and I'll know if you do, the other night will seem like a distant, pleasant memory."

A dark shadow had cast itself across his face. He looked utterly terrifying. Talia shuddered.

*

The next morning Talia went about cleaning the house, last night's warning still fixed in her thoughts. She cleaned the whole house, top to bottom. When at last she had finished tidying the

study, the only room left was the bedroom. She walked in the room and immediately saw the carved chest sitting on the dresser. She ran her hand over the eye on the lid as she dusted. Talia shook her head, I can't, she thought. God only knows what he'll do to me this time.

Her eyes kept flicking back to the chest as she scurried around the room making the bed, cleaning the windows, tidying the drawers. And in the drawers, she found a key. It was small and golden, its head the shape of an egg. Even though she hadn't seen this key before, Talia knew what it unlocked.

She looked around the room. Silly, she thought, no one is here. But she couldn't shake the feeling of being watched. Still, she stepped over to the dresser, put the key down, and put her hands on either side of the chest. It felt cold, not like it had been sitting in the freezer, like it was imbedded with evilness. She picked up the key and hesitated, looking around the room. Then, she put the key into the lock and turned.

Talia gasped as she opened the lid. Inside the chest were twelve severed fingers. As soon as she saw them she knew, she knew whom they belonged to. Her stomach churned as the realization of whom she was married to hit.

*

Pete walked through door, throwing down his bag on the clean floor. He walked over to Talia.

His eyes narrowed. She smiled brightly at him, or at least she tried, the image of the chest still vivid in her mind. He strode down the hallway and into the bedroom where the carved chest sat on the dresser. Talia breathed slowly, attempting to calm herself.

She heard him fiddling with something and mumbling to himself. Then, after a few minutes, he went quiet. He walked out of the bedroom glaring murderously at Talia. Her heart tightened in her chest.

"You've been looking in my chest, haven't you?" he bellowed.

"No. Of course not. You told me not to," squeaked Talia.

"Yes, I told you not to, but you still did it anyway," his eyes, dark as pitch, bored through her.

Talia backed away, but he grabbed her arm. She tried to twist around, but his grip was too hard. She squirmed in his arms and kicked out. Her kick caught him in the knee and he yelled in pain, dropping her arm as he did. She ran to the front door and knocked over a vase of fresh flowers. She heard the crunch of glass underneath his boots as he chased her. She reached the door and threw it open, running into the cold bite of the night air to find she was not alone.

She turned around and saw the shocked look on Pete's face for just a second before it turned to rage. He glowered at her. The lights illuminated his eyes red and flecked his beard with blue.

SNOW QUEEN POISON HEART

BY NEIL WILLCOX

The poison creeps slowly into my heart -
It has been there since the day I was born.
Introduced too early by a crystalline dart.
Villain or Saviour? Between these I'm torn.

It has been there since the day I was born,
Killing by inches for what I will do,
Villain or Saviour; between these I'm torn.
Death, my companion, I shall follow through.

Killing by inches for what I will do,
Doomed by prophecy to freeze the world up.
Death my companion? I shall follow through:
If this is my fate then come share my cup.

Doomed by prophecy to freeze the world up,
Introduced too early by a crystalline dart;
If this is my fate then come share my cup -
The poison creeps slowly into my heart.

WHO'S AFRAID?

BY MISS MACROSS

the cottage is made of plexiglas
i can see the wolf inside
he isn't even trying
stretched sleep gown/bare teeth
neat rows of carcasses
of girls who took this same stroll
in this same anomalous forest of
pines and palms
sun in the sky
snow on the ground
the goosebumps ripple
he sees my
nipples harden
the calm
before fresh blood
splatters on those clear walls

HYMN TO HEROES

BY DANNY MCLAREN

Paths beaten down by time
Following that call of the void,
That siren's song of adventure
Travelling deeper and deeper still
All is quiet here
The stillness of open air
Trees standing proudly, steadfast, on either side
But this place hasn't always known such peace
For I am not the first to wander through these long forgotten woods
I trace the footsteps of those who came before me with my own
Those mythic heroes and warriors who carried duty like a sword and honor like a shield
Who pulled bravery out of dark caverns and starless skies
Who pressed on through thick underbrush that bit at exposed skin
And held courage close and dear
For when they stood against a beast
Courage was all they could call upon

Author Biographies

OLIVIA ARIETI

US citizen, with a degree from the University of Pisa, she lives in Torre del Lago Puccini, Italy with her family. Her plays and poems have been published both in the USA and UK. Her short stories appeared in *The Smoking Poet*, *Enchanted Conversations*, *Enchanted Tales Literary Magazine*, *Daily Bites Of Flesh* 2011 Pill Hill Press, *Voices From The Garage*, *Riverbabble*, *Halloween Anthology* Magic Cat Press, *Christmas Warmth Anthology* Xoxo Publishing, *Medieval Nightmares*, *Poe-It*, *Spring Fever Anthologies* Static Movement, *Far Off Places*, *100 Doors To Madness* Forgotten Tomb Press, *Plague*, *Black Cats* Horrified Press, *Bloody Ghost Stories*, *Full Moon Books*, *Mirror Mirror*, *Dangerous Dreams*, *Broken*, *Behind Closed Doors*, *Death And Decorations* Thirteen O'Clock Press, *Infective Ink*, *Sinister Saints Press*, *Doorknobs & Bodypaint*, *Pandemonium Press*.

LINDA M. CRATE

Linda M. Crate's poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has five published chapbooks *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications, August 2016), *My Wings Were Made to Fly* (Flutter Press, September 2017), and *splintered with terror* (Scars Publications, January 2018), and one micro-chapbook *Heaven Instead* (Origami Poems Project, May 2018). She is also the author of the novel *Phoenix Tears* (Czykmate Books, June 2018).

MISS MACROSS

Miss Macross (a.k.a. Sheena Carroll) is a Pittsburgh-based poet, tutor, witch, and painter. She is influenced by spacecraft, witchcraft, and personal trauma. Her work has been published in *Nasty Women & Bad Hombres Anthology*, *Philosophical Idiot*, *The Mantle*, *Rag Queen*, and *Flash Fiction Magazine*.

DANNY MCLAREN

Danny is a queer writer, poet, photographer, and musician from Toronto. They are currently an undergraduate student majoring in gender studies, with an interest in equity, inclusivity, and diversity-related work. They often explore themes associated with mental health, gender, and identity in their work. They are an editor and co-founder of an arts and culture magazine called *Alien Pub*, and has poems published in a number of online literature journals.

MARIBEL C. PAGAN

Maribel C. Pagán is a Latina writer and poet. She has appeared in *Gone Lawn*, *Foliage Oak*, *7x20*, *Cuento*, and others. She has received 4th Place in the *Word Weaver Writing Contest*, among other prestigious awards. Additionally, she is the Editor-in-Chief of *Seshat*, a Prose Reader for *Apprehension*, a Poetry Reader for *Frontier Poetry*, and a singer and musician for *The Angelic Family Choir*. Visit Maribel at <http://therollinghills.wordpress.com/> or on Twitter @maribelauthor12.

LAUREN WALSBURG

Lauren Walsburg is an Australian writer, editor, and artist. Her work has featured or is forthcoming in *Skive Magazine*, *The Mystic Blue Review*, *Umbel & Panicle*, *The Green Light*, *Riggwelter* and *Pussy Magic*. She is the director of *Wisteria Press*. Her debut poetry collection *Ink Stained Heart* was released in 2017. Lauren also works for *Cauldron Anthology*, *Minute Magazine*, *The Cerurove* and *Newfound*.

NEIL WILLCOX

Neil Willcox lives in south east England, where he has worked as a fruit picker, an insurance salesman and a maths tutor. He has self-published an Edwardian comedy-crime novel with the unlikely title *The Inexplicable Affair of the Mesmerising Russian Nobleman*. Despite, or perhaps because of all this, he has been working on "something about elves" for the last three years.

