

• The Gatekeepers •

• Daughter •

Being a fancieful Tayle
of faeries

occurring on the fence of the
most delightfull Park Extens-
ion and the Town of Mount-Royal.

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I

The girl awoke with faerie locks. Her dreams had been filled with the most beautiful people she had ever seen, the image of a tall boy with fair hair and dark eyes who was about her age, stayed burned in her mind as she got out of bed. That night, the faeries had danced a sweet dance in her hair, moving to the rhythm of her beating heart and the rising and falling of her chest. They took strands of her hair in their arms and, as if they were dancing around a maypole, weaved in and around each other until the locks were matted. The young male-faeries danced too, finding the girl more and more beautiful as the night went on. One of the faerie boys was particularly drawn to this sleeping beauty, recognizing something pure within her that he hadn't seen in any of the faerie maidens. He regarded her beauty with a certain melancholia, knowing of the girl's fate were she to fall in love with him.

The girl's parents had recently found work as the gate keepers in the town. Yesterday, they took up post in their new house, adjacent to the gate, where the previous gate-keeper and his family had lived. It is said that the foregoing gate-keeper had been cursed by demons: over the course of a week, the man had disposed of all of his worldly possessions, giving them to the poor



and the homeless, and, bundling his young daughter in piles of clothes, and dragging his wife by the hem of her skirt, they left the Town, heading East, leaving the gate wide open behind them. No one saw the family again, but rumours abound that he was seen a few days later, tattered and alone, mumbling “shoulda’ dressed ‘er in daisy chains, shoulda’ dressed ‘er in daisy chains...” (We all know, of course, that dressing children in daisies protects them from being carried off by faeries).



II

The gate just so happens to cross a faerie path leading between two of the faerie forts told of in the legends of the Mount Royal. For the last few-hundred years, humans have built their homes on the areas around the forts; an acceptable practise for the faeries, as long as the humans didn’t impede their path.

The Park fort, to the local-east of the gate (which, in faerie-world coordinates, is north-east), is where the displaced people from the other side of the world built their dwellings. There was once a time that the borders were open, and so these people flocked, wishing to create new lives for themselves. But now, due to their visible differences to those ethnically of the north-west, they instill fear and resentment in the hearts of the old-folk, not because they are dangerous (indeed, they are some of the kindest, most generous people in these parts), but because they are misunderstood, speaking different languages and eating different foods.



The Town fort, located to the local-west of the gate, is near to where those with vast sums of wealth built their homes. After the town was built, about a century ago, the town residents were cursed with coveting small pieces of colourful paper, which they believe to contain some magical value. Expecting the gate would stop people from taking their prized possessions, they believed that by enclosing themselves on all sides, their curse would be lifted. They were, as you may already have guessed, mistaken, as they inadvertently built their fence across a faerie path, which is a dangerous matter indeed.



III

In the time before history began, the angels, believing themselves to be more powerful than they really were, began a dispute with God. The records of this dispute have gone the way of most tales—lost with the changing times, but what is remembered, is that the dispute became so heated that the angels staged a revolt, almost bringing arms upon God. God, angered by this, ordered for the gates of heaven to be shut. Those angels who were in heaven at the time stayed that way—angels. Those trapped outside did not have such a wonderful fate, the angels who were visiting hell became demons, and those caught in between are those we call faeries. The fabric of our realm and the Otherworld, the invisible realm that the faeries reside in, is intertwined. When Scorpio is in the sky, these realms almost touch; on the night of Samhain, the Otherworld is so close, the faeries can build faerie-rings, the portals which allow them to jump across the divide. Faeries, being from the Otherworld, can only move along certain paths in this realm. These paths are known as faerie-paths, which they travel along in straight lines.



IV

On this evening of Samhain, the all-hallows feast, the humans prepare for the coming of the faeries. They ask spiders to weave webs in their windows as a call to Marawa, the ancient spider God, who dispels any mischievous spells cast by otherworldly creatures. They light the outside of their homes with lanterns, which, as ancient lore tells us, house the soul of Jack—a foolhardy trickster who led the devil up a tree and trapped him there.





Jack is long dead, but his soul still roams the earth, trapped between heaven and hell: the Devil, bound by a deal he made with Jack that he would not claim his soul, wouldn't bring him to the underworld. A deceiver like Jack would have caused havoc in Heaven, so God never allowed him through the gates. And so Jack's soul was left in limbo. Angered by this situation, Jack's soul started to burn. The ancients, knowledgeable in the sepulchral arts, would place parts of his soul inside the roots of the earth, and on this day every year, turnips, potatoes and beetroots would glow so brightly that people said they could see a shadow of Jack's human form glowing through the dimensions.

It is said that carving the face of a devil on the outside of these Jack 'O lanterns will keep malicious faeries away—legend has it that the light from the lanterns will burn the faeries who participate in particularly roguish behaviour.



V

The gate-keeper—being new at his post and not having apprenticed in the ancient art of gatekeeping, was unaware that the gate was traditionally left open during the night of Samhain. After many hours of struggle, he finally managed to close the gate after finding the combination of keys, locks and incantations to get the thing to move. The builders of the gate, wiser than the residents of the Town, built small holes in it, just large enough for the faeries to pass through. Tonight, however, the faeries, on their ritual journey between their forts, were caught unawares by the closed gates. This angered them. The faeries believe gates to be a sign of disrespect, they took the gatekeeper's act as a sign that they were not wanted in the Town.

The faeries, being a highly democratic folk, immediately held a meeting to decide what was to be done. They were divided into two opposing factions—those that wanted to play mischief on all of the houses inside the town as pay-back for the disrespect; and those who wished to give the humans a chance, knowing the gate-keeper was still new at his art. After lengthy discussions, and several minor scuffles, they decided upon a solution: they would flit from house



to house, and if the people who came to the door excused themselves for the gatekeeper's actions by giving them small treats, they would be forgiven. After all, the faeries decided, sweetmeats could be of use to them during the ritual ceremonies at the faerie forts. However, if the doors they announced themselves at were empty, or if the people were unrepentant, the more roguish faeries would have free reign to play mischief on these houses. The wisest of the faeries warned the younger ones of the houses with lanterns outside them. He had, in ages gone by, seen vexatious young faeries, unaware of the significance of the lamps, turn immediately into flame after playing particularly malicious tricks on the humans. The young faeries, many of whom had never been out of the Otherworld, were frightened by this, and vowed silently to themselves not to play any tricks that night.

So the faeries passed through the gate. House after house they visited, with the youngest ones tasked with going up the garden paths, knocking on the doors or ringing the bells. The smallest faeries, scared of the darkness (the Otherworld is always bathed in a faint glow—the same glow which creates the Will 'O the Wisp in our realm), wouldn't go up to the houses without their lights on, but the older, more daring faeries would, knowing the people of these houses to be either asleep or absent, making them the perfect target for mischief making.



VI

The gatekeeper's daughter was home alone when the faerie came pounding on her door, her parents out getting drunk on mead and green tobacco after their hard day's work.

"Trick or Treat!" the faerie shouted through the key-hole, this being the call that they had agreed upon earlier that night.

Frightened, the girl ran to fetch the container of boiled sweets from the top shelf of the pantry. Standing on a stool she could just about reach it, but just as her little fingers had a hold on the jar, the faerie struck the door again, startling her. Her hands slipped, the container fell to the floor, and shattered. The sweets broke and mixed with the shards of glass.

Not wanting to make the faerie wait too long, lest he play some mischief (the gate-keeper had been so busy that day trying to understand how to close the gate, he hadn't had time to carve a lantern), she ran to the door and pulled it open. The faerie on the other side, was, to the girl's surprise, the faerie-boy



that she remembered from her dreams. As their eyes met, the faerie, had just caught a piece of stardust as it fell from the sky, and the girl, still flushed from her fright a moment before, fell desperately in love.

Now, as you may know, falling in love with a faerie is serious business, and our protagonist was in for quite a shock. When one falls in love with a faerie, there is nothing to be done but to wistfully follow them everywhere they go. You are filled with a burning desire, which can only be fulfilled by a journey to the Otherworld. This journey cannot be undertaken by mortals of this realm.

Deliriously in love, the gatekeeper's daughter pursued her darling. She followed him from house to house, and when they arrived at the Town faerie fort, she partook in the faerie rituals as a young faerie-maiden would. As the sun started peaking over the horizon, it came time for the faeries to leave, since faerie-rings close with the coming of the first light. The girl gave the faerie a portion of her heart to take with him in the hopes that her longing would be fulfilled. Yearning farewells were exchanged, as he and the other faeries departed through the faery-rings in trees in the Park, just as they had arrived.





The girl, however could not follow him. For years, she pined, spending long hours under the portal-trees. She was repulsed by the gate, the mere sight of it made her sick to her stomach, as she believed it to be the cause of all her woes. One night, as her despondence was at a peak, she went out with a torch and burned the gate to the ground.

This act being complete, she walked calmly to the portal tree, and, spreading out her arms, falling forwards into the earth, she entered the Otherworld.



• *FIN* •
