

A

Tome of Tales

Senior Scholar Devon Greene

A Tome of Tales

collected and edited

by

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To the Woodlanders of Cottington Woods.

Thank you for your invaluable aid.

--Devon Greene

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Etain | The Lord's Curse |
| The Burnt Tree's Lullaby | Molly Bahn |
| The Chandler's Wife | Siren Song on the Royal Oak |
| The Curse of the Wanderkin Bride | The Smith's Curse |
| Dragon Tooth Warriors | The Three Spinners' Names |
| The Drowned Boy | The Tinman's Heart |
| The Gingerbread Man | The Water Nixie |
| The Glass Slipper | The Wishing Well |
| Little Miss Muffet | The Zombies of Hallowdale |
| The Lightning Rod | |

Etaire

Etain was the lovely wife of Mithir. She loved nothing more than taking long walks in the woods just as the day wound down towards evening. At times her husband would join her, and she loved these times best of all, for they were deeply in love. However, Mithir often had to work late in the evening and Etain would take her walks alone. During these times she was watched, though she did not know.

Down the path, past the large oak tree, and halfway around the lake lived their closest neighbor, a wealthy merchant by the name of Edgar. He too, was in love with Etain and would watch as she walked by his lands each day. Edgar was very fond of the game of chess and on the days that both husband and wife came by, he and Mithir would play, gambling for points or goods. On the days that Etain walked alone, Edgar would watch from his house, and pine for his neighbor's lovely wife.

It was on one of these such days that Edgar decided he must have Etain, and when she came by invited her in on the pretense of giving what he owed her husband after their last game. When she came in though, Edgar barred the door behind her and locked her away in a back room.

When Etain didn't come back that night, Mithir spent the night searching for her in the woods. By morning he was tired, hungry, and starting to suspect his neighbor, as he had often caught the looks Edgar would give to Etain when he thought Mithir wasn't looking. He marched down to Edgar's house, planning to demand his wife, only to find that Edgar was waiting outside with the two armed guards that he usually employed when selling his wares on the road. Mithir knew he couldn't fight all three men, so he decided to fall back on their usual way of handling things and challenged Edgar to a game of chess, with Etain going to the winner.

The game lasted longer than any they had every played before, with the win finally going to Mithir. He demanded his wife be brought to him, but Edgar refused. Mithir knew he still couldn't fight all three, so he made a pretense of leaving, waited for the three to relax then snuck in the back to find his wife. Edgar had taken no chances, hiding Etain behind locked doors and even setting a few traps, but Mithir unlocked the locks and safely released each trap, and rescued his loving wife. They returned home and lived out their days happily, always going for walks together, and always in the other direction.

The Burnt Tree

Once upon a time there was a great forest. It was a place of fairies and elves, and wolves and other beings. It was a magical place. A great tree grew in that forest, not the greatest of trees, but still great. It didn't have a name, because trees don't have names, but if it did, like all trees, it would have been called Cottington Wood. The tree had a full and lazy existence, like all trees, and especially those of this trees size and age. It spent its time providing a home for the many woodland animals and the most taxing duty it had to perform was to not steal too much of the sun's light so that its saplings could grow.

Men lived in the wood as well. This was around the time when Lord Curren fashioned his points and men began to fight among themselves, so most of those who lived in the wood got nervous when men came around. The tree thought itself above them, not just because it did, in fact, tower over them, but because it had long since learned to walk, and if needs be it could simply take a step and end them. So, because it perceived them as no threat, it simply stood back and ignored them.

But men, and especially those early Robber Barons and the men of the harsh Frostwroth, should never be ignored, for they were prone to do stupid things. These

men were no different. By the time the dark settled in with the night they were near insensible with drink. They lit a fire to keep warm, and within minutes it seemed, the fire was out of control.

The tree howled, startling the men, who scrambled to their feet and ran away. The tree gave chase, stamping down their camp, but instead of being smothered the flames took hold, and the great tree began to burn. It howled again, watching helpless as its saplings, not yet old enough to be awake, were consumed.

Within an hour, all that was familiar to the tree was ash. Its own great form was diminished, its limbs twisted and black, its leaves brittle and mostly gone. Its wood, ancient, proved difficult to completely burn away, and so it survived, but only barely.

And who would not go mad when suffering so? The tree blamed the men, of course, and he was not wrong. His home was destroyed, and so he began to haunt the woods. When he saw the animals, he offered them no comfort. When he saw men, he killed them, crushing them under foot or flaying them with wicked thorns. Because of him, the forest became unlivable.

The fairies had to intervene.

It was Arafel who taught the men the way to sing the tree to sleep. "It hates men for what they did," she said. "But like all living things, it is soothed by your songs." The men listened to her, preparing a special rite, gathering five waystones and writing special songs to sing.

They lured the tree back to its home, the grove where it was born and its children died, a place where already new life had begun to grow.

How many men died trying to stay ahead of the tree, with its long crushing legs. But eventually they did bring it home. Seeing that new life was the first step to calming it. Arafel spoke to it then, and while she did, men began to sing. "Your grove needs you here, my old friend," she said, and if trees could weep, this one did. The man lay four of the stones at the north, south, east and west around the tree, and while it wept they placed the last at its feet. And when they did, the singing stopped, and the tree had been sung to sleep.

In this way, the wood was saved from the Burnt Tree.

The Chandler's Wife

A woman lies in bed, dying of a long-lasting sickness. Her husband is a candle maker, and she has always found comfort in the dancing flames of his fine work. Next to her bed lie three special candles that he had made for her birthday. Hands shaking, she reaches for the first candle and lights it, and in her ailing state she sees visions.

In the glow of the first, she sees family and friends sitting down to a picnic. The blanket is piled high with her favorite foods and they have left a space open for her. As they eat, they laugh and joke and she feels joy.

In the glow of the second she sees her little daughter playing games with some friends. They run and laugh as children do. The woman feels love in her heart. In the glow of the last candle she sees her husband beside her bed, tucking the blankets gently around her. She settles under their weight, feeling the gentle touch of his callused hand on her brow.

The woman lets out a final contented breath and dies with a smile on her face.

Curse of the Wanderkin Bride

There once was a Spadelander man who worked closely with the agents of the King of Farraway. He was trusted and well respected by his peers. His potential was recognized, and it was not long before his marriage was arranged to a young woman of a slightly more prominent name.

The man thought little of this arrangement. He was loyal to his father, and would do as they asked. He thought there were worse things than an arranged marriage. And then he fell in love.

The woman was a wanderkin. Were he another man, serving in any other way, they would not have met. But he was a Jack, and wanderkin are often found to be the cause of nefarious doings. In watching them, he saw her. She was beautiful. She was charming. She wanted him. He was helpless.

When his father discovered their secret love, he forbade the man to see her. He said, "She put a curse upon you to steal your fortune. You are bewitched. It's what they do."

The man was loyal to his father, but he was young and in love, and until now he had been granted everything. So he took his love and hid her, and because she was with his child she let him, and in this way they continued their love for ever after, until the day he died, which is another story for another time.

The Dragon Tooth Warriors

Warriors rose from the dragon bones and surrounded the prince and his men. The prince gripped his sword and grinned. “This doesn’t look good.”

His friends surrounded him as the warriors closed in. There was fighting. The warriors were good, but they had slumbered long and they were beaten without terrible trouble.

The prince’s hearth witch came to his side. “Let me tend that,” he said, pointing to a cut on the royal upper arm.

“Thank you, Vigo,” the prince began.

Amelia aimed her chemical bow. “Your highness,” she warned.

The hearthwitch stepped away and picked up his staff. Prince Aaron gripped his sword again. The dragon tooth warriors had risen from the ground where they had fallen, their injuries magically stitching closed.

"It's as we were told," the Prince said. "The more of them there are, the harder they are to kill."

Amelia gave him a cockeyed look as she shot a bolt of lightning at the closest foe. "It appears they are ALL here, your highness."

Prince Aaron smiled. "We were also told they were prone to greed." He reached for the gem – their prize – to toss it into the midst of the warrior ranks.

The gem was gone. Prince Aaron frowned. He said again, "This doesn't look good."

The Drowning Boy

Once there was a boy who worked at his father's farm, tending to the animals and livestock there. Every day he did his chores. Every day he fed the cows, the sheep and the chickens. Every day he fetched them water. One day he went to the stream to fetch water for the animals. By then, he had come to know the stream very well. The previous day it had rained and so everything was dewy and wet. The banks were thick with mud.

The boy leaned down with his bucket to gather water from the stream, but the bank was too slippery, the water too fast. He swung out the heavy, wooden bucket to fill it with water, but the water was moving too quickly. The bucket became too heavy and the boy slipped in the mud, the bucket flying wide.

With a great splash, the boy fell in. The water was moving so fast and the boy, being a farmer's son, never had a need to learn to swim. The current swept him away and soon the cold water took him. The water strangled him, drowned him beneath the fast currents.

Just then a fairy swept up the drowned boy in her arms. He was a boy she had known

very well for she had seen him every day from the time he was very young. Her waters, for she was the fairy of this stream, had taken him and so it was her waters that could restore him.

She brushed his forehead, marking him forever as hers and whispered to him as his eyes opened, "You owe me a boon, child, and one day I will claim it."

The Gingerbread Man

Once upon a time a great Chef lived in a cottage in the Woods. One day the Chef made a gingerbread man. She gave him currants for eyes and cherries for buttons. She put him in the oven to bake.

The Chef was very hungry and wanted to eat the gingerbread man. As soon as he was cooked, the Chef opened the oven door. The gingerbread man jumped out of the tin and ran out of the open window shouting, 'Don't eat me!'

The Chef was surprised, but then realized what a miracle she had made, and ran after the gingerbread man. 'Stop! Stop!' she yelled. "I won't eat you!" The gingerbread man did not look back. He ran on saying, 'Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!'

Down the lane he sped when he came to a pig. 'Stop! Stop! I would like to eat you,' shouted the pig. The gingerbread man was too fast. He ran on saying "Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man."

A little further on he met a cow. 'Stop! Stop! little man,' called the hungry cow, 'I want to eat you.' Again the gingerbread man was too fast. He sped on down the road saying, "Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man."

The cow began to chase the gingerbread man along with the pig, and the Chef. But the gingerbread man was too fast for them.

It was not long before the gingerbread man came to a horse. 'Stop! Stop!' shouted the horse. 'I want to eat you, little man.' But the gingerbread man did not stop. He said, 'Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man.'

The horse joined in the chase. The gingerbread man laughed and laughed, until he came to a river. 'Oh no!' he cried, 'They will catch me. How can I cross the river?'

A sly fox came out from behind a tree. 'I can help you cross the river,' said the fox. 'Jump onto my tail and I will take you across.'

'You won't eat me, will you?' said the gingerbread man.

'Of course not,' said the fox. 'I just want to help.'

The gingerbread man climbed on the fox's tail. Soon the gingerbread man began to get wet. 'Climb onto my back,' said the fox. So the gingerbread man did. As he swam the fox said, 'You are too heavy. I am tired. Jump onto my nose.' So the gingerbread man did as he was told.

No sooner had they reached the other side, than the fox tossed the gingerbread man up in the air. He opened his mouth and 'Snap!' he gobbled the Gingerbread Man up.

But that was not the end of the gingerbread man, for the Fox brought the Gingerbread Man back to the Chef and said, "I've brought him back to you." And the Chef knelt down by the Fox's stomach and said "Have you learned your lesson and will never run away from me?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" the Gingerbread Man cried. "I'll never run away again! They'll eat me up!"

And so the Fox spit up the Gingerbread Man, and the Chef took him home.

Glass Slipper

As she was sitting all alone, there was a burst of light and a fairy appeared. The fairy said, "Don't be alarmed. I know you would love to go to the ball. And so you shall!"

The lady replied, "How can I, dressed in rags? The servants will turn me away!"

The fairy smiled. With a flick of her magic wand the lady found herself wearing the most beautiful dress she had ever seen. The fairy said, "Now for your coach. A real lady would never go to a ball on foot! Quick! Get me a pumpkin!" Then the fairy turned to the cat. "You, bring me a family of mice, and, remember they must be alive!"

The lady soon returned with the pumpkin and the cat with several mice he had caught in the cellar. With a flick of the magic wand the pumpkin turned into a sparkling coach. The mice became four white horses, and footmen and grooms, and ladies-in-waiting. The lady could hardly believe her eyes.

She had a wonderful time at the ball until she heard the first stroke of midnight! She remembered what the fairy had said, and without a word of goodbye she slipped

from the Prince's arms and ran down the steps. As she ran she lost one of her slippers, but not for a moment did she dream of stopping to pick it up! If the last stroke of midnight were to sound - oh, what a disaster that would be! Out she fled and vanished into the night.

The Prince picked up the slipper and said, "I will search everywhere for the girl whose foot this slipper fits. I will never be content until I find her!" So he tried the slipper on the foot of every girl in the land until only the lady was left.

The stepmother snapped, "That awful girl simply cannot have been at the ball. You ought to marry one of my two daughters!" But, to everyone's amazement, the shoe fitted perfectly.

The prince was overjoyed. He said to the lady, "Come with me, and be my wife."

But the lady looked at the Prince, and with a roll of her eyes she asked, "Why would I settle for a Prince, when I could have a King?"

Little Miss Muffet

Little Miss Muffet,
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider,
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

The Lightning Rod

Once there was a girl who lived in the Clublands. This girl had both a gift and a curse. This was curiosity. The girl desperately wanted one thing above all else and this was to collect some Zap from the sky. In hopes of gathering some all for herself, she convinced the Blacksmith's apprentice and a local to help her climbed atop the roof of the Blacksmith's shop and there they planted a lightning rod that reached high up into the sky.

The first time lightning struck the rod, however, a shower of sparks rained down and the girl found that her curiosity had unintended consequences. Soon the sparks set fire to the tar of the roof. Soon that fire reached down, down into the building and burnt the place to nothing more than cinders. Only the smith's anvil and the firepit remained.

And so you learn that while curiosity is important and valuable, wisdom must temper it.

The Lord's Curse

Once there was a Lord, cold and hard and cruel as a diamond. Those within his domain lived in fear of him, and suffered under his malice, and though he skirted the edge of the King's Law, he never broke it, or at least was never caught, and so the people beneath him could only suffer, with no hope that he might be overthrown.

His wife and son were killed by wolves in the Woods, and some say that though he was a hard and cold man before that day, it was after it he became truly cruel. Others whispered, however, that so cruel was his spirit and jealous his hold on his rule, that he was relieved that the wolves had taken away one who might someday take from him his manor.

He took a new wife, a young girl of a nearby lord who owed him dearly, and if you asked her, she would say that she was happy with her lord, though the servants say that at night she wept tears at the True Love she was forced to leave behind.

But then one day a Wanderkin caravan came passing through, and asked the Lord for hospitality. And seeing what stood upon his doorstep, had dirty water and rotting food thrown upon them and cast them out. And the Old Gypsy

Grandmother among them stepped forward, and asked again for his kindness, and reminded him of the Old Ways of Hospitality. And in response, he sent his men, and clapped the Wanderkin in chains, and threw them in his dungeon. This, he said, was hospitality enough for them.

But the young Lady, tired of tears and terrors, snuck into the dungeons with a key in hand, and opened the chains of the Wanderkin. "Be free," she whispered, tears still upon her face. "Be free where we cannot."

And the Old Gypsy Grandmother brushed her tears away, and then strode to the room of the Lord, where he lay sleeping in the night. "As you have brought terror, so you shall have terror," and she Cursed him a terrible Curse of Nightmares, and the manor rang with his cries as he lay trapped in a dark and terrible sleep.

And so there it might have ended -- The Lord cursed and the people, though haunted by his screams, free of his terror -- were it not for the will of a young Sandman.

"No one should remain trapped in their terrors," he said to the people, "not even one as cruel as he."

And the young Sandman stepped into the Slumberlands, and into the dark and terrible dreams of the cruel Lord. There he faced Nightmares and Terrors, but at long last, he brought the Lord out of the dark landscape of his sleeping mind and into the dawn of the waking world again.

But this is not a happy tale, for the Lord did not suddenly repent of his terrible actions. Instead he pulled his lady close, and reveled in her new tears, and told her only, “Remember you are mine.”

And he thanked the Sandman for breaking his Curse, but did not reward him. He bade the Sandman remain and guard his dreams, but the Sandman quietly refused and went upon his way.

And so the Lord remained, a cruel and cold and heartless Lord, and so he remains today, and the people beneath him could only suffer, with no hope that he might be overthrown.

Molly Bahn

Now come all ye hunters who follow the bow
Beware of your shooting at the setting of the sun
For Molly's own true love he shot in the dark
But oh and alas Molly Bahn was his mark.

For she'd her apron wrapped about her and he took her for a swan

Oh and alas it was she Molly Bahn

He ran up beside her and saw that it was she

Cried "Molly oh Molly have I killed thee"

He lifted up her head and saw that she was dead

And a fountain of tears for his true love he shed.

Siren Song on the Royal Oak

“What is it?” Prince Aaron asked. “I’ve not before heard the like.”

There was a moment of almost silence as Captain Broadside listened to the ocean move. Behind the sound, far off yet, yet clearly sweeter than anything meant for earthly ears, there was a song. Broadside took the prince by the arm and pulled him. The prince was already halfway over the side. Broadside said, “Sirens.”

The crew of the Royal Oak threw themselves below for stores of thick wax meant for just such occasions. At the same time, an old man came topside.

“Bartholomew,” the captain called. “Song us a song.”

“You’ve one in mind, captain?”

“Something loud, man. We’ve got siren!”

The old man looked out over the waves. “I’m getting’ too old for this.” he said. He belted into the loudest song he knew.

The Smith's Curse

Once there was a smith who specialized in the crafting of fine blades. His works were wonders, but none so wonderful as a particular blade he completed on a misty spring night. This sword, of all his swords, was without equal, and he knew it to be so. He celebrated his creation and, in a fine mood bolstered by too many cups, he chose to walk home by passing through the nearby wood. Not far within the wood he came upon a serene pool, and from this pool he sipped.

His fine sword slid from its sheath and sank to the bottom of the pool.

The man cursed, and reached to recover the blade, when a figure rose from the pool with the very blade in hand. The figure said, "My my, what a wonderful sword you have made. What would be worth such a lovely weapon?"

The smith shouted, "That is the greatest blade I have ever made! That has ever been made! And there is nothing a witch like you could ever give to me that is worth even one tenth of its value! Now give it back or I shall take it!"

The figure shook his head. “There’re no witches in this wood, only me. And I have offended you. Let me make amends. I can grant you anything you want.”

The smith, still in his cups, tried hard to understand. “Anything?”

The figure smiled. “You simply have to say it, and I’ll make it so. Repayment for the slight.”

The smith pondered this, perhaps beginning to understand what he had stumbled on to. He looked at his perfect sword. “I would ask you to grant that the weapons I make have the power to make their wielders heroes, to give them the strength to live through the end of their tales.”

The figure grinned, wider than ever before. “A great wish indeed, and so it shall be, for you and for your son, and his son, and on until the last of your line shall fade.”

The Three Spinners

There was once a girl who was lazy and refused to do her spinning. No matter what her mother said, the girl would not do her work. At last the mother was so angry with her daughter that she yelled loudly at her. This made the girl cry. Now at this very moment a Merchant drove by. When he heard the weeping, he went into the house, and asked the mother why she was yelling at her daughter.

The woman was ashamed to reveal the laziness of her daughter and said, "I cannot get her to stop her spinning. She insists on spinning forever and ever, and I am poor and cannot buy the flax."

"Oh," answered the Merchant, "there is nothing I like better than to hear the sound of spinning. Let me have your daughter with me in my home. I have lots of flax, and there she can spin as much as she likes."

The mother was very satisfied with this arrangement, and so the Merchant took the girl with her. When they arrived at the palace, the Merchant led the girl to three rooms that were filled from floor to ceiling with the finest flax.

"Now spin me this flax," said the Merchant, "and when you have done it, you shall have my eldest son for a husband. I don't mind that you're poor. I like the fact that you're such a hard worker."

The girl was terrified, for she could not have spun the flax even if she had lived until she was five hundred years old and had worked on it day in and day out. When left alone, she began to cry. She wasn't able to spin at all. She did not know what to do.

In her distress, she went to the window. Then she saw three women coming toward her. The three woman were stooped and disfigured. They stopped before the window, looked up, and asked the girl what was wrong. She told them and the women offered to help. They said, "We will help if you will invite us to your wedding by calling our names, not be ashamed of us, and call us your aunts, and likewise place us at your table. Then we will spin the flax for you in short order."

"With all my heart, I promise to these conditions," she replied. Then she let in the three strange women and cleared a place in the first room, where they seated themselves and began their spinning. The one drew the thread and trod the wheel, the other wet the thread, and the third

twisted it and struck the table with her finger. As often as she struck the table, a skein of thread fell to the ground that was spun in the finest manner possible.

The girl concealed the three spinners from the Merchant whenever he came to inspect the great quantity of spun thread. When the first room was empty, she went to the second, and at last to the third, and that too was quickly cleared. Then the three women got ready to leave and said to the girl, "Do not forget what you have promised us — it will make your fortune."

When the maiden showed the Merchant the empty rooms and the great heap of yarn, the Merchant gave orders for the wedding. And the bridegroom rejoiced that he was to have such a clever and industrious wife.

"I have three aunts," said the girl. "They have been very kind to me, and I want to invite them to the wedding and let them sit with us at the table."

The Merchant and the bridegroom agreed. When the wedding feast began, the three women entered in strange apparel, and the bride said, "Welcome, dear Aunts."

"Oh," said the bridegroom, "how do you come by these odious friends?"

He went to the first, and said, “How do you come to be so stooped?”

“By spinning,” she answered.

Then the bridegroom went to the second, and said, “How do you come to be so stooped?”

“By spinning,” she answered.

Then he asked the third, “How do you come to be so stooped?”

“By spinning,” she answered.

At this, the Merchant’s son was alarmed and said, “Neither now nor ever shall my beautiful bride touch a spinning wheel!”

And so, the lucky girl never had to spin again.

The Tinman's Heart

Jade Jones knew she was being hunted. She could hear the monkeys behind her. Their low shrieks, the gentle whir of their mechanical wings. They were never good at being stealthy, they were monkey after all. She sighed and shook her head. She supposed she should have known they would come for her sooner or later, she had just thought it would be later. Looking behind her, she could see them drawing nearer and decided it was time to stop running. She stopped at the edge of a large clearing and drew her sword. She was a warrior, after all, and not afraid of a few winged monkeys. Jade had time to set her feet before the first of the monkeys burst from the cover of the trees, coming right at her. She swung her sword and severed its head. The next, and the next were also easy work. A fierce smile settled on her lips as she made short work of the flying monkeys. Her task down, she cleaned her blade on the grass, turned back into the woods and continued on her quest.

The Water Nixie

A little brother and little sister were playing by a well, and while they were playing there they both fell in. A water nixie was down there. She said, "Now I have you. Now you will have to work diligently for me," and she led them away with her.

She gave the girl tangled dirty flax to spin, and she had to fill a bottomless barrel with water. The boy had to chop down a tree with a dull ax, and all they got to eat were dumplings as hard as rocks.

Finally the children became so impatient, that they waited until one day when the nixie was lured away to listen to the Storyteller of the Mantle read, and then ran away. When the story was over, the nixie saw that the birds had flown away, and she followed them with long strides.

The children saw her from afar, and the girl threw a brush behind her, which turned into a large brush-mountain with thousands and thousands of spikes, which the nixie had to climb over with great difficulty, but she finally got to the other side.

When the children saw this the boy threw a comb behind him, which turned into a

large comb-mountain with a thousand times a thousand teeth, but the nixie was able to keep hold of them, and finally got to the other side.

Then the girl threw a mirror behind her, which turned into a glass mountain, which was so slippery, so slippery that it was impossible for the nixie to climb over it.

Then she thought, "I will quickly go home and get my ax and chop the glass mountain in two."

However, by the time she returned and had chopped up the glass mountain, the children were far away and had escaped, so the water nixie had to trudge back to her well.

The Wishing Well

This, above anything else, is a story of love. There once was a man and a woman who lived a happy life. They travelled together and entertained and found only joy on the road before them, but as they grew older together they found that one thing missing in their life—they desperately wanted a child.

They prayed with priests. They tried the solutions that Men of Science offered them. They tried witchery. No matter how hard they tried, none of this worked. Just as they began to lose hope, they tried one last thing.

In the Cotting Woods there lived a wise old owl who knew the ways and the secrets the forest offered. The couple went to him and begged for this one thing they wanted so desperately. The owl, in turn, was moved by their love for each other and told them that they must follow a path in the woods. And so, hand in hand, they did. At the end of this path they found a clearing and in that clearing stood a wishing well. Together, they wished with the whole of their hearts for a child.

They heard the sound of a baby's cry, and there, on the other side of the well they found a baby in a basket. A cat laying on top of her as if to guard her. This was the gift that true love and wisdom gave that day.

The Zombies of Hollowdale

This tale was told to me by Cordula Nekros, as she bore witness to the terrible deaths of the people of the tiny hamlet of Glendale the night the Zombies came to the town. Due to the tragic events that took place near the Cotting House on April 19, 2013, this tale can no longer be considered as Truth, and is the cause that this tome can no longer be admitted into the Index of the Word.

I have included it here, as reconstructed by my notes, for the sake of completeness.

--Senior Scholar Devon Greene

Once there was a small hamlet of Hollowdale, nestled in the hills and woods, far from any source of trouble in the world, or so the people there believed. It was a simple life, but a good one. And this was the beginning of the tale of the people of Hollowdale.

But one day there came to this peaceful village two travelers, a young man and woman. It was plain to see to anyone that the two were in love, and equally plain to see that the woman was dying.

The people of the town were wary, as it seemed she had a Plague. And they had heard such tales of the plague that had taken so many lives in the village of Glenhold, not so far away, that they would not welcome the travelers into their homes, not even when the man begged.

But the people were not heartless, and so they pointed them to a barn and left them food and drink, and even the local Hearth Witch stopped to see if there was anything she might do. But, alas, the illness upon the woman was too great, and none would dare seek out a Wood Witch after Glenhold. There was nothing there could be done.

In the morning, the people awoke to the sound of the man's weeping, for the woman he loved had died in the night. With anger and grief he turned to them, "You could have saved her!" the man cried. "I will never forgive you for this! You will suffer, too!"

The people tried to calm the man, but he would have none of this and ran off into the Woods. The people then buried the woman in the graveyard not far beyond the village.

And so the tale might have ended there. Certainly it did not, though the tale of what the man did next in the months and time intervening, the Patrons have not yet revealed to us.

But what is known is that a year passed, and on the anniversary of that fateful night, the villagers heard a noise, and saw a fell light fall upon the graveyard. Wearily, the bravest among them went to see what was happening. And there they saw the man, dressed now in robes much like a magician, standing over the grave where his beloved had been buried, the dirt overturned. And the woman, all rotted and bones and all, standing up beside him.

“Necromancer!” they cried.

And the man laughed. “Yes,” he said to them. “I will cheat death. I will change her tale. And you shall all pay the price.”

And he raised his hand, and called forth magic so dark and foul that only a Nekros might have heard whispers of its terrors, a secret magic long banned by the Church and secreted away. There was a tremor, and the ground moved, and all the dead came to life.

“Their life is yours,” the man whispered to the undead about him, and set the Zombies upon the town.

Once there was a small hamlet of Hollowdale, nestled in the hills and woods, far from any source of trouble in the world, or so the people there believed. It was a simple life, but a good one, but now it had come to the end.

The Zombies raged through the town, killing every living person. Until at least only one home stood, with a few people bravely fighting inside, and the Hearth Witch valiantly trying to keep her Hearth, and Cordula Nekros, who had been passing by, calmly writing the tale of this death in her book, accepting that she, too, may perish this way.

But this was a dark night, and there was no hope in the end. Finally the zombies broke through the door, and even the Hearth Witch’s magic was not great enough to stop them entering. The Magician man laughed, and looked at the Hearth Witch who remained.

“I would have given her life if I could,” the Hearth Witch said, standing bravely before him. “She could not be saved.”

“And neither can you,” he said cruelly, and with a gesture, sent his Zombies upon her.

But seeing Cordula Nekros, still writing in her corner, the sole survivor, the Magician raised his hand, and stopped his horde. He gave her a mocking bow. “Let it not be said that I do not thank the House of Nekros for what they do and have done,” he said. “You are not of Hollowdale, and I would have their deaths be told.”

And then, with his dead love and his zombies about him, the Magician turned and walk back into the Darkness.

And that is the story of the fate of Hollowdale.