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The Girl Who Fell in Love with Death

by

Gea Haff

Once upon a time there was an innocent girl who fell in love with Death. Her mother was most displeased with this course of events as were all the young maiden's suitors. They did not believe her when she said she was saving herself for Death.

A fancy, they scoffed. A fad, they laughed, though not without a wrinkled brow. "Then why not go to him now?" one spat in frustration.

"Because," she said, "he will not have me. He says I'm not yet of age. But I will wait and save myself only for him. If you touch me, He shall punish you."

And although they did not believe her, when they closed their eyes at night they were set upon with such a cold dread, it gave them pause in the morning with the coming dawn. And as there is an endless supply of young pretty girls, each suitor moved on, certain the girl was mad and not worth the trouble of their lust.

And so the years passed.

Her mother, having died peacefully, the young woman lived alone in the forest, but she was not alone, not for a moment. All the trees were her siblings and they embraced her, whispering their secrets in her ear and guarding her fiercely.

The birds sang their songs to her. Sometimes they screamed: Pay Attention! Wake Up Now! Listen, Listen, Listen to the Language of God.

In time the stag, the wolf, the branch and the bird shared their secret most secrets too. The ant, the bee, the bit of soft green moss, entrusted to her the mysteries.

The Earth is a map. You are Earth.

She learned to read the Spider's Web and to decipher the Map of the World.

To understand the Language of God.

And she fell ever more deeply in love with Death. He was her greatest teacher and guide. He slayed her doubts and taught her to conquer her fears. It wasn't easy. He made her work for it. Death loved his initiations. He could be rough, brutal even. But no being was a more loving lover than Death. In the dark of night, as she lay in the deepest forest, he came and wrapped her in his embrace. He gave her comfort. He gave her courage. He filled her with the roar of his wings.

One day a dark prince appeared in the

woods, bloodied and scarred. He didn't look like a prince. He was a man, not a boy, and a worn battered one at that. But there was strength to his shoulders still. Defiance in his eyes. His hands were hard as steel and they gripped her when she lifted his head to give him cool water to drink.

He opened his eyes and they were filled with blood. It startled her. She was accustomed to death but she gasped all the same. She had never seen a man so marked with its imprint still able to breathe. She realized it was only the blood vessels in both eyes, ruptured like star bursts, fractured crimson flames.

She led him to her hut and she healed him, all the while waiting for Death to come visit.

But He didn't.

Sometimes she thought He was already there, sipping on broth and nettle tea, staring at her with his healed eyes. While she waited for Death she wondered, had he slipped inside this man maybe for a moment? So pale was his hair as to be almost white. So blue were his eyes as to be almost frozen. His breath steamed in the winter air. He drank her hot brews. He submitted to her ministrations. And every night he grew stronger than the one before.

The wolf howled one midnight when the moon was full and ripe.

And still Death did not come.

"Why have you abandoned me? the girl cried out to Death. "What have I done? How have I offended thee? Tell me!" she demanded to the darkness.

But all was silence.

She sank to her knees. "I am yours. I have only ever been yours. Why do you shun me?" she whispered to the abyss. That night the girl fell asleep upon the moss beneath the moon, beside a wolf. A stag paused under a great Elm and drew God down through his horns into the Earth.

The man, a fallen prince, found her there desolate upon the ground.

"I am here, my love," he whispered. He turned her over so that the kiss of the moon fell upon her face.

"I am here my sweet," he murmured. He laid his lips upon her mouth, his hand upon her breast. With a knee he edged her thighs apart.

She opened her eyes and saw Death gazing down at her.

"Save me," he begged, and he plunged deep inside her. She screamed to the stars in pain and ecstasy. She arched and opened and gave herself freely.

And there upon the forest floor with a wolf and stag watching while all the trees held their breath, Death claimed his maiden. He made her whole upon the crushed grass and through his endless baptism initiated her into the mystery of freshly created things.

The End

--Inspired by Garcia Lorca's essay on Duende