

The Forest's Tale

by a_bees_buzz

In a world of magic, fairy tales can come true.

The Forest's Tale

Chapter 1 of 1

In a world of magic, fairy tales can come true.

Disclaimer: Some of it belongs to JKR, some to JRRT, some to [author to be named later], and the rest is mine.

For centuries, one generation after another, the Masters of Hogwarts have warned their charges not to enter the Forbidden Forest for fear of the creatures that dwell within. What they do not say, for they know it not themselves, is that the greatest danger neither walks nor crawls nor slithers nor flies. It does not even grow by leaf or twig or vine. The greatest danger does not lie within the forest; it is the forest itself. For the wood known to you, my dear, as the Forbidden Forest, is in truth but one aspect of the One Forest that has always been and ever will be in all worlds and all lands and all times. It is known by many names, Darkenwood and Malebranche and Phyrriidum and Fangorn and ... Ah. I see you know that name.

It seems that you are not entirely ignorant of the nature of the One Forest. In that case, I shall tell you a story, not of Fangorn or the Forbidden Forest, but of another aspect of the One Forest, the one that is never named by those who know and fear the Elder Gods, for the very sound of its name is as the bitterest bile to them.

The story begins with a simple man, a Muggle, you would call him. He woke one day and looked to where his wife lay beside him, still sleeping, with her hand laid across her swollen belly, and thought to himself: "I will be a father soon. My child will have questions, and I must be able to answer them. My child will have fears, and I must be able to soothe them." And so, he went out of his house to find the answers to the questions of his unknown child and to rid the world, or at least his own corner of it, of the dangers that might threaten his unborn child's tranquility.

He had not far to go to discover either questions or dangers, for he lived by the edge of the One Forest. Day after day, he trudged into and around the forest, ducking and dodging from untold dangers in his quest. When his son was born, he still knew only a small portion of the secrets of the One Forest, but what he had learnt was enough that he knew that he would never be able to soothe his son's fears, for the dangers of the forest were more numerous and deadly than his simple mind could comprehend.

The man went to his wife in despair. "I have failed, wife," he said. "I can tell our boy that there are four hundred and eighty four thousand square yards in the woods and that the tallest tree is eighty five feet tall. There are seventeen paths that enter it, but only twelve that leave." He went on, listing the different measures of the One Forest as it was in that time and place, the measures that he had so diligently collected. "But I cannot tell our boy that it is safe, nor can I believe it myself. Our son will live in danger, every day of his life, and there is nothing that I can do." With that, he collapsed at his wife's feet, bemoaning the fate of their poor child.

She looked at him for a moment and then said, "Fear not, my husband. I will make the wood safe for our son." Then she collected up the toys from their child's crib and made her way to the place where the trees began and the safe, comfortable world of men ended.

There, she set the toys out on the ground in a circle and called out to the spirit of the wood. "I come to you as a mother to offer the sacrifice of my life that my love may guard my child against the dangers of the wood. I set this owl to know the fearsome dangers of the wood and guide their steps away from my child. I set this pig to feel the

dark horrors of the wood and face them for my child. I set this ass to know the depths of despair of the wood and carry them for my child. I set this tiger to know the fierce energy of the wood and ground it safely away from my child. Lastly, I set this bear to know the sweet secrets hidden among the dangers of the wood and lead my child to them." With that, she stepped into the One Forest and was never seen again, and although she was but a simple Muggle, the power of her sacrifice was such that there, in that world, in that land, in that time, the wood became safe, and the boy played there with his guardians until he became too old to play. The Elder Gods were greatly angered that their work had been so easily undone, but their every attempt to reverse the magic of a mother's love was doomed to failure, and the wood became known far and wide as a place of happy enchantment.

"And now, my darling little girl, it is time for you to go to sleep. Did you enjoy your birthday story?"

"Yes, Mummy. It was very pretty, really. But, you know, I am nine now. I don't believe in fairy stories anymore."

"Luna, darling. You must believe this one. Promise Mummy that you won't ever go play in the wood."

"Silly Mummy. Of course I'll play in the wood. I'm not afraid of old gods."

The woman kissed her child and waited until her breath evened out. Then she collected up five toys and headed to the edge of the wood.

Xenophilius Lovegood woke to his daughter's screams. "Luna! Where are you?" He stumbled outside to find her running towards him. "Where is your mother?"

"She went to the wood, Da. I pretended to be sleeping so I could follow her and see where she went. She took my toys, just like in the story, but before she could cast the spell, there was a horrible flash of light and she disappeared."

Xenophilius held his daughter as she looked back to the wood and, for the first time in her life, saw the Thestrals playing beneath the trees.

A/N: 4,840 square yards = 1 acre

A/N: The author to be named later is, of course, A.A.Milne.