

LUGH'S OBSESSION

A TALE FROM THE STORYROOM



MIKE LONGMEADOW

Mike Longmeadow

Lugh's Obsession

Lugh's Obsession

A Tale from the storyroom

Mike Longmeadow

Lugh's Obsession © 2024 Mike Longmeadow

Lugh's Obsession © 2024 by Mike Longmeadow. All rights reserved. This story is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real places are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or places or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. All rights reserved. This short story contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties.

Any unauthorized reprint or use of this material is prohibited. No part of this story may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without express written permission from the author.

Published by Karmic Publishing

Cover Art: author on Canva

ISBN: Pending

Lugh's Obsession

After being blessed with a name by the Queen of the Shadows, Milucra, Lugh has fulfilled all his obligations. Or so he believed. One more task awaits him, and just as he begins his new trek, Lugh meets the one being that makes his mind spin, his heart race, and rest upon his soul's embers. His one true Love. His obsession.

Mike Longmeadow

Lugh's Obsession

Dedications:

To all who believed in me. The list would be too long to list here, but know that I am deeply grateful for each and every one of you.

Mike Longmeadow

Acknowledgements:

To all the characters – from Forrest to Claudia, Lugh to Delphina – you accepted my ravings with humility and grace, and you have never missed an opportunity to inject your ideas just at the right moment to move the Tales in the right direction.

For that, and also because you accept me as is, I am deeply grateful to have met you.

Lugh's Obsession

From Mike with Author Academy Elite

Cosmic Consciousness

michellongpre.com/cosmic-consciousness

Tales from the Storyroom

Short stories

Birth of a promise

A name for a Kobold

Searching for Forrest

Waking Celeste

From Within

The Orchard

One More Task

Torji's deal

Fulfilling the Promise

michellongpre.com/tales-storyroom

Mike Longmeadow

Lugh's Obsession

To all the humans and Fey children who were lucky to hear of my earlier Tale about Forrest's father, the human called Clarence. You have no idea how much I appreciate the fact you let me take you on a detour. Giving me the chance to share what happened to Clarence, the only human to see me and accept my existence, and as I would soon come to find out, father to Forrest Greene, has lifted a huge weight from my shoulders.

Now that you know that my human was taken by the Queen of the Shadows' people, it's time to return to the Tale at hand, namely the meeting I helped setup between Queen Milucra and Queen Celeste. To show my appreciation to you, reader, for letting me divert the sequence of events, let me take you back and refresh everyone's memory.

When I first came back to Faylandia, I thought I was going to chase after Clarence and try to negotiate his return. Instead, as you may recall, Milucra granted me a name and tasked me with finding Queen Celeste and accompanying her to a designated meeting place. Queen Milucra shared no detail on the trek that awaited me – she just gave the order and expected me to get it done. I surmised that she wanted to parlay with the Queen of the Fairest. Though I knew nothing, as I was nothing more than the messenger servant.

The time spent with Celeste was quite pleasurable. Her generous demeanor towards me was surprising in the best ways and helped me find my footing in Faylandia. Although her Catshees were there to remind me I was nothing in the grand scheme of things, the fact they became disinterested in my presence over time was an extra boon to my confidence – they didn't see me as any kind of threat. Besides a squirrel's untimely trickery, my trek with Celeste was quite uneventful, which meant we reached the meeting place in no time.

Mike Longmeadow

We got there so early that we ended up spending moment over moment doing nothing. I took advantage of the time and had a satisfying nap while the Catshees took turns standing guard – though they seemed to be chilling more than anything else. Celeste followed suit and laid down on a bed of leaves. When I emerged from my deep sleep, she was just lying there, eyes open. Had she slept with her eyes open or had she taken this time to focus her mind? I kept any question to myself. Who was I to question how she chose to rest? Besides, that moment in my life was almost perfect. It may have been the only time where I was both well rested and well fed all at once. Even in my time with Clarence, the balance kept moving from one to the other, never quite finding a perfect middle as it did right now.

During the time we waited for Milucra's arrival, I was fighting with a growing sense of impatience. I tried to soothe myself by admiring the sunrays that were punching through the tree canopy. Each trail of particles they left in their wake were individual works of art, with the dust and pollen being energized by the ray's heat and dancing like there was no one watching. Then one specific particle caught my eye. It was brighter than the others, and most importantly, it floated with a purpose, clearly searching for something. I walked up to the particle to observe it more closely. It reacted to my approach by floating toward me. Curious to see if it was really coming to me, I stopped. It continued to float to me and began to hover, which I took as an invitation to touch it. Before I even made contact, an unseen energy threw me back a good ten feet. Celeste took notice, but the Catshee just kept cleaning themselves, uninterested by my misfortune.

Before I get ahead of myself, for those who are worried about my new velour garbs, they weren't damaged by the fall.

"What phenomenon has you in such a bad way?" Celeste asked as I lumbered back to my feet.

I pointed to the particle of pure energy. "It appeared a moment ago," I told her. "I tried to see it up close, but its power tossed me back like a sheet of paper in the wind."

She didn't seem surprised. "Milucra is nearby." Celeste said, to

Lugh's Obsession

which the Catshees responded by standing at attention, ears pointed and muscles tensed.

Celeste walked up to the particle and cupped her hands around it. She kept her hands firmly cupped around the particle and closed her eyes.

“I am ready.” She said.

The Catshees flanked Celeste, and everyone turned to look at the storm cloud that was being pulled by thirteen Nymphs. On top of the cloud stood Milucra. She was regal, intimidating. She wore a spectacular crown made from elk antlers. Her eyes shone brightly even though they were pitch black, lit by a red hued light emanating from inside her. Her dress was spectacular, majestic even, and entirely made of armor. The Nymphs pulled the cloud with wild abandon, yet Milucra stood firm, with panache, as if standing on solid ground. The Nymphs let go before the cloud touched the ground. It landed softly, dissipating instantly on landing. The thirteen Nymphs landed some distance away, wary of the two Catshees who stood proudly by Celeste.

The Nymphs all hid behind bushes and trees, but even that couldn't hide their spectacular beauty. Although I could only see them partially, I couldn't look away. It was easy to see how they could subdue any human to do their bidding. One of them had the most profoundly beautiful eyes, the kind that could hypnotize a human into getting lost in them forever. Another had lush, inviting lips, and still another showed an almost too perfect facial. Each Nymph had a specific part of her that was designed to overpower any human's resistance, and it seemed to be working on me as well. Despite the fact I was overwhelmed by all the beauty around me, I managed to keep myself under control. I was sensitive to the fact these Nymphs were Milucra's soldiers. She may have granted me a name, but she can take it away just as fast if I act on the lust I feel rising in me, I thought, fighting the urge to run into the arms of a Nymph and partake in as much pleasure moments as I could. Milucra, who was now comfortably sitting on a fallen tree log, turned to me.

“My faithful Lugh, my heart expands with joy. You were true to your task.” She told me, wearing a smile that had no compassion which

Mike Longmeadow

sent shivers down my spine.

As you may know, this is the last line of the Tale we have revisited. From this point on, let's dive back into the Tale that has yet to be told. And let me extend my deepest appreciation for the time you took in following me in my detour.

The Final Episode

Milucra opened her arms as an invitation for me to join her, but I stayed where I was, unable to move. What if I have incurred some unsavory consequence by letting Queen Celeste bring her Catshees? I thought. I wanted to tell Milucra that the fear of having made a mistake was holding me back, but I couldn't produce a single coherent thought. Milucra smiled at my refusal to move, then reset herself on the fallen tree log to properly face Celeste.

A hush fell on the forest as the two Queens sat facing each other in silence. I badly wanted to bear witness to this first meeting between the two courts, but found myself unable to keep my focus on the Queens, as someone's gaze was burning the back of my head. I turned to see a Nymph clad in a leaf woven bikini that was adorned with white, almost fluffy, flowers that contrasted perfectly with the deep green of the leaves and the creamy milkiness of her skin. I felt my legs turn to jelly as she approached my position, expertly jumping from branch to branch without disturbing any of the trees' inhabitants. Her grace, how she made the most difficult jump look so easy, made my heart flutter and thus began my obsession for she who would one day be my true Love.

Once the Nymph was close enough, I couldn't look away from her hair, made of wheat strands that had been combed into soft, blond locks which flowed down her back. She landed on a branch and looked down at me. Her crouched position made me nervous, she seemed ready to pounce at the slightest movement on my part. "Who are you to reject the Queen's summons to be by her side?" Asked the Nymph. Her voice was pure as the most perfect melody ever created. I felt a shiver of joy go down my spine as her words penetrated my mind. I desperately tried to think of something to say

Mike Longmeadow

just to keep her talking so I could listen to her voice some more.

“You... she said... your voice...” I was unable to string more than two words together, and bowed my head, defeated.

The Nymph burst into laughter before jumping down from her perch.

“You’re cute,” she said, looking me over. “Do you have a name? I’ve heard that many Kobolds are nameless, and I find that revolting.” She was giggling as she said this, visibly pleased about making me uncomfortable.

She asked for my name, and I had one to give. My heart filled with joy and my chest filled with pride as I opened my mouth.

“My name is Lugh.” I was so happy to say it out loud. “I am a servant to Milucra.” I added, hoping she would recognize we were on the same team.

“If what you say is true, you should be able to pass the test.” She said while she started to rub my back.

The feeling of her hand on my back sent sparks of sensual lightning through my whole body. I had to use all my focus just to stay conscious as my blood grew hotter by the second.

“Cease, Delphina.” Ordered Milucra. “We are here for peace.” She said with a flat tone.

Delphina pulled her hand back and pouted for a moment, which became the precise moment I fell in Love with her. With a capital L. I had met many humans and many Fey Folk in my life, but never, not even once, did they create such a powerful impact in my mind, my heart, and my soul all at once. I didn’t know what was coming next, but I knew that as long as this Nymph Milucra called Delphina was near me, I knew there was little chance I could properly interact with anyone. I kept my gaze on her only because I wasn’t able to do anything else, and soon discovered that beyond the brilliant beauty she exuded, her eyes displayed a depth that hid a high level of intelligence and cunning – which only made me love her more. Delphina stayed close to me, keeping her eyes on Milucra, who didn’t budge and waited for her Nymph to return to her initial position. With a pinched mouth and furrowed brows, she then returned without another word in two quick bounds. The Catshees

Lugh's Obsession

were observing the scene attentively but didn't really seem to care as they stayed back, looking very relaxed to the point both laid themselves down, satisfied there was no danger.

I understood that I would be useless until I found a way to be able to see Delphina and function all at the same time. I slipped into a spot next to a bush and sat down with my heart and soul feeling conflicted. How can I dare dream of winning the heart of a Nymph? I have nothing she could want or need, I thought, crouching into a ball under the bush to await the sequence of events to come.

Celeste and Milucra sat in silence for a long moment with their gaze locked on each other. A feeling of peaceful calm washed over the area, as both looked relaxed and composed despite the staring contest. They kept their hands crossed, sitting on their laps and their head held high. This was the protocol associated with a meeting between the two courts. They were to remain silent, with both hands always visible, for as long as needed. This protocol was used to establish the proper respect for a meeting. Keeping their hands visible was a given, one never wanted any surprises. During this time of silent observation, if one broke the silence, it meant they came with ill intentions and trouble usually followed. Both Celeste and Milucra were careful to let time flow past them before speaking to prove they were here with a good heart. The sun rose and fell three times as they remained almost perfectly still, save their chests heaving under their breathing, waiting for enough moments to pass before they could consider a conversation.

I stayed under the bush, unable to focus on anything else than Delphina. She was impossibly close yet felt so far away. My entire soul ached to feel her skin next to mine. I raised my head to try and see her and she caught me looking. The smile she gave me felt genuine, which only managed to deepen the Love I felt for her. There were so many things I wanted to share with her, there were so many questions I wanted to ask her.

"You are my true queen." I said out loud, looking directly at her. I mentally cursed my mouth for speaking out of turn and immediately slapped both hands on my face to hold back any other words that might want to come out, leaving only a sliver between two fingers to

Mike Longmeadow

see.

I shuddered, aware I had broken the truce of the silence. Both Queens turned towards me, and though they seemed more curious than angry, still I tensed up, expecting the worst. All I wanted was to find a hole in the ground and slide in and forget this moment ever existed. Breaking the silence at such an important meeting had to be dealt with, I knew there was no way to shy away from the consequences of my actions. I chose to stay where I was and wait for the Queens to announce my punishment. Although I knew an admission of guilt on my part would attenuate the penalty, I was afraid Delphina could perceive that as a weakness from me and decided to stand my ground if confronted. Both queens ignored me and turned their attention to Delphina, who just shrugged her shoulders with a what-can-I-say attitude. Celeste smiled, seeming amused by the Nymph's frivolity and turned back to Milucra without even glancing in my direction. I was getting dizzy and realized that I had stopped breathing. I overcompensated and inhaled too much air which caused me to start whooping and coughing. The Queens both sighed and looked at me with the look of a disappointed mother who is close to losing her shit.

"Please accept my deepest apologies. From this point on, I shall remain silent and immobile." I said, hanging my head as low as it would go.

Celeste and Milucra looked at each and shook their heads, visibly chagrined by my actions. Thankfully, they both continued to ignore me, which gave me the opportunity to keep my gaze on Delphina, hoping she would see past my social clumsiness. She was busy gathering some pollen to snack on, and my Love for her kept growing. To my relief, Celeste finally spoke, breaking the awkwardness.

"Milucra, Queen of the Shadow Folk, you summoned my presence by your side. My spies have informed me that you are planning a Rade, causing me to be bemused by our meeting. I have no recollection of our courts ever unifying for such an outing. Why do you believe we need to take such a meaningful action now?"

Milucra remained silent for a time. She scratched her nose, then her

Lugh's Obsession

forehead, then her nose again while thinking of a response, her gaze lost in the distance. Celeste took no offense and took that moment to pull back on her gloves to make sure they were snug. Milucra took a breath to speak.

“Celeste, Queen of the Fairest, first let me extend my heartfelt gratitude that you answered my call.” Another nose scratch. “I understand it is not yet the season for you to rise. Yet we need you – and your energy of fertility – to establish a stronger bond with the universal forces.”

Celeste remained stoic, her back straight, her eyes focused on Milucra. After a moment, she spoke up. “If I am to understand what you are proposing, your plan is not to steal from the humans?” She asked.

Milucra chuckled. “Only if an occasion presents itself. No, our goal is to strengthen the bond we have to the universal potential of creation. Humans are a lost cause — we cannot help them anymore. Our very survival is what this Rade is about.”

Milucra leaned in towards Celeste, her eyes sparkling.

“We understand the planet’s energy, the humans do not. We can use that understanding to become the primary occupants and push the humans back to where they belong – in the deepest caves so they can kill each other without disturbing the planet’s flow of life.”

Celeste pursed her lips.

“There are unwritten laws that state there needs to be a balance between the physical and immaterial. Is what you are proposing even permitted? Does your plan give life a chance to flourish?”

Milucra laughed, which made me shiver; it sounded like she was scrapping her nails on a polished rock. For no explainable reason, the shiver became an uncontrolled tremble, which I noticed made Delphina laugh. I took the fact she was looking at me as a good sign and tried to recompose myself.

“Physical life is present everywhere; humans are not necessary for balance to exist.” Milucra said.

Delphina furrowed her brows at those words, revealing a new facet to her beauty that made my heart skip yet another beat. She turned her attention to Milucra and ventured an unprompted query.

Mike Longmeadow

“My Queen, may I pose a question?”

I edged closer to hear her voice and let it caress my ears.

“Do so freely, my Love bug.” Responded Milucra.

“Does your plan imply there won’t be humans to seduce?”

I felt like I was listening to a symphony. Each intonation, each word spoken was like a movement of music that slid into the next one with grace, filling my soul with ecstasy.

Milucra looked at Delphina and took a moment to reflect. “This is true. But fear not, you will find fulfilment in the after.”

Her response didn’t seem to satisfy Delphina. She sensed my gaze on her and shot me an angry glare. To me, it was yet another facet of the layers of beauty she possessed. I was beginning to think that a lifetime spent by her side would not be enough to discover everything she had to offer. That’s when I decided I would spend the rest of my life catering to her every whim.

“Look away, feeble Kobold.” She growled, the depth of her aggressiveness making me shiver with sensual joy. “I shan’t remember your name, but I will remember long enough to tell all who are willing to hear that you marked the end of human existence by organizing this meeting.” Her shoulders slumped as she turned back to Milucra. “My one true pleasure is seducing humans. I love how they fawn over me only to fall into my cage and become whatever my Queen needs them to become. It is truly fulfilling, and to this day I have no equal. My talents are honed to perfection, it will be a waste to have them become useless.”

Milucra raised her hand and placed a finger to her mouth, to which Delphina responded by sulking. I had heard about falling in love at first sight, but I didn’t know it could be so painful. Her words seeped into my mind, which caused a brief but powerful bout of pain in my heart. How could she say those things? Maybe she just used me to vent her anger, but even then, it wasn’t enough to calm me down. Milucra, satisfied Delphina was once again silent, turned back to Celeste.

“I have shared my true intention with you. Now I must ask — why did you accept my call? What I propose isn’t Fair, which should bother you.”

Lugh's Obsession

Celeste smiled sheepishly, for a moment revealing her youthful traits. "I was curious." She said, before reaching down to touch the ground with her hands. "And I wanted to see how the network reacts. For the longest time I believed your actions were the origin of the dry spots that are multiplying throughout Faylandia. Yet your presence has not disturbed the spores. I came with the understanding that if the network refused the endeavor, we would currently be listening to my Catshees' song of death." Celeste took a deep breath and caressed one of her Catshees. "You speak and all is calm. As such, it is a fair request and I agree to your request in my participation in the next Rade."

Milucra smiled. Her eyes burned red as the excitement rose inside her.

"That pleases me." She said while leaning back, to which the Nymphs all burst out in laughter, prompting the Catshees to take notice as they perked up their ears.

Delphina probes Lugh

Once the Queens finished their exchange, an eerie silence fell over the meeting. Delphina watched as the ground heaved, a sign that the mycelial network was absorbing the information and disseminating it far and wide. Delphina was still reeling from the shock of hearing her Queen state human existence would soon end. She was trying to pull herself away from this place so she could let out the scream of rage that was stuck in her throat. She was careful to avoid shaking any leaves in the trees as she jumped from branch to branch. She knew she had already spoken out of turn. To break the Queen's concentration now would only result in dismay. Looking to pull herself out of the state of shock, Delphina wanted to speak to the Kobold again, curious to see why such a lowly creature would be adorned with the greatest name one could get in this realm? "Lugh! To me!" Yelled Milucra, to which Delphina froze on the spot. The Queen's voice pierced through the trees and brush as if propelled by thunder. It sounded to Delphina that she was right next to her, but everyone was still at the same place they were a moment ago. Relieved she hadn't incurred the Queen's wrath, she turned her attention to the Kobold, who had jumped a good five feet at the sound of his name. Without hesitation, he went to the Queen, his head hung low, and his shoulders slumped. He was still looking in her direction, but Delphina couldn't stand his forlorn gaze and gave him an angry stare. For an answer, the Kobold nodded and placed his hand on his chest, lightly tapping it to imitate his heartbeat. Delphina threw up a little bit in her mouth but managed to swallow it without making a sound. She sensed he might become a problem if she didn't let him know there was no future where they were together in any way. He reached the Queen, and Delphina jumped her way back to be close enough to hear what they said.

Lugh's Obsession

"I'm at your service, my Queen. What do you need from me?" Said the Kobold with a trembling voice. Delphina couldn't tell if it was from fear or if it was just this creature's nature to be so insignificant.

"Dear Lugh, you have been loyal. Being part of the Rade is an immense honor and I have no doubt you wanted to revisit to the world that was your home for so many passages of the sun. Although it would please me to have you by my side, I must entrust you with a task that will keep you in Faylandia."

"I will do as asked." Said the Kobold.

"You must find the Lake Maiden who answers to Zanna of the Isles. I have a message for her that must be delivered in person. You shall be that person. The message is as follows: I understand, but she must comply with her promise."

Lugh's skin turned pale and transparent. "I understand my Queen. Serving you is all that matters." He said, performing a curtsy as he spoke.

As much as it displeased her, Delphina felt she would need to stay close to the Kobold. She knew that Zanna of the Isles was working on something that would put her in the crosshairs of both Queens and have a profound impact on the Rade. If there was a chance to keep humans active for Delphina and her cohorts to play with, this was it. The rumor was that Zanna was tasked with carrying a human child to deliver a halfling to Milucra. What was to happen with this child was anyone's guess, but Delphina was starting to see what Milucra was planning. With Halflings populating the earth, humans would no longer be needed to maintain the equilibrium between the physical and immaterial. More importantly, Delphina and her Nymphs would no longer be able to seduce them, as Fey Folks were off limits to the Nymphs. Milucra did promise the Nymphs would find fulfilment in the after, but it irked Delphina that the after would be imposed on her. She felt in her heart that Milucra's promise was only true on the surface.

Delphina noticed that after stepping away, the Kobold was standing listless, seemingly awaiting something else. She moved in to stay close to him so she could follow his movements. In her haste, she caught the attention of one of the Catshees who approached her

Mike Longmeadow

position, ears pointed, and muscles tensed. Delphina stopped and turned to face the beast, offering her best smile. The Catshee laid down and turned on its back, offering its belly to Delphina. It was clearly relaxed, but she knew rubbing a Catshee's belly was a double-edged sword. They could as easily let you caress them or grab your arm and rip it off. Playfully, of course, but still very painful.

The Queen's attention was elsewhere, her eyes looking into the distance as if she was planning ahead. The Kobold was still standing before her with an empty stare. It seemed as though he was waiting for some sort of permission to leave the area, unless he was too thick to understand what was asked of him? Milucra provided the answer.

"Why does thou still stand near me? On your way, dear Lugh. Each Instant is of the utmost importance." She said, to which the Kobold replied by taking a step back and offering the Queen a bow.

He left with haste but instead of going on his mission, he slipped out of sight and stayed close. He was looking for something, but Delphina couldn't be sure if he had already found Zanna or if he was so dumb he still didn't know what he was to do. Ever since she saw him at the castle, Delphina felt the Queen was making a major mistake by trusting this lowly creature. Regardless, she decided she would stay close to the Kobold, but made sure she would stay out of his sight until they came across Zanna of the Isles.

Lugh's POV

I was floored by Milucra's request. I was convinced she would use my knowledge of the human world to help guide the Rade in the right direction. Now I was tasked to find Zanna of the Isles and deliver a message – a task that a crow could have accomplished with ease. Instead of leaving on my quest right away, I slipped behind some trees and stayed close, hoping I could catch one last glimpse of Delphina before I was to return to a life of loneliness. I couldn't see her, but felt her gaze on me, and that was enough to help me stay calm.

When I returned to Faylandia, I had thought I would automatically reconnect with the mycelial network. A place where I could find quantum bliss, where I could travel from one point to the next in an instant, where I could let my spirit travel freely to locate Clarence. Instead, I found a damaged network, and before I could find my footing in this place, I was thrust into service for the Queen of the Shadows. It was empowering to receive a name, but now that I had carried it for some time, I was beginning to be bored by the mundane message deliveries and escort missions. I never expected to miss the Fairchild barn as much as I did on this day. My soul ached to return there with Delphina and build a life with her that would be filled with wonder and enchantment. But all those thoughts were for naught, as he was under orders from the Queen to stay in Faylandia and yet again be the delivery boy.

As I watched the Queens gather their things for their return to their castles before they start the Rade, I couldn't find Delphina anywhere and it was beginning to weigh on my heart. I took the risk of peeking out to have a better vantage of the area, hoping Milucra wouldn't notice I hadn't yet left. That's when I saw Delphina sitting on a

Mike Longmeadow

branch. She didn't notice I saw her and for a moment, I had the privilege to observe her as she was busy making hand signals to some Nymphs who were nearby – a series of elegant hand gestures that all the Nymphs focused on with intent.

If there was a way for me to fulfill my task and stay close to Delphina, I was open to it. Except my mind was empty, barely hanging on to the message I had to transmit. A sensation of panic wrapped itself around me for a moment. What was the message again? I turned my gaze away from Delphina to try and focus. Luckily, the part of my brain that stored that information was still functioning. “Milucra understands, but Zanna must comply with her promise.” What she could understand went way over my head, and I didn't care. All I wanted was to find this Zanna person, deliver my message, and get back to trying to win Delphina's heart.

I knew this Rade was designed to help reconnect the mycelial network and eliminate the dry spots that were multiplying in Faylandia. That it would mark a new beginning between the courts. One that could blossom into a larger unification, if everyone found a way to agree. In a world where there was no dissention between the courts, I could dream of a life with the one I love. Provided, of course, that Delphina would want the same thing, which was not a guarantee. But that was on me to make her change her mind. For now, I must find Zanna of the Isles. Without that, there's no use dreaming of anything.

Back to Delphina

Delphina watched the Queens leave the meeting place. She bid farewell to her Nymph pals, who were back at the helm of the storm cloud to pull the Queen back home. Celeste returned to the path that led her here, accompanied by her two Catshees. As the silence returned, a hum could be heard filling the air. It came from underneath, coming out in waves causing the ground to expand and contract, as if it was breathing. The rising buzz sounded like a melody that was built following the strict guidance of a metronome—constant and unrelenting. Delphina let the vibration take over her mind and body. The next moment, she felt as though she would soon be ripped apart. Within the instant we might call a flash, she was connected to the whole mycelial network. She held on, although she felt her body was being stretched beyond anything she thought possible. Suddenly, the vibration missed a beat, and she opened her eyes. The Kobold was still close, his gaze firmly on her. Though her vantage point was far up in the tree, she could see his eyes were glazed over by what he probably believed was love. His energy was confused, unfocused, and Delphina was wondering if she would be able to suffer his presence for very long. She discreetly signaled a squirrel to attract the Kobold's attention, which he did with zeal. While the squirrel played his tricks, she descended towards the Kobold, still thinking on how to approach this situation. Milucra was holding something back, and Delphina had a strong impression that was directly related to the task she had given her servant.

A squadron of butterflies flew by. They were maintaining a tight V formation as they all fluttered to the Kobold and started hovering. Delphina felt a sense of relief to know that Celeste had her secrets as

Mike Longmeadow

well. The fact she had mandated some spies was undeniable evidence that Celeste was playing her own game within the game. This gave Delphina some pause, she would need to carefully plan her next moves.

As Delphina was looking at how she could creep in a little closer, something caught her eye. Hidden behind the treetops was a Forest Nymph. She was following Celeste, and once she they were far enough, she descended to join the Queen. Delphina felt this was something she needed to attend to and left the Kobold to get closer and listen in on the conversation. Celeste's Catshees watched the Forest Nymph descend upon them, clearly at ease with her presence. Celeste welcomed her by extending her hand so the Nymph could land. Delphina managed to get close enough to hear their voices but kept the breeze in her face to stay away from the Catshee's sense of smell. Celeste spoke first.

"Asteria, you are one of the few I fully trust. Today, we must attend to a situation that may be dire, and I believe you are the one to accomplish what needs to happen." Celeste said. "I know her enough to know that Milucra has a personal agenda. You will need to be discreet with your gaze, but the breeze told me Milucra gave specific orders to someone. All be told, I found her demeanor to be secretive during our meeting and that bothers me."

Asteria immediately turned to look towards the Kobold, as if to confirm the Queen's words. He was still sitting in the same spot, looking distraught, dumfounded, even. Still looking at him, she raised her eyebrows as if to ask if he was the messenger?

Celeste nodded at Asteria's silent query. "Follow him." She added. "My true desire was that you could join me on the Rade, but I feel this needs the attention of one I trust."

Asteria nodded slowly, which looked like she was giving a bow, then immediately left to follow the Kobold. She began rubbing her fingers, which emitted a melody that Delphina couldn't quite hear. Some butterflies arrived almost instantly and formed a line along the trees. The Kobold hadn't moved and was now hidden inside a depression in the ground. He was chewing on the sleeve of his sweater, visibly distressed.

Lugh's Obsession

The Kobold didn't notice the butterflies since all his focus was centered on looking for Delphina where she sat a moment ago. She was satisfied he hadn't seen her move around – that was good. That meant his tracking capacities were weak and she could keep an eye on him without being forced to show herself and speak with him. It was comical to see how he had no control over his personal energy – it was spreading chaotically in all directions. There was little chance he would be able to do anything else than follow orders. It was easy to imagine him getting lost even when following the correct path. Delphina was still at a loss as to why Queen Milucra would give him such a noble name but forced that thought out of her mind to stay focused.

Holding her position, Delphina tried to focus all her attention on the song produced by Asteria. One by one, she forced herself to ignore each sound present around her – the ruffle of the leaves, the pitter-patter of insects on the ground – only accepting the sounds coming from Asteria. For a moment, the melody remained a muffled, barely perceptible distant hum. She kept her focus, and soon, the ground began to vibrate and suddenly Delphina could hear the melody as well as the message that was hidden inside.

“By order of the great Queen Celeste.” The message said. “I give you the task of following the Kobold who bears the name Lugh.” More butterflies were floating in as the message spread across the forest. “Do not lose sight of him and report his movements to me and me only.”

Delphina had heard of Asteria. She was referred to as the leader of the pollinators, and she looked exactly as she was described. This told Delphina would need to be doubly careful. She needed to avoid being seen by both the butterflies and the Kobold. Delphina turned her attention to the Kobold, looking to accomplish what was asked of her.

The Kobold was still hiding in his hole in the ground, with tears flowing down his cheeks. Delphina felt a surge of empathy for him but stayed back, aware he was already hopelessly in Love with her even though she did nothing to seduce him.

The butterflies were careful at first to stay hidden, but they kept

Mike Longmeadow

creeping closer and closer, and soon they made no effort to hide, surrounding the Kobold. Delphina stayed behind Asteria, who was smiling as she descended on the Kobold.

“Aye, dear Kobold, what ails your soul to such levels of despair?” She said softly.

Lugh looked up, surprised.

“What do you want from me?” He asked, trying to sound mean. “I must warn you I am under Queen Milucra’s protection.”

Delphina held back a laugh. She couldn’t imagine Milucra running to save such a lowly creature. Although the fact he was wearing the name of the Queen’s great-grandfather was still disturbing and confusing.

“I want to help you assuage your sobs and blubbering. Now I must warn you that I am to follow your every move. Which will happen with the help of my butterflies.”

While Asteria spoke, more and more butterflies approached, landing on random branches in the trees around them. Lugh looked at the growing number of butterflies, dumfounded. Asteria waited for him to speak, giving him a chance to ask any question. After a rather long moment, she understood this Kobold was not going to give her anything and spoke up.

“You have been tasked by Milucra to deliver something.” She said. “I have been tasked by Celeste to follow you. I propose we trek together, it will be less lonely, since you won’t be able to evade me.” Lugh remained silent for a moment while he wiped the tears from his face with the sleeve of his velour shirt.

“May I ask what name you answer to?” He asked.

“Asteria. We have met, you know. When you were in the human realm.” Asteria said, rubbing her chin to the Kobold’s lack of memories.

Tears filled the Kobold’s eyes and soon, he was sobbing loudly once more.

“I do remember. You showed me the way me back to Faylandia. Your actions have led me to meet the love of my life and lose her within the same moment. Now I have nothing in the human realm, and nothing in Faylandia. I cannot accept your presence by my side and

Lugh's Obsession

as such, I bid you farewell.”

Lugh then lept out of his hiding hole and ran into the woods. Asteria watched him run off, discouraged by the futility of his action.

“Useless as a blade of grass in the winter.” She muttered.

Asteria snapped her fingers to signal the butterflies, but they had already taken off to follow the Kobold. Asteria followed, then Delphina. Lugh’s red velour suit acted as a beacon and everyone could see the path with no difficulty. Delphina stayed behind far enough to remain invisible, but she knew she would need to be alert and jump ahead as soon as they found Zanna.

Seeing things

The butterflies were twitching their wings as they tried to hover, Asteria was constantly throwing her arms up in disgust, and Delphina was fighting hard against her rising impatience. All were victim of Lugh's slow advance. He was walking with no apparent direction, constantly looking around him, probably looking for Delphina. Lugh walked along the forest floor with his shoulders slumped and dragging his feet. Delphina was fighting a growingly unbearable urge to slap him behind the head and tell him to get a move on. And she felt she wasn't the only one, as Asteria was fluttering closer and closer to the Kobold, seeming to urge him on with her mind.

"Like hell he will!"

The scream came from somewhere ahead of them. To Delphina, it was clearly a human voice, but from where they stood, it was impossible to see who was there. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Asteria divert from her path and followed suit. Soon, they came upon some humans seeming to be dealing with a Gnome Delphina knew by the name of Torji.

"You did not have an offer for me." Said Torji the Gnome. "I chose for you and so it shall be. There is still time to renege. No action has yet been taken."

"It's fine." One of the humans said.

They were standing in front of two possible paths that disappeared in the trees.

"One leads to Claudia, the other leads to Madeleine's husband. Both lead to the other, but not in the same order. You decide which needs attention first." Said Torji to the two humans.

One yelled out: "my husband", The other only said a name:

"Claudia".

Lugh's Obsession

“Then that is how it shall be. One path for each.” Torji replied.

“Wait, we can find a way to agree on a path.” One of the humans said with a twinge of despair in her voice.

“The path will only accept those who choose it. That choice can only be made within an instant. You have made yours, so has your brother. Go now, and do not forget your promise.”

Torji then pushed one of the humans into an opening and followed him in. Now only one human stood, and she slapped herself, seemingly trying to wake up from some nightmare. The human looked discouraged and beaten, before finally entered the opening and soon, there was no indication of any passage ever having existed there. Delphina had become too entranced by what she saw that she didn't notice Asteria looking at her, as she waited to be noticed.

Once Delphina saw her, Asteria spoke.

“I've seen you speaking with Zanna in recent times. Have you some plan to execute, or are your conversations those of simple friends?”

Delphina was surprised Asteria knew of their meetings, but seeing how the butterflies could locate someone so easily, it was not a far stretch to think she was seen in passing and the information reached Asteria.

“As you know, Lake Maidens are welcome in both courts.”

Asteria nodded.

“In that regard, we have developed a friendship in recent times when Zanna was called upon by Queen Milucra.”

This time, Asteria stepped in, her gaze hard. Delphina wasn't impressed and continued.

“As you may know, there is a human who saw a promise be imposed on him, yet he does not know what.” Delphina looked at Asteria, trying to see through her reactions to gauge what she might know, but only got a hard stare. She ventured a little more. “Milucra already knew that the human's promise is related to his vital energy. I could have offered my services, and though there are none who can compete against me to seduce a human, I will forever refuse to consume the seduction I offer. Because of this, Milucra called on Zanna to bear the human's child and steal his vital energy.”

Asteria frowned. “But that's not what will happen.”

Mike Longmeadow

Delphina was impressed with Asteria. She was stone faced but clearly knew something.

“In part. Zanna will carry the human’s child, but not in the name of Milucra.”

“Did she make a promise to the Queen?”

“She did, but there are ways around it.”

“Will she turn to Queen Celeste?”

“I don’t think so, but I guess we’ll have to ask her.”

Before the conversation could continue, some dragonflies flew in and landed on Asteria’s shoulder. Delphina tried to listen in, to no avail.

“I do wish we could continue our exchange, but my presence is required elsewhere. I bid you farewell.” Asteria said as she lifted off and disappeared behind the treetops.

What about Lugh?

Reader – I do hope there are many of you – we are close to the end of this series of Tales, and I fear I will soon be forgotten – such is the nature of life. Before that happens, let me take some of your time and tell you about something I saw as I left the meeting of the two Queens to deliver a message for Milucra to a Lake Maiden named Zanna. “The Queen understands, but Zanna must comply with her promise.” Was the message. It felt as though my missions were becoming less and less important, and I was crestfallen to miss the Rade the Queens had discussed.

More than that, I had met the one soul that aligned perfectly with me. For the briefest moment, I was privileged enough to share the same air as her. Delphina was her name, and after meeting her, she had already disappeared from my life – though I felt her presence near me at times.

Alas, I was to serve the one Queen who gave me a name. If that meant living a life of loneliness, then that was what would happen. In the end, I wasn’t alone, I had Asteria’s butterflies following me, though I couldn’t see them.

But all this is beside the point. As I left on my trek to find Zanna, I couldn’t help but try and see if Delphina was still close. To my deep chagrin, she was nowhere to be found. I trudged forward, sensing there was something pushing me along that I couldn’t see.

Then I froze. Just ahead of me was Madeleine. She was with a human I’d often seen her with during my time in the human realm and a Gnome who looked like he was as wicked as he was clever. They spoke and the human who was with them then entered a path, followed by the Gnome before the passage closed behind them. I

Mike Longmeadow

took a step to go to Madeleine, but then thought she might not know who I was, since she never saw me. Before I could muster enough courage to show myself, she followed suit and entered the other path that disappeared in the forest, and soon after, it closed behind her as well. What was she doing in Faylandia? Had something happened in the human world that I should be aware of?

Before I could even make any sense of what I just saw, I heard something nearby. I sneaked in closer, and soon saw two beings. One was a Lake Maiden, the other was a human who looked an awful lot like Clarence. The Lake Maiden stayed a few steps ahead of the human as they walked along a trail that was leading them in a circle. I sneaked in closer, trying to see if I could hear her name spoken. If this was Zanna of the Isles, there was a chance I could still join the Rade. I was told to find a blue skinned Lake Maiden with bright red hair, which was all nice and good, except that described at least half of the Lake Maidens. I was jumping from bush to bush, working to get closer, when she stopped and turned to face the human she was with.

“I have yet to properly pay my respects for your actions since we began our trek.” She said to the human.

She was calm, her smile was soft, and her gaze seemed honest. The human looked at her with surprise and started to shuffle his feet.

“My actions... well, shucks... you don’t have to.” Watching him try to respond was painful. But still, something about his voice felt highly familiar.

“Your presence behind me averts any surprise attack. You have my full appreciation for such courage.” Added the Lake Maiden before she turned and continued on their trek.

The human looked around him, worry now apparent on his face. After taking a moment to gather himself, he trotted up to get closer to the Lake Maiden. Confident they didn’t see me, I jumped from bush to bush to stay close. As I reached their last position, I was hit with a curtain of perfume that smelled of fresh water and spring flowers. It had perfect balance and carried a charge of energy with it that washed away all my worries. I couldn’t help but wonder if it did the same for the human, who now looked at peace as he followed

Lugh's Obsession

along.

A crow flew by, skimming the treetops, then returned. It landed on a low branch, looking at the two travellers with one eye. The Lake Maiden placed her hand on the human's chest.

"Wait here." She said.

She then walked over to the Crow, and I made a beeline to get closer, ignoring any attempt to remain hidden. The human had a flabbergasted look on his face, and the Lake Maiden seemed very preoccupied, so I assumed my presence would go unnoticed. The Lake Maiden cawed at the Crow to acknowledge its presence, to which the Crow answered. To avoid any confusion for you, here is the translation of their conversation.

"I see you, Crow. What message do you have for me?"

"The Queen is still unaware of your plan, yet has sent a messenger to find you."

"I have no plan, only a truth to pursue."

After that, they remained silent, during which time they communicated telepathically to keep prying ears at bay. To anyone walking by, it would have looked as though they were meditating. After a rather long telepathic conversation, the Lake Maiden reached into her pocket and pulled out a ring that she gave to the Crow, who grabbed it with his claws and flew away. The Lake Maiden seemed pretty relaxed about the whole situation, so I made sure to remain unseen. I hoped that if she wasn't Zanna, she might at least know where I could find her.

"Is everything ok?" Asked the human.

The Lake Maiden gave him a blank stare.

"Yes. Don't burden yourself." She said before returning to the trek.

The Lake Maiden resumed walking, but seemed to carry a pang of worry as she furrowed her brows, clearly thinking about her next steps. This gave me hope she was the person I was looking for.

Nevertheless, I stayed behind, waiting for something more concrete before I moved in. The last thing I wanted to do was to deliver the message to the wrong person. The human took a breath to speak, then said nothing. He did this a few times before finally speaking up.

"What did you give the crow?" He asked, to which the Lake Maiden

Mike Longmeadow

turned on a dime, her gaze angry. Seems he asked the wrong question.

“What do you think it was, dear human? Is your question a veiled accusation?” Her eyes were filled with contempt and I felt some empathy for the human.

“No! No...no. What could I accuse you of?” He said, putting his hands up. “I’m in your world, that crow could have been your friend, and you were returning something you borrowed from it. Or a foe, and you were paying it off for protection. Either way, it doesn’t matter. I really like our conversations and I was just trying to start it up again.” Seeing the Lake Maiden seemed to calm down, he continued. “You are important to me. My heart feels a surge of joy when my eyes see you. My mouth waters when I smell your perfume, my mind wanders when I think of you.”

The Lake Maiden’s expression remained hard for a moment, then she gave him a beautiful smile and pulled him to her to give the human a hug. The human seemed to melt in her arms, to the point that I believed he would crumble to the floor if she let go. Then she grabbed him by the shoulders and held him at arm’s length. Her lower lip was showing a light pout, and her eyes filled with tears. The human was now sweating profusely, but he kept his composure as the Lake Maiden just stared at him. Finally, she spoke.

“Forrest, I must make an admission. I have taken you down a deceptive pass.” She looked over his shoulder, her gaze getting lost in the woods while I dove down to avoid being seen. “Your presence here is essential. You are here to give birth to a new era.” She took a breath. “The ring I gave the raven was to be used to marry you to one of Queen Milucra’s damsels of the Shadow court. After which you would spawn halfling shadow children.”

That was Milucra’s plan. I knew there was more to the upcoming Rade, but something told me it would all revolve around this human. But something else hit me. She called him Forrest. That meant he was Clarence’s son. Which meant the promise was made with Milucra.

“What? That makes no sense.” Reacted Forrest the human. Then he laughed and wagged his index finger at her. “You’re playing with

Lugh's Obsession

me.”

The Lake Maiden returned the smile, but only with her mouth.

“Yes. I’m playing with you. Come, we must go. Now.”

She got up and started down a new path. I followed, racking my brain to find how I could present myself to them. The human had joined her, and I noticed some butterflies were tagging along, staying out of sight. I understood I didn’t need to stay so close and risk being seen, so I fell back and followed the butterflies.

“We’re going the wrong way.” The human said to the Lake Maiden.

“We should be leaning to the left.”

“It’s fine, worry not.” She answered, as she took his hand “Still, we advance. The direction we take has little bearing on the result.”

Epilogue

Clarence felt there was something special in the air on this day as he worked at folding a freshly cleaned bedsheet. His workstation was besieged by a strong breeze that was as relentless as it was chilly. When he asked if he could wear something warm, he was told the cold was designed to force him to keep busy to try and warm up. Folding the sheet for a bed big enough to accommodate an Ogre alone was a challenge in itself, he didn't feel he needed the cold to help him. He couldn't just fold it loosely, it had to be reduced to a small square that could fit inside a pocket.

Over time, Clarence learned to use to his advantage. The breeze was strong enough that it lifted the sheet if Clarence turned his back on it. It made it so it was as if someone was on the other end of the sheet to help with the folding. In the end, as cold as the breeze was, to Clarence it was close to an early April day back home, which he knew quite well, so it wasn't so bad.

"Pssst."

Clarence looked around, unsure if he heard anything at all.

"Over here."

This time, something moved ever so slightly behind a curtain on the far side of the room that was made from a quilt representing Clarence's capture. Every day, he came down to this dungeon to clean the sheets of a highly ranked regent who clearly loved running around in the forest, seemingly trying to fill the bed with as much mulch, dirt, and leaves that he could. And every day, he worked facing this curtain – that was more like a mural – remind him of what he lost.

"Who's there?" He asked in a loud whisper.

"No matter. Do you want to go back home?"

Clarence took a moment to think about his response. Of course he

Lugh's Obsession

wanted that, but was this some weird test he was facing?

"I'm not done with the sheets." He said.

A young Elven girl peaked out, revealing only her face. Her eyes were entirely pitch black, and her skin was stark white.

"That won't matter once you're back on the human side." She said, before ducking back.

Clarence's heart began beating a little harder.

"But how?"

"We need your help."

"What is it?"

"You must first accept to help."

"How can I accept if I don't know what it is? I did that last time, now look at my life."

Silence.

"Hello? Are you still there?"

"Yes." More silence. "Ok, so here's the deal. We help you get back to the human side, you deliver a message for us to Morrigan."

Clarence felt there was some sort of catch, but felt comfortable enough with the proposition.

"Sounds good. Who's Morrigan and what's the message?"

"Slow yourself, we must first help you return. If you are captured trying to leave this place, they will submit you do a brutal interrogation, we don't want you to reveal the message to the wrong people. We are happy you accepted."

"Whoa, I haven't..." Clarence realized he said sounds good, which was one the accepted ways of saying yes in this place. "Ok, so how do we do this?" He added after a pause.

The young Elf stepped out from behind the curtain to toss him a small bag. He now saw her strange eyes were due to the fact she was a Dark Elf, which made him nervous. When he first arrived in Faylandia, he was guarded by Dark Elves, and to say they were brutal was too nice. But this one was quite young, and she showed no signs of being aggressive.

"Eat the mushrooms we have gathered for you to connect to the network and return to your world." She said.

Clarence looked at the bag and hesitated.

Mike Longmeadow

“Push away your worries. If wanted your life, you would already be expired.” Said the Elf.

He responded by picking up the bag and opened it. Inside was a mishmash of various mushrooms, all chopped up and thoroughly mixed together.

“You must eat it all for the connection to work.” Said the Elf, this time carrying an impatient tone in her voice. “Do it now before we are seen.” She added, carefully scanning the area.

Clarence looked into the bag once more, still unsure of what to do.

“Do it now!” ordered the Elf.

This time, Clarence plunged his hand into the bag and grabbed a handful of mushrooms. He brought them to his mouth and started nibbling at the batch in his hand.

“Just eat it all, no questions!” Barked the Elf, now standing right next to him. “Why are you afraid of returning home to find your kin?”

Clarence’s thoughts went straight to his son, which pushed him over the edge, and he stuffed his mouth with as many mushrooms as he could. Finding his kin could mean Madeleine, but there was a chance Forrest was still alive. Clarence was suddenly besieged by a thousand questions. How old was he? Did he remember his father? Did he know what was expected from him? While Clarence waded through the minefield of questions – each one threatening to send him into an emotional tailspin – he kept eating his mushrooms. Soon, a cloud rose in his mind, slowly obliterating any coherent thought. His body was becoming lighter as well, and Clarence grabbed on to the table in front of him in case he flew away. As if seeping out of every nook and cranny in the room, a soft melody arose in the air, filling the room with its auditory perfume. Then a circle began to form on the wall, turning the stone to something that seemed almost liquid.

“Keep eating!”

Clarence felt himself losing control, but at that moment, he decided to let go. He grabbed a second handful and did as told. The melody had become a full-blown chaotic orchestra that was arranged in the most melodic way. The castle’s rocks, windows, curtains, and its foundation all worked together to create the harmony that Clarence knew would carry him over to the other side. The circle of liquid rock

Lugh's Obsession

had grown to occupy more than half the wall, and it was clear there was something inside it. To Clarence, the shadow's outline looked a lot like the area around his farm, making the excitement rise in his heart. There was one handful of mushrooms left – he grabbed the last handful and ate it. While he chewed on his last bite, the circle in the wall had become a crystal clear window, and the song of the mycelial network resounded loudly in the room, making the windows shake and moving the curtains like a strong wind.

“You can simply walk through. But be aware that if you renege on your promise, we will make sure you return here and inherit a much worse task.” Said the Elf, its voice carrying over the music as if they were in a silent room.

“Can you tell me what the message is?” Clarence asked, hoping to get an idea of what could be awaiting him on the other side.

“You can expect a visit soon after you pass.”

Clarence swallowed his last bite. He felt two hands lean on his back and begin to push him towards the circle. Footsteps could be heard coming from the corridor, someone was approaching. It was the Elf pushing him.

“Go! Now! They cannot follow you through.”

Clarence hesitated for a second, then the Elf shoved him through the circle. His head touched first, and he was pulled in and tossed hard in the air, landing hard on his back in the middle of the orchard that was next door to the Fairchild farm. The air was thick and humid and Clarence started to choke, as if he was under water. He held his breath with the air tickling his skin. After a few seconds, he ventured another breath, this time filling his lungs without choking. He was back home, in what he had become to know as the human realm. He felt no side effects from the mushrooms, either digestive or psychic, and took a moment to take a few breaths.

He looked around him. This was where Madeleine's family lived. Except everything looked different, as if many, many years had passed. He was looking at a fruit orchard where he expected to find grazing fields. The barn where the cows and goats lived was gone, replaced by neat rows of apple and pear trees. His farm was standing in the background, still showing open fields of wildflowers, and the

Mike Longmeadow

house looked like it had seen better days. Although some maintenance was done recently as it shone with a fresh coat of yellow paint. Before he could begin to try and make sense of what he saw, a crow flew in, appearing from out of nowhere. It landed at his feet, looking him straight in the eyes.

“To find Morrigan, you must enter the forest and walk.” The crow said, speaking in Clarence’s mind. “Directions will be given as you advance. Your message is as follows. The child is conceived, your claim can begin.” The crow didn’t move, seeming to wait for an acknowledgment. “Do you need to write it down?” It asked. Clarence shook his head. The crow continued. “You must deliver the message by week’s end. Failure will result in your return to servitude.” Added the crow before flying away.

The child is conceived. What did that mean? Was Forrest still only a small child? If that was the case, how could the farm – orchard – be so different? Clarence felt older, but did his world stand still as time passed in Faylandia? Then something moved near the pond. He moved closer to see and noticed a series of circles were forming near a patch of mushrooms. Someone appeared suddenly, and before he could see who it was, Clarence ran to hide in a shed that was next to the house, afraid this could be a security team sent to retrieve him.

There was a cauldron filled with a burnt mixture of mushrooms at its bottom, its smell overpowering everything in the shed. Holding back a cough, Clarence squeezed himself into the corner and waited. Nothing happened for a minute, but soon, he could hear footsteps approaching. He froze, tensing each of his muscles, willing himself to stay still. The shed door opened, and someone walked in. He could see the person wince at the shed’s smell as he approached the cauldron. Clarence’s heart stopped for a second. That person was Forrest. He was now a grown man, but there was no mistaking it. “You look so different than I imagined.” He told the man standing there.

The man looked at Clarence, seemingly racking his brain to remember who he was.

“I do apologize it took me this long, son. But I wasn’t the one who

Lugh's Obsession

decided when I could come back. Looks like it could only happen if you fulfilled your promise.” Clarence said to the man.

“Dad?” The man ventured.

Clarence stepped out of the shadow and opened his arms, and the man immediately ran to him. They stood there for minutes on end, as Clarence held on as if his life depended on it.

Mike Longmeadow

END

End of season 1

This marks the end of the first season of Tales to come from the Storyroom. The second season will be an adventure centered around the visit of the Fey People in our world during their Rade, starting in the fall of 2024.

Until then, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to all the readers who have let themselves be tempted by this special adventure. As I continue to discover more about the amazing world of the Feys, I know I've found my main source of inspiration, and I sincerely hope that will please you in my future writings.

Mike Longmeadow

About the Author

It is my goal to protect, as much as i can, the folly of our imagination, which is often rejected in this cold world.

In the meantime, let's Connect:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MikeLongmeadow>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/mike_longmeadow/

Website: <http://michellongpre.com/>