Juniper Hill: Continued

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Nicholas Silverseed, the son of a magician, has from his long-absent father a coming-of-age gift: a birthday sneeze. Nicholas aspires to become the Royal Bard of Southmarsh, and to this end has taken service at the court of King Toby. On his travels before arriving at Thornbrooke Castle, Nicholas has observed ominous flocks of blackbirds heading northward.

In the castle, King Toby’s daughter Clarissa struggles unhappily with her embroidery. Her parents want her to wed the Grand Duke of Walton Wold and to learn to play the lute to please him. Fortunately, she meets Joan, a new serving-maid who loves to do needlework. While they plan to switch places, allowing Clarissa to get out of the castle for an hour or two a day, the windows are suddenly assaulted by blackbirds. As they crash through the windowpanes, black feathers everywhere, the girls cover their heads.

A rescue party led by Clarissa’s mother Queen Elianora finds the princess examining the bodies in hopes of discovering one still alive for purposes of interrogation. The distraught Elianora orders Clarissa off with Master Pickney for her music lesson, while she herself confronts King Toby. Her husband applauds Clarissa’s mettle, so Elianora implies that unless the child learns refined behavior, no suitor will ever want to marry her. Acceding, Toby orders Clarissa kept indoors.

In the parlor, Clarissa practices. Her labors are regrettably overheard by the Grand Duke of Walton Wold, who promptly changes his mind and withdraws his suit for her hand. Elianora promptly orders Clarissa to spend three hours a day on her embroidery instead of only one. Clarissa restrains her delight. With three hours to go about in disguise as Joan, she will be able to travel to Thorn Wood and back! As for Joan herself, she looks forward to the glowing colors of blackbirds heading northward.

"I am thinking of it," he admitted, "though I know not what I could do against a whole flock. I may look about in Thorn Wood tomorrow if I can slip away from the stable, and perhaps find some clue to their whereabouts. I must admit," he added, "that I cannot understand these strange birds. Why should they fly about the castle so oddly?"

Guy shook his head. "'Tis very strange," he agreed. "And more like a dragon than a flock of birds. But there are no more returnings in these times."

"Happy for us!" grinned Nicholas. "I'd not care to go up against a dragon."

"Oh, you'd manage somehow," said his friend. "You're sharper than Elfin Odel's sword. Never so sharp as myself, of course," he added playfully, "but then I'm not after the gold. I've no family to care for, and I'm well enough on my own."

"Nicholas grinned again. "And if you marry?"

"Faith, Nick, what talk is that! I'll wed no bold-eyed castle lass, and I'll not be back to Wynchingham till two years come May."

"Aye, and then you'll go wenching in Wynchingham!" laughed Nicholas. "Take care not to catch yourself in the winches of your wenches' charms!"

Guy aimed a playful blow at his friend's ribs.

"Aow, mercy!" wailed Nicholas.

"See how I winch with pain!"

The conversation ended in a good-natured scuffle.

"Now, remember," said Clarissa as she shot the bolt, 'you must make some mistakes in the embroidery. Especially knots on the undersides--I'm forever making those. I have ordered the servants not to disturb us, and my lady mother is too occupied to be bothered, so you need only go down at four o'clock to fetch up the tea. If there is any trouble, I shall attend to it upon my return."

She began to let down her hair. Joan laced her fingers nervously.

"But your Grace, what if--"

"No buts!" said Clarissa. "All adventures have their risks. There, how do I look?"

She stood barefoot before the fireplace in the too-short skirt, her immaculate hands folded beneath the too-large bodice, her shining brown hair tumbling over her shoulders.

"You look like a princess dressed as a serving-maid," said Joan truthfully.

"Your skin is too smooth and your hair is too shiny and you look too proud, even when you slouch."

Clarissa had assumed a posture that would have sent Juliana into horrible hysterics. Now she pulled a face to match.

"I'll rub some earth on my hands when I get outdoors. Or--here!" She scooped up a handful of warm ashes and began to rub them across her face. Joan let out a squeak of dismay.

"Don't do that! We'll never get them off! Earth is much easier to cleanse away. Just remember to hang your head a little. No, not like that. Just look at the ground when you walk. That's better."

Clarissa, carefully looking at the floor, edged her way toward the tapestry behind the clotheshorse.

"I can't walk in this," she complained. "I'll bump into something. I can't see where I'm going."

"Pretend you're carrying something you don't want to spill," suggested Joan. "How can I run, then?"

Joan giggled. "Never mind, your Grace. I'm sure no one will notice you." She glanced at the hour glass. "And please, your Grace, don't be late!"

Clarissa grinned. "Never fear. I shall return anon!" She flourished the corner of the tapestry as she had seen the knights flourish their cloaks at the tourneys, and whipped up a spiral of dust that all but blinded her. Coughing, she managed to spring the wall panel that opened onto the scullery stairs, seldom used by the castle household and often referred to among the younger members as the 'secret passage.' The secret passage was the exclusive property of trysting lovers, children, pages on errands of urgency, and anyone on errands of mischief, which meant that Clarissa could have navigated it blindfold with both wrists bound behind her. As it was, she prided herself on the fact that she had used a candle for years and had never, as yet, so much as slipped.

She made her way down through the thick, musty-smelling darkness, round and round and round till the steps began to be faintly visible below her, and the scents and sounds of kitchen life to make their presences known. She proceeded cautiously to the foot of the stair and ducked into the kitchen passage branching off to her right, which led past the scullery and into the kitchen-garden. So far, so good. Probably most of the servants were busy with sunnystay chores on the castle.

"Well, Nick, it would seem you've taken the King's words to heart," said Guy as they brushed hay from their clothes and wet their hands at the water trough. "Are you thinking of hunting out those blackbirds yourself to gain the purse of gold? I know it's a large family you have, and you could be using such a prize."

Nicholas smiled in the gloom as they walked toward the central square of the servants' village, where the meals were

Part 7

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grounds: washing, gardening, airing the linen were all jobs that were pushed into the last of the good weather. This meant, of course, that she would have quite a gauntlet to run once she got outdoors, but she might be able to evade the worst of it by ducking along the hedgerows.

She sidled out the scullery door and made her way across the kitchen-garden, trying to look both nonchalant and occupied, so that no one would ask her where she was off to. No one gave her a second glance, especially when she did not even look up from their fragrant beds of herbs, and the beekeepers were too involved in their own preservation to pay attention to anything else.

She cut across the far end of the orchard to avoid contact with the castle women, whose laughter and sharp remarks could be heard from the little stream where they beat the clothes clean upon the rocks. King's Rill, as the stream was called, wandered down from the heart of the castle wood to join Thorn Brook several miles below Castletown.

The cool turf beneath the apple trees gave way to sun-warmed meadowgrass that reached almost to Clarissa's knees. Daisies, cornflowers and gipsy's lace nodded in the breeze, stretching away toward the wood on the one side and the downs on the other.

Away in the distance she could see King Toby's shepherds, small dots against the green in their blue and brown smocks, and faintly on the wind came a gentle baaing and the chink of bells.

Clarissa had never been so far from the castle, except for processions in Castletown, when she had been flanked by bodyguards and followed by ladies-in-waiting. She paused, bewildered by the new sights, sounds and scents. She was tempted to lie down among the flowers, but she caught herself and turned resolutely toward the wood. Today she must search for the blackbirds and, if possible, reach almost to Clarissa's knees. Daisies, for once, found themselves at a loss for words.

"Please stay," she said in her most deal obliging tone, "I love music. I don't see why you should be afraid of me."

Nicholas regarded the newcomer and, for once, found himself at a loss for words. He had seen her stumble in the churchyard, and he was not about to put to his lips, but his dark eyes were fixed on her with surprise, wariness and, she noticed uncomfortably, curiosity. Snapping snuffboxes! she thought, what now?

Nicholas had the uncomfortable feeling that he was trespassing. He had also had a very uncomfortable suspicion of the girl's identity and felt his throat go dry. He swallowed. "I'm Nicholas," he said, "and I was just leaving."

"No, wait!" said Clarissa. She had been thinking fast during this brown lad's reply, and she was sure that this was an elf. His distrustful manner had aroused her curiosity - that and his woodland looks. And with a name like Silverseed, who could doubt it? She must try to overcome her natural shyness.

"Please stay," she said in her most obliging tone, "I love company. I don't see why you should be afraid of me."

"Oh, so must - " began Clarissa, and then realized that she didn't want him asking questions about her. She nodded and said lamely, "So you must, too?"

Nicholas' smile was grim. So she was about to play your flute for me? she asked humbly.

Nicholas nearly laughed aloud. Apparently this sprite was not used to resistance in her visitors. Good then: he would show her not all humans were superstitious milksops. He grinned at her as he turned the instrument in his hands.

"This isn't a flute," he said, "it's a whistle. But I have a flute in my pouch." He pulled it out and blew on it, then rubbed it with his sleeve.

"It's beautiful," said Clarissa. "I love music." She paused. She wanted very badly to jump the stream and sit on the soft moss of the glen - but would it be wise? And would the brown elf allow it? She squirmed as he polished his flute; the bracken on this side grew right up to the bank, and there were thorns sticking into her back. She took a deep breath.

"May I come across?" she asked in a small voice.

Nicholas felt a knot tighten slowly in his belly. This little sprite wanted trouble. Until now, there had been running water between them, and she was asking him to invite her across it! He opened his mouth for a sharp retort, and suddenly felt reckless. Why not invite her over? He would deal with her if she tried any tricks. He gave her another smile to show her that he knew what he was courting.

"Come ahead," he said.

Clarissa went cold again when she saw that smile, and her courage nearly failed, but she tossed her head. She was a princess. She took a flying leap and landed in a bundle on the opposite bank. She sat up hurriedly, brushing the grass from her skirt, and stared at the elf. He was very tan indeed, with very black hair, and he was smiling at her mockingly. She lifted her chin and put her hair back from her face with a little flick. It wasn't as bad as she had feared.

Nicholas studied her curiously. Seen from closer, she looked more spritish than ever. Her hair had a sheen like still water;
her skin was white, whiter than gipsy's 
lace, with the same sheen as her hair.

She was in the corner, like a 
tinker's, but she had a glow and a sparkle 
that no tinker maid could ever copy. And 
there was an air about her, a way of move-
ing hands, of tipping the head, a lift to the 
voice that made his fingers tingle. He re-

The Coming of Beorn (illustrated by Phil) uses vivid, 
direct imagery and a gripping story line to describe the first 
encounter between the bear-man and the goblins of the Misty 
Mountains. His illustrations show the definite influence of 

Szetel: <i>Juniper Hill</i> Continued

\begin{enumerate}
  \item First issue, Jan. 1975, 35¢/copy,
  \item 35 pages long like the other two \textit{zines}.
\end{enumerate}

The third major contribution is Tom Cook's poem, "Tom Bombadil Journeys to Mother Nature." The idea is sound; 
however, Tom has chosen a difficult meter. It is almost that 
of Tolkien's original Bombadil songs, but adds a syllable to 
each line that forces the eye to jump awkwardly. Otherwise, 
it's very pleasant to read. Note should be made of Phil Helms' 
"Law Notes," part of a series in which the "baddies" have their 
day in court, and a chance to complain about any legal irregular-
ities by the "goodies." The case in this issue was Saruman 
vs. Gandalf: was Saruman de-staffed by proper impeachment 
procedure? For puzzle men, there is a Tolkien word search.

The story is gentle and should 

FANZINE REVIEW

MINAS TIRITH EVENING-STAR by Phil and Marcia Helms, 
4581 Glenalda Drive, Drayton Plains, MI 48020. 35¢/copy

"An elf?" he echoed. "I, an elf?"

if she didn't, then she wasn't

"You're not a wood sprite?" he asked

as calmly as he could.

"Me?" exclaimed Clarissa. She saw 
his expression and said, "You mean, 
you're not an elf after all?"

"A saddlemaker for the King's 
stable," said Nicholas. Something was 
very strange here. The magic had not 
diminished in the glen, it was stron-
ger than ever. Was she the source? Or 
was it the glen itself? But if she were 
not a sprite, what was she? A witch?

Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm--" began Clarissa, and sudden-
ly looked sly. "I'll tell you--tomorrow!"

She turned and ducked into the brack-

The glade was suddenly silent.

"Wait!" called Nicholas. "What's 
your name?"

There was no answer. She was gone 
as suddenly as she had come, and strain 
as he would, he could hear no sounds of 
 footsteps in the distance. With the sil-
ence came suddenly a feeling of overwhel-
ming loss, so profound that he sat down 
with a shudder. The magic in his 

fingerstips still ran strong. But he had no 
sensed it at all until she had crossed the 
stream, so he could not blame it on the 
glade. Well, if the lass with the brown 
eyes had cast a spell on him, she would 
not get off so easily! He would reckon 
with her on the morrow.

TO BE CONTINUED

GUEST EDITORIAL--from p. 11

things are essentially inseparable. Each of them is the 
complete book separately; yet in the complete book all of 
them exist together. He can, by an act of the intellect, 
"distinguish the persons" but he cannot by any means "divide 
the substance". How could he? He cannot know the Idea, 
except by the Power interpreting his own Activity to him;

he knows the Activity only as it reveals the Idea in Power; 
he knows the Power only as the revelation of the Idea in the 
Activity. All he can say is that these three are equally 
eternally present in his own act of creation, and at every 
moment of it, whether or not the act ever becomes manifest 
in the form of a written and printed book. These things are 
not confined to the material manifestation: they exist in-
they are--the creative mind itself."