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Puttleleaf

by Katy Wise

It was love at first sight when Puttleleaf walked in to that bar. But it was not love for him that she felt, although long ago that would have been the case. She had heard rumours he was here, that he had left the safety of his forest to wander the wild places, and that he was looking for something. She had wondered if it was her he sought.

Their love had been young and unrequited, she was from an ancient royal family reaching back to the birth of time, she had fairy blood in her veins and an air of magic about her, while he was a common forest dweller. Her parents had forbid it, but it was years after that she relinquished her prestigious name and took to the roads.

There were few left who knew her true nature, but those that did were loyal to her and provided protection.

She looked at Trimble now, he had aged well, and was fit and strong with a sun worn look from a lifetime of the outdoors, he had not noticed her yet, although the kestrel on his arm had.

She had a feeling he was as content as her to be here for it was the place she had fallen in love with, a village in the midst of a forest of bluebells, their sweet heady scent filled the air and dappled light lit up the kind faces of the locals, who welcomed travellers with cold beer, hot tea and plentiful meals. This was a happy place, supplies could be replenished, horses rested and companions reunited.

The Swinging Bluebell where they both now resided was painted a sunny yellow, comfortable warm chairs encircled a huge stone fireplace and pretty paintings of wildlife scattered the walls, a handsome man cleaned glasses behind the bar and his sparkling blue eyes served her two whiskeys on request.

It was true, she thought, they are an elvish people not unlike myself.

She was tempted to smile back but it was no longer in her nature, she nodded her appreciation instead and turned to sit by the dormant fire.

The kestrel's eyes still followed her but Trimble was lost in conversation with a local girl, till two young men like partners in crime, fresh and exhilarated from hunting clattered through the door, deerhounds just as bouncy and enthusiastic as them by their sides, clapped Trimble on the back, threw him a wink and escorted the girl away.

Trimble chuckled and rolled his eyes at his bird, before turning towards the fireplace intend on a comfortable seat and some smoked venison.

But the barman observed him stop in his tracks as he did so as if the breath had been knocked out of him, at the sight of the ageless woman who pushed a whiskey slowly in his direction.

“Pearltaim,” Trimble gasped.

“Its been a long time since anyone called me by that name,” replied Puttleleaf and this time she smiled.