

TITHE

A MODERN FAERIE TALE

Holly Black

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For my little sister Heidi

*"And pleasant is the faerie land
But an eerie tale to tell,
Ay at the end of seven years
We pay a tithe to Hell;
I am sae fair and fu o flesh,
I'm feard it be mysel."
—"Young Tam Lin"*

Prologue

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*"And malt does more than Milton
can To justify
God's ways to man."
—A. E. Housman,
"Terence, This Is Stupid
Stuff"*

Kaye took another drag on her cigarette and dropped it into her mother's beer bottle. She figured that would be a good test for how drunk Ellen was—see if she would swallow a butt whole.

They were up on stage still, Ellen and Lloyd and the rest of Stepping Razor. It had been a bad set and watching them break down the equipment, she could see that they knew it. It didn't really matter, the sound system was loud and scratchy and everyone had kept drinking and smoking and shouting so she doubted the manager minded. There had

even been a little dancing.

The bartender leered at her again and offered her a drink "on the house."

"Milk," Kaye smirked, brushing back her ragged, blond hair and pocketing a couple of matchbooks when his back was turned.

Then her mother was next to her, taking a deep swallow of the beer before spitting it all over the counter.

Kaye couldn't help the wicked laughter that escaped her lips. Her mother looked at her in disbelief.

"Go help load up the car," Ellen said, voice hoarse from singing. She was smoothing damp hair back from her face. Her lipstick was rubbed off the inside of her lips but still clung to the edges of her mouth, smudged a little. She looked tired.

Kaye slid off the counter and leapt up onto the stage in one easy move. Lloyd glared at her as she started to pick up the stuff randomly, so she stuck to what was her mother's. His eyes were glazed. "Hey kid, got any money on you?"

Kaye shrugged and took out a ten-dollar bill. She had more, and he probably knew it—she'd come straight from Chow Fat's. Delivering Chinese food might pay crap, but it still paid better than being in a band.

He took the money and ambled off to the bar, probably to get some beer to go.

Kaye picked up Ellen's stuff and started hauling it through the crowd. People mostly got out of her way. The cool autumn air outside the bar was a welcome relief, even stinking as it was with iron and exhaust fumes and the

subways. The city always smelled like metal to Kaye.

It only took her a few minutes to get the car loaded up. She went back inside, intent on getting her mother in the car before someone smashed the window and stole the equipment. You couldn't leave anything in a car in Philly. The last time Ellen's car had been broken into, they'd done it for a secondhand coat and a bag of towels.

The girl checking IDs at the door took a long look at her this time but didn't say anything. It was late anyway, almost last call. Ellen was still at the bar, smoking a cigarette and drinking something stronger than beer. Lloyd was talking to a guy with long, dark hair. The man looked out of place in the bar, too well dressed or something, but Lloyd had an arm slung over the man's shoulder. She caught a flash of the man's eyes. Cat-yellow, reflecting in the dark bar. Kaye shivered.

But then, Kaye saw odd things sometimes. She'd learned to ignore them.

"Car's loaded," Kaye told her mother.

Ellen nodded, barely listening. "Can I have a cigarette, honey?"

Kaye fished the pack out of her army-surplus satchel and took out two, handing one to her mother and lighting the other.

Her mother bent close, the smell of whiskey and beer and sweat as familiar as any perfume to Kaye. "Cigarette kiss," her mother said in that goofy way that was embarrassing and sweet at the same time, touching the tip of her cigarette to the red tip of Kaye's and breathing in deeply. Two sucks of smoke and it flared to life.

"Ready to go home?" Lloyd asked, and

Kaye almost jumped. It wasn't that she hadn't known he was there; it was the sound of his voice. It sounded velvety, a shade off of sleazy. Not normal asshole Lloyd voice. Not at all.

Ellen didn't seem to notice anything. She swallowed what was left of her drink. "Sure."

A moment later, Lloyd lifted his arm as though he were going to punch Ellen in the back. Kaye reacted without thinking, shoving him. It was only his drunkenness that made her slight weight enough to push him off balance. She saw the knife as it clattered to the floor.

Lloyd's face was completely blank, empty of any emotion at all. His eyes were wide and his pupils dilated.

Frank, Stepping Razor's drummer, grabbed Lloyd's arm. Lloyd had just enough time to punch Frank in the face before other patrons tackled him and somebody called the police.

By the time the cops got there, Lloyd couldn't remember anything. He was mad as hell, though, cursing Ellen at the top of his lungs. The police drove Kaye and her mother to Lloyd's apartment and waited while Kaye packed their clothes and stuff into plastic garbage bags. Ellen was on the phone, trying to find a place for them to crash.

"Honey," Ellen said finally, "we're going to have to go to Grandma's."

"Did you call her?" Kaye asked, stacking her Grace Slick vinyl albums into an empty orange crate. They hadn't so much as visited once in the six years that they'd been gone from New Jersey. Ellen barely even spoke to her mother on the holidays before passing the phone to Kaye.

"Yeah, I just woke her up." Kaye couldn't remember the last time her mother had sounded quite so tired. "It'll just be a little while. You can visit that friend of yours."

"Janet," Kaye said. She hoped that was who Ellen meant. She hoped her mother wasn't teasing her about that faerie bullshit again. If she had to hear another story about Kaye and her cute imaginary friends...

"The one you e-mail from the library. Get me another cigarette, okay, hon?" Ellen tossed a bunch of CDs into the crate.

Kaye picked up a leather jacket of Lloyd's she'd always liked and lit a cigarette for her mother off the stove burner. No sense in wasting matches.

Chapter 1

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in
the
se
sho
rt
sch
ool
unif
or
ms.
We
sho
uld
hav
e
unif
or
ms
like
that
her
e,
ma

n.
Yo
u
eve
r
we
ar
one
of
tho
se,
huh
?"

"Sh
ut
up,
dic
khe
ad,
"

Jan
et
sai
d,
lau
ghi
ng.
"Sh
e
we
nt
to
gra
de
sch
ool
wit
h
Do
ugh
boy
and
me.
"

Ke
my
loo
ped

one
finger
through
the
belt
rings
of
Jan
et's
jeans
and
pulled
her
over
to
kiss
her.

"Ye
ah,
well,
damn.
"

Mar
cus
laughed.

"Won't
you
hold
up
your
hair
in
those
pigta
ils

for
a
sec
ond
or
so
met
hin
g?
Co
me
on.
"

Ka
ye
sho
ok
her
hea
d.
No
,
she
wo
uld
n't.

Ma
rcu
s
and
Do
ugh
boy
star
ted
to
pla
y
Ha
cky
Sac
k
wit
h
an
em
pty
bee

r
bot
tle.
It
did
n't
bre
ak
as
the
y
kic
ked
it
bo
ot
to
bo
ot,
but
it
ma
de
a
holl
ow
sou
nd.
She
too
k
ano
ther
lon
g
sip
of
bou
rbo
n.
Her
hea
d
wa
s
alre
ady
buz
zing
ple

as
antly
,
hu
mm
ing
in
tim
e
wit
h
ima
gin
ed
mer
ry-
go-
rou
nd
mu
sic.
She
mo
ved
fart
her
bac
k
into
the
dim
roo
m,
to
wh
ere
old
pla
car
ds
ann
oun
ced
po
pco
m
and
pea
nut
s

for
five
cen
ts
api
ece
.

Ag
ains
t
the
far
wal
l
wa
s a
bla
ck,
we
ath
ere
d
do
or.
It
ope
ned
jer
kily
wh
en
she
pus
hed
it.
Mo
onli
ght
fro
m
the
win
do
ws
in
the
mai
n
roo

m
rev
eal
ed
onl
y
an
offi
ce
wit
h
an
old
des
k
and
a
cor
kb
oar
d
wit
h
yell
ow
ed
me
nus
still
pin
ned
to
it.
She
ste
ppe
d
insi
de,
eve
n
tho
ugh
the
ligh
t
swi
tch
did
n't

work. Feeling in the blackness, she found a knob. This door led to a stairwell with only a little light drifting down from the top. She felt her way up the stairs.

Du
st
cov
ere
d
the
pal
ms
of
her
han
d
as
she
slid
the
m
alo
ng
the
raili
ngs

.
She
sne
eze
d
lou
dly,
the
n
sne
eze
d
aga
in.

At
the
top
wa
s a
sm
all
win
do
w
lit
brig
htly

by
the
mur
der
ess
mo
on,
ripe
and
hug
e in
the
sky

.
Inte
rest
ing
box
es
wer
e
sta
cke
d in
the
cor
ner
s.

The
n
her
eye
s
fell
on
the
hor
se,
and
she
for
got
all
the
rest

.
He
wa
s
ma

gnif
ice
nt
—g
lea
min
g
pea
rl
whi
te
and
cov
ere
d
wit
h
tiny
pie
ces
of
glu
ed-
do
wn
mir
ror.
His
fac
e
wa
s
pai
nte
d
wit
h
red
and
pur
ple
and
gol
d,
and
he
eve
n
had
a

bar
of
whi
te
teet
h
and
a
pai
nte
d
pin
k
ton
gue
wit
h
eno
ugh
spa
ce
to
tuc
k a
sug
ar
cub
e.
It
wa
s
obv
iou
s
wh
y
he'
d
bee
n
left
beh
ind
—h
is
legs
on
all
fou
r

sid
es
and
par
t of
his
tail
had
bee
n
sha
tter
ed.
Spli
nter
s
hun
g
do
wn
fro
m
wh
ere
his
legs
use
d
to
be.

*Gri
stle
wo
uld
ha
ve
lov
ed
this*
. She
had
tho
ugh
t
that
ma
ny
tim

es
sinc
e
she
had
left
the
Sh
ore
,
six
yea
rs
pas
t.
*My
im
agi
nar
y
frie
nds
wo
uld
ha
ve
lov
ed
this*
. She
'd
tho
ugh
t it
the
first
tim
e
that
she'
d
see
n
the
city
, lit
up
like
nev

er-
end
ing
Chr
ist
ma
s.
But
the
y
nev
er
ca
me
wh
en
she
wa
s in
Phil
ade
lphi
a.
An
d
no
w
she
wa
s
sixt
een
and
felt
like
she
had
no
ima
gin
atio
n
left.

She
trie
d
to
set
the

horse
up
as
if
he
were
e
standi
ng
on
his
ruin
ed
stu
mp
s. It
wobbl
ed
unstea
dily
but
didn't
fall.
Kaye
pulled
off
her
coat
and
dropp
ed it
on
the
dusty
floor,
sett
ing
the
bou

rbo
n
nex
t to
it.
She
sw
ung
one
leg
ove
r
the
bea
st
and
dro
ppe
d
ont
o
its
sad
dle,
usin
g
her
feet
to
kee
p it
fro
m
falli
ng.
She
ran
her
han
ds
do
wn
its
ma
ne,
whi
ch
wa
s
car

ved
in
gol
den
ring
lets
. She
tou
che
d
the
pai
nte
d
bla
ck
eye
s
and
the
chi
ppe
d
ear
s.

The
whi
te
hor
se
ros
e
on
uns
tea
dy
legs
in
her
min
d.
The
lon
g
curl
s of
the
gol

d
ma
ne
wer
e
coo
l in
her
han
ds,
and
the
gre
at
bul
k
of
the
ani
mal
wa
s
real
and
war
m
ben
eat
h
her.
She
wo
ve
her
han
ds
in
the
ma
ne
and
grip
ped
har
d,
slig
htly
aw
are
of a

prickling feeling all through her limbs. The horse whinnied softly beneath her, ready to leap out into the cold, black water. She threw back her head.

"Kaye?"

A
soft
voice
snapped
her
out
of
her
day
dream.
Ken
ny
was
stand
ing
near
the
stai
rs,
reg
ardi
ng
her
blank
ly.
For
a
mo
me
nt,
tho
ugh
,
she
was
still
fierce.
Then
she

felt
her
che
eks
bur
nin
g.

Ca
ugh
t in
the
half
-lig
ht,
she
cou
ld
see
him
bett
er
tha
n
she
had
do
wn
stai
rs.
Tw
o
hea
vy
silv
er
hoo
ps
sho
ne
in
the
lob
es
of
his
ear
s.
His
sho

rt,
cin
na
mo
n
hair
wa
s
mu
sse
d
and
had
a
slig
ht
wa
ve
to
it,
mat
chi
ng
the
beg
inni
ngs
of a
goa
tee
on
his
chi
n.
Un
der
the
flig
ht
jac
ket,
his
too
-tig
ht
whi
te
T-s
hirt
sho

we
d
the
eas
y
mu
scle
s of
so
me
one
wh
o
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m.

He
mo
ved
tow
ard
her,
rea
chi
ng
his
han
d
out
and
the
n
loo
kin
g at
it
od
dly,
as
tho
ugh
he
did
n't

rem
em
ber
dec
idin
g to
do
that

.
Inst
ead
he
pett
ed
the
hea
d
of
the
hor
se,
slo
wly
,
alm
ost
hyp
noti
call
y.

"I
sa
w
you
,"
he
sai
d.
"I
sa
w
wh
at
you
did.
"

"W
her

e's
Jan
et?"
Ka
ye
wa
sn't
sur
e
wh
at
he
me
ant.
She
wo
uld
hav
e
tho
ugh
t he
wa
s
tea
sing
her
exc
ept
for
his
seri
ous
fac
e,
his
slo
w
wa
y of
spe
aki
ng.

He
wa
s
stro
kin
g

the
ani
mal
's
ma
ne
no
w.
"Sh
e
wa
s
wo
rrie
d
abo
ut
you
."
His
han
d
fas
cin
ate
d
her
des
pite
her
self
. It
see
me
d
like
he
wa
s
tan
glin
g it
in
ima
gin
ary
hair
.
"H
ow

did
you
ma
ke
it
do
that
?"

"D
o
wh
at?"
She
wa
s
afra
id
no
w,
afra
id
and
flatt
ere
d
bot
h.
The
re
wa
s
no
mo
cki
ng
or
tea
sing
in
his
fac
e.
He
wa
s
wat
chi
ng
her

so
inte
nse
ly
that
he
see
me
d
drai
ned
of
exp
res
sio
n.

"I
sa
w it
sta
nd
up.
"

His
voi
ce
wa
s
so
low
she
cou
ld
alm
ost
pre
ten
d
that
she
did
n't
hea
r
him
righ
t.
His
han

d
dro
ppe
d
to
her
thig
h
and
slid
up
war
d
to
the
cott
on
cro
tch
of
her
pan
ties
.

Eve
n
tho
ugh
she
had
see
n
the
slo
w
pro
gre
ssio
n of
his
han
d,
the
tou
ch
star
tled
her.
She

wa
s
par
alyz
ed
for
a
mo
me
nt
bef
ore
she
spr
ang
up,
letti
ng
the
hor
se
fall
as
she
did.
It
cra
she
d
do
wn,
kno
cki
ng
the
bot
tle
of
bou
rbo
n
ove
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dar
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or
pou
ring
ove

r
her
coa
t
and
soa
kin
g
the
bot
tom
s of
the
dus
ty
box
es
like
the
tide
co
min
g in
at
nig
ht.

He
gra
bbe
d
for
her
bef
ore
she
cou
ld
thin
k,
his
han
d
cat
chi
ng
hol
d
of
the

nec
k
of
her
shir
t.
She
ste
ppe
d
bac
k,
off-
bal
anc
e,
and
fell,
her
shir
t
rip
pin
g
ope
n
ove
r
her
bra
eve
n
as
he
let
go
of
it.

Sh
oes
pou
nde
d
up
the
stai
rs.

"W

hat
the
fuc
k?"
Ma
rcu
s
wa
s at
the
top
of
the
stai
rwe
ll
wit
h
Do
ugh
boy
,
tryi
ng
to
sho
ve
his
wa
y in
for
a
loo
k.

Ke
my
sho
ok
his
hea
d
and
loo
ked
aro
und
nu
mbl
y

while
Kaye
scrambled
for her
brown-
soaked
coat.

The
boys
moved
out of
the way,
and Janet
was
staring,
too.

"What
happened?"
"

Janet
asked,

loo
kin
g
bet
we
en
the
m
in
con
fusi
on.
Ka
ye
pus
hed
pas
t
her,
sho
vin
g
her
han
d
thr
oug
h
an
arm
hol
e of
the
coa
t as
she
thre
wit
ove
r
her
bac
k.

"K
aye
!"
Jan
et
call

ed
afte
r
her.

Ka
ye
ign
ore
d
her,
taki
ng
the
stai
rs
two
at a
tim
e in
the
dar
k.
The
re
wa
s
not
hin
g
she
cou
ld
say
that
wo
uld
exp
lain
wh
at
had
hap
pen
ed.

She
cou
ld
hea

r
Jan
et
sho
utin
g.
"W
hat
did
you
do
to
her
?
Wh
at
the
fuc
k
did
you
do?
"

Ka
ye
ran
acr
oss
the
car
ous
el
hall
and
sw
ung
her
leg
ove
r
the
sill.
The
glas
s
she
had
car
eful

ly
avo
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d
earl
ier
slas
hed
a
thin
line
on
the
out
sid
e of
her
thig
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as
she
dro
ppe
d
am
ong
the
san
dy
soil
and
we
eds
.

The
col
d
win
d
felt
goo
d
aga
inst
her
hot
fac
e.

Cornelius Stone picked up the new box of computer crap and hauled it into his bedroom to drop next to the others. Each time his mother came home from the flea

market with a cracked monitor, sticky keyboard, or just loads of wires, she had that hopeful look that made Company want to hit her. She just couldn't comprehend the diff

ere
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qua
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cou
ldn'
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und
erst
and
that
the
age
of
gue
rilla
eng
ine
erin
g
wa
s at
a
clo
se,
that
bei
ng
a
mot
herf
uck
ing
gen
ius
wa

sn't
eno
ugh
.
Yo
u
nee
ded
to
be
a
rich
mot
herf
uck
ing
gen
ius.

He
dro
ppe
d
the
box
,
kic
ked
it
har
d
thre
e
tim
es,
pic
ked
up
his
den
in
jac
ket
wit
h
the
dev
il's
hea
d

on
the
bac
k,
and
ma
de
for
the
do
or.

"Ca
n
you
use
that
stuf
f,
hon
ey?
"

His
mot
her
wa
s in
Jan
et's
roo
m,
fold
ing
a
ne
w
pair
of
sec
ond
han
d
jea
ns.
She
hel
d
up
a
T-s

hirt
wit
h
thin
est
one
cat
s
on
it.
"Th
ink
you
r
sist
er
will
like
it?"

"Th
ank
s,
Ma
,"
he
sai
d
thr
oug
h
gritt
ed
teet
h.
"I
got
to
get
to
wo
rk."
He
wal
ked
pas
t
The
Hu
sba

nd,
wh
o
wa
s
sto
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d
ove
r,
gett
ing
a
bee
r
fro
m
the
cas
e
und
er
the
kitc
hen
tabl
e.
The
whi
te
cat
wa
s
wa
ddli
ng
alo
ng
the
cou
nter
top
, its
bell
y
dra
ggi
ng
wit
h

another pregnancy, screening for canned food or pickles and ice cream or something. He petted its head grudgingly, but before it began rubbing against his

hand in
earnest,
he opened
the screen
door and
went out
into the
lot.

The cool
October
air was a
relief from
the recircu-
lated cigar-
ette smoke
.

Comy
loved

his
car.
It
was
a
primer
-colored
Chevy
blooming
with
h
rust
spots
and
an
inner
lining
g
that
hung
like
baggy
skin
n
from
the
roof.
He
knew
what
he
looked
like
.
Be

aky
.
Ski
my
and
tall
wit
h
bad
hair
and
wo
rse
ski
n.
He
live
d
up
to
his
na
me.
Co
mel
ius.
Co
my.
Co
m-
dog
.
But
not
in
his
car.
Insi
de,
he
wa
s
ano
ny
mo
us.
Eve
ry
day

for
the
last
three
weeks
he
had
left
a
little
earlier
for
work.
He
would
go
to
the
convenience
store
and
buy
some
food.
Then
he
would
drive
around
,
cruise
past
tall

the
local
rutting
joints,
imagining
he
had
a
semiauto-
matic
rifle
in
the
car
and
counting
how
many
he
could
have
gotten.
"Pow,"
he'd
say
,
softly,
to
roll
up
win

do
ws
as
a
bro
wn
-hai
red
boy
wit
h
bro
ad
sho
uld
ers
and
a
bac
kw
ard
s
bas
eba
ll
cap
ran
up
to
the
gig
glin
g
girl
s
beh
ind
the
win
do
w
of a
red
truc
k.
"Po
w.
Po
w."

To
nig
ht,
he
bou
ght
a
cup
of
coff
ee
and
a
pac
kag
e of
bla
ck
lico
rice
. He
ling
ere
d
ove
r a
pap
erb
ack
wit
h
an
em
bos
sed
met
allic
dra
gon
on
the
cov
er,
rea
din
g
the
first
few

sen
ten
ces
,
hop
ing
so
met
hin
g
wo
uld
inte
rest
him
. The
ga
me
wa
s
bec
omi
ng
bor
ing.
Wo
rse
tha
n
bor
ing,
it
ma
de
him
feel
mo
re
pat
heti
c
tha
n
bef
ore
. Ne
arly
a

we
ek
bef
ore
Hal
low
een
and
all,
this
wa
s
the
poi
nt
wh
en
a
real
ma
nia
c
wo
uld
go
and
get
a
gun
. He
sip
ped
at
the
coff
ee
and
alm
ost
spa
t it
out.
To
o
sw
eet.
He
sip
ped

at it
so
me
mo
re,
ste
elin
g
him
self
to
the
tast
e.
Dis
gus
ting
.

Co
my
got
out
of
his
car
and
chu
cke
d
the
full
coff
ee
into
the
par
kin
g
lot.
It
spl
ash
ed
sati
sfa
cto
rily
on
the

asp
halt

.
He
we
nt
insi
de
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"Who are you supposed to be, the devil?"

"I wish," Co my said, dropping a dollar twenty-five on the counter. "I wish."

Chapter 2

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o her foot on the way to the swamp. They'd never even made it down the ridge.

as dressed in modern clothes.

he didn't know what they were anymore. She'd been flung back and forth through too many emotions over the past few

l to being the one person she was relying on, in the space of mere hours?

to *do* something, no matter whether it needed doing.

ted house. The remaining blackened shell was used only to set off the city's annual fireworks. Galaxia had once been a

with her hair in hundreds of bright braids bounced in place, a teddy bear tethered to her belt loop with a fluorescent

even try to talk to Roiben; she just slipped her hand inside his and pulled him along through the crowd. He let her lead

e top of the bar, a green-skinned pixie boy with a blue glow stick lighting up the inside of his mouth. And other fey,

he swam closer, the waves grew larger and more violent, breaking over her. Janet's body was pulled from her grip and

r, touching Janet's cold face with cold fingers. And in that moment it seemed that the whole world had gone cold and

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salt. When she did remember, she pulled herself out of bed with a groan.

He'd helped her out of the outfit and then wrapped her in both his shirt and his coat.

and they became a deep violet.

With a pass of her hand, she was wearing an emerald Renaissance frock coat over green fishnet stockings, a modified

so much three-dollar champagne that she'd completely forgotten how to get where they were staying, and they had

rief and rage. But everything was different between them this morning, and she didn't know how to make it right again.

in with him, wrinkling her nose at Kaye as she flittered around the backseat and then finally perched on the dusty

al, willing the car to stay in the middle of the lane as she sped down the highway.

but she didn't want to take her eyes off the road long enough to see the expression on his face.

hanging far over the yellow line in the parking space. She turned the key off with a sigh.

holding up a hand for inspection and turning it in the light to make sure it was still pink all over. Then she glanced at

ing over into Faerie.

ead out with Folk sitting or lying on them. As Kaye walked among them, she could smell fresh lavender and heather.

A group of faeries were crouched over what looked like a game, one tossing shining stones into the center of a circle

m base to top, where one little man was grasping desperately for a fat apple.

room caps. Faerie ladies and gentlemen clapped.

r hair shone bright as copper in the sun under a woven circlet of ivy and dogwood blossoms, her eyes were as bright

en apparent.

would be careless with him, not even caring that his new owner might break him. Clearly, she had plans that included

ping the stem carefully, flung the head in the direction of a pretty faerie lady who laughed.

ng fingers stroked her hair. He smelled of honey and sweat and the detergent her grandmother used.

ded.

her coat to signal her to stop.

his small spectacles as they slipped down his nose.

a long crooked stick. A man with long arms and a hunched back was adding some granules to the mix, making the

cross the room, the man and woman looked up from their duties and smiled too. "You're one I thought sure never to see

in one direction, something seemed to shift in the corner of her eye. The books themselves were in such varied sizes

she turned into a dead end.

were steel plates buried in the toe of the boots too, although they would be much too big to use unless she could
er.

lved hurling somewhat round stones.

rd that the little faerie was barely able to control her flying.

n the ornate, wooden throne, iron circlet burning on his brow. She saw him drop a hand to caress Corny's hair.

el, curtsying in what she hoped was a fair approximation of the seamstress.

ramatically, lifting the goblet high above his head, "if only you could stop hoping."

eyes met hers. Nephamael dropped to his knees, scratching at his throat. He opened his mouth, perhaps to speak,

he thing dropped from his hand.

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nt in a moon-pale gown, very like the one in Roiben's tapestry. Over it she wore a peacock-blue cape that swept the

day to put things to rights."

r him.

. She was still in Silarial's court." Roiben gave Kaye a sharp look, but she hurried on.

here. A couple of days after that, my old faerie friends contacted me and said they needed me to play along with their

d was because Roiben stepped in. If Nicnevin hadn't died, Nephamael wouldn't have benefited at all, only Silarial.

glamour. They were going to let me be sacrificed, then reveal the trick and blame Nicnevin. And today, when we got

crowd. He was not one of them, it was true, but he was remote as a king.

like, and I will give you all of Samhain. Freedom from dusk until dawn forevermore."

at head.

and Fatima were all there, sitting in a huddle, whispering to one another constantly, even when the preacher was

ked more obscene.

p again when she called. It was strange and kind of nice, but Kaye didn't want to get used to it.

gagged when they went close. She couldn't, however, keep her hand from straying to the cold, oddly firm flesh of

A bouquet of Pixy Stix."

the fluorescent lights and the organic smell of rotting vegetables and the tumble of plastic bags across the parking lot

of relief that you have when you know that something painful is coming, but you can avoid it for the moment. If she

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Francis for hand-holding above and beyond the call of duty; and to Theo for enduring the misery along the way. In