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The Role of Magic in Fantasy Literature:
Exposing Reality through Fantasy

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Chapter 1 – Magic: Breaking the Border between Worlds

There is no such thing as magic in our reality as we might find in fantasy literature. Instead, the “magic,” of our reality is more in line with theorist Tzvetan Todorov’s concept of the fantastic. Card play and parlor tricks, legerdemain and illusions: these are tricks created by human logic, and ingenuity. And even though we are aware of its falsity, we still hold our breath. This moment of hesitation is incumbent on Todorov’s signature definition of the fantastic: “The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event,” (Todorov, 25). However, there is no explicit answer to that hesitation, which world the reader occupies, at least offered by the author. The readers must answer it for themselves.

There is a natural border between the realm of the real, and the realm of the fantastic. One is placed in the world we know, and the other occupies a space that is unreal. The reader’s hesitation between real and unreal helps define the border between these worlds, and also offers a path from one to the other; their uncertainty helps them cross between each world. Without the reader’s participation, without their moment of uncertainty and crossing of worlds, the purpose of the fantastic narrative is lost. That is, the reader does not hesitate, and so does not see the fantastic of the narrative.

Todorov’s definition of the fantastic is still relevant to modern fantasy literature. In a genre that is now branching off into subgenres ranging from urban fantasies to supernatural romance, Todorov’s definition of the fantastic affects and shapes all of them. Despite the label of their subgenre, a distancing from traditional fantastic narratives, these new narratives still produce the sense of unreality that Todorov’s fantasy is capable of creating.

Despite being labeled as a genre widely known for its stereotypes – wizards, witches, dragons – fantasy literature has a unique relationship to reality. Fantasy literature is able to utilize the reader’s hesitation to its advantage. Their uncertainty of reality lets fantasy literature highlight the world they actually live in. But because it is a separate world commenting on another, the commentary is safe, and comes from a place of unreality. In doing so, remaining a separate entity, fantasy literature can expose reality for what it is; by having an outside perspective, and utilizing various tools, fantasy literature is able to expose the truths of reality.

Ultimately though, the purpose of fantasy literature, in relation to reality, lies in what Rosemary Jackson says in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. As Jackson says, “Fantasy recombines and inverts the real, but does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real. The fantastic cannot exist independently of that ‘real,’ world,” (Jackson, 20). Jackson points to an idea of fantasy literature that must be kept in mind when discussing the genre: it does not live in a vacuum. Even in its form, fantasy is still in some point of dialogue between itself and the rest of the world, even if it is just borrowing ideas or concepts. That relationship, according to Jackson, is parasitical or symbiotic. What Jackson is highlighting is that other fiction can exist independently of the real world, while fantasy literature cannot.

Jackson uses the image of a lens achieving paraxis in order to illustrate the position of fantasy literature in relation to the real. Paraxis is an optical term for an area where “light rays seem to unite . . . after refraction . . . Object and image seem to collide but in fact neither object or image . . . reside there,” (Jackson, 19). That paraxial area, Jackson posits, is the space in which the fantastic exists: “neither entirely ‘real’ (object), nor entirely ‘unreal’ (image), but is located somewhere . . . between the two,” (Jackson, 20). The uncertainty of the fantastic, much like Todorov asserted, is a vital concept. With fantasy literature playing in this ambiguous space, this

border between definite real and unreal, authors use the parasitical/symbiotic relationship Jackson spoke of. Other fiction, which is able to function as the object or as the image, exists in a dialogue with itself; it is already grounded. Fantasy literature needs the reality found in other fiction, as a means of crossing over to the real.

That paraxial area, the border between worlds, not only grounds fantasy literature, but gives it access to reality. This grounding of fantasy in reality is what causes the break in reality, because by acknowledging what's real, fantasy can expose it. "The fantastic is a spectral presence, suspended between being and nothingness. It takes the real and breaks it," (Jackson, 20). Mainstream fiction literature can exist independently of our reality because it lives in our reality; fantasy literature does not have that luxury.

And despite the stereotypes that influence people's expectations of the genre, fantasy literature has more than enough merit to accomplish this complex narrative agenda of exposing reality. Brian Attebery provides a definition of fantasy that affirms the importance of fantasy literature's relationship to reality, and showcases exactly what fantasy literature can accomplish using the reader's uncertainty. Attebery sees fantasy as existing in two states simultaneously: fantasy as a formula and fantasy as a mode. The first acknowledges the trend of fantasy as "a form of popular escapist literature," (1), which lives comfortably in the world of generic fantasy tropes: dragons, wizards, young heroes, and more. The second states that fantasy as a mode is characterized with "stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought," (Attebery, 1).

Fantasy literature as a mode, according to Attebery, fits perfectly within the sphere of legitimate fiction. It is a much more aware narrative than its cousin, the form. It can play with expectations, find ways to subvert the given tropes of the genre, and comes with a heightened

sense of identity, capable of highlighting reality itself. In these ways, fantasy authors have an easier time relating their fantasy literature back to reality. Their awareness of the genre allows them to deftly cross the border between real and unreal. Since they are actively looking for what to discuss about our world, they can craft their fantastic narrative to expose reality, and explore what it means to them. Fantasy as formula caters much more to the tropes of the genre, rather than making a concentrated effort to create that break between worlds; while it may produce that uncertainty discussed before, it lives comfortably on its own, with the border between worlds remaining intact, if translucent.

Many fantasy stories, even those that take place within our reality, have elements and worlds that are greatly removed from the everyday. Fantasy authors therefore must create a means by which, as Jackson might say, fill in the paraxial space, between the real and the unreal. This filling of space not only acknowledges the relationship between reality and fantasy, it creates a means to break the barrier between the two; the various devices of fantasy exist as a means to expose reality for what it is.

Through its use of mode, and its paraxial relation to the real, fantasy literature has the unique ability to critique and analyze reality in a way that is both removed and immediate. Fantasy literature has many tools to implement this subversive treatment and/or commentary. The tools fantasy literature authors' use for this commentary are numerous, ranging from character perspective, to allegorical narrative, metaphor, and awareness of its own expectations. However, one of the more powerful tools in the fantasy author's toolbox to cross the border between realities is the device of magic, whose very presence punctures the membrane between worlds.

To define magic specifically, we must turn to the primary sources. Every author interprets magic differently, but all ask for some connection to the real world, or at the very least, a connection to a familiar, human concept i.e. scientific law, universal physics, sacrifice, secrets, etc. Kvothe learns in *The Name of the Wind*, that magic can let you, “impose your will on the world,” (Rothfuss, 78), giving us a glimpse into magic as a tool of agency. Wizard Harry Dresden of Jim Butcher’s *Storm Front*, defines magic as “tap(ping) into the fundamental energies of creation and life itself,” (Butcher, 18), and that it, “comes from inside of you,” (Butcher, 20), showing us its form as a point of origin. The Unicorn of Peter S. Beagle’s novel, *The Last Unicorn*, says to a malicious witch, “Real magic can never be made by offering up someone else’s liver. You must tear out your own and not expect to get it back,” (Beagle, 32), depicting sacrifice. C.S. Lewis, through the voice of Queen Jadis in *The Magician’s Nephew* claims that the most powerful magic can be called, “the secret of secrets,” (Lewis, 70), offering magic as a truth. And in N. K. Jemisin’s novel, *The Kingdom of Gods*, her protagonist Sieh says magic is a, “call to reality, and reality responds . . . we and existence are one and the same,” (Jemisin, 135), the ultimate connection between self and reality.

Magic exists as both a signifier of the genre and a device in which to explore real world concepts. Authors are able to introduce contemporary concerns and truths of reality, by breaking through the border of worlds and exposing certain aspects of reality through the device of magic. The majority of authors within the mode of fantasy utilize their magic and their story, as a means to ground their fantasy narrative with a real world influence, in order to glimpse the inside of this reality.

This thesis will present how fantasy authors, depending upon the context of their narratives, utilize the break in reality their magic creates in different ways. For authors such as

J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis, who write in secondary world narratives, utilize the device of magic to bring real world agendas – the introduction of Christianity, the horrors of fascism - to a fantasy world. Meanwhile, authors like Neil Gaiman and Jim Butcher, who work in Urban Fantasy narratives, utilize the device of magic to repurpose the fantastic elements of our reality – fairy tales, mythology – into a commentary on human narrative.

All of this research is being conducted for the benefit of a creative piece at the end of the thesis. As a young fantasy author myself, it is my hope to one day publish fantasy and other speculative work of my own. However, in order to do that, I need to have a deep, working knowledge of the genre I plan to work in. This thesis has been preparing me for a novel of my own that I have been working on: *Candle*. At the end of each chapter is an analysis of how each author has added to my creative piece. Finally, at the end of the thesis, there will be a creative piece from *Candle*, exploring how the previous authors' works have contributed to how I think of magic and what my magic says about my views on reality.

Chapter 2 - The Magic of C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien: Exposing Modern Agendas

To understand the break that magic is capable of, one must begin with the classics. The study of magic in fantasy must begin with two of the founding fathers of classic fantasy literature structure: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien are authors responsible for creating some of the most instantly recognizable and influential works in fantasy literature: *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Lord of the Rings*, respectively. In these worlds, magic as a border is represented in two very distinct ways. Lewis' narrative and magic in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, are highly allegorical of Christ's life, death, and rebirth, as represented by Aslan the Lion. Tolkien's link back to the real world was formed in a post-World War wish for nostalgia, back to the times when the world was not ravaged by war and death. His land of Middle-Earth is in transition, as ancient, magical races begin to fade, and man comes into their own as a world power. While peace is eventually secured, it comes at a high price: the reign of man ensures the death of magic, and the birth of industry in the wake of war.

When reading these stories as a child, the authors' ideas of Christ figures and pre-industrial nostalgia, did not cross my mind. The thing that spoke to me most at that age was the wonder and the magic of a new world. Both authors granted me something I could not get from reality itself. Tolkien's character of Gandalf let me experience life as a powerful magician: wise and kind, intelligent and magical. Lewis' story brought children from earth to a new world, and imbued them with weapons and wisdom, and magic.

Trying to understand magic is something that never crossed my mind when I was a child. It was there to provide a Todorovian sense of wonder, creating the uncertainty of which world I lived in. It was a way to distance myself from my own world without losing myself completely.

Why it is there, how it works, why some can do it and others cannot; these were just window-dressings for me. For me at that age, magic helped create a sense of wonder, and it is what made fantasy literature so enticing to me.

Now older, magic in fantasy literature, has taken on a different meaning. Much like Attebery defines fantasy literature in two ways, both existing simultaneously, so too does the magic of Tolkien and Lewis act. On the one hand, they are devices used to enhance the wonder of a fantastic world and story: hobbits and giant lions, walking trees and powerful witches. But on the other, as much as Tolkien and Lewis celebrated the form of the genre – talking animals, wizards, dragons - they both had agendas, and issues with the real world that found a home in the mode of the genre, through their narratives and magic. Lewis worked to introduce Christianity to children in a way he never had when he was younger, using the form of the genre to work in his allegory. Tolkien worked to illustrate the death of nostalgia and innocence i.e. magic, to a world still reeling from the horrors and warfare of the World Wars.

The first thing we must look at it how their created worlds link to human creation myths, a crucial step in building a world familiar to their audiences. Lewis strictly ties himself to the Christian experience of world creation, just one monotheistic experience. As Wood says, Lewis' stubbornness "leads him to use the Christian myth as a closure on human existence," (Wood).

Lewis' world creation is specifically geared towards this idea of the Christian myth antecedent. According to Hartt, "religion is not only looking backward; it is conformity to a predetermined order . . . (had) no capacity for the genuinely new, no real potency; neither can there be any celebration of other stories. Lewis' world is closed off," (Hartt). Lewis, in his *Chronicles of Narnia*, has recycled the story of creation, and of the bible; as a storyteller, he

limits himself, cutting himself off from any sort of new idea or take on his story. His use of the Christian creation myth creates a narrow break, and hinders the reader's ability to connect to the story. They are forced to view the story through a specific lens: a Christian viewpoint and that is all. The link from fantasy to reality is solid but it is not a strong narrative choice.

Lewis himself has no problem admitting his purpose in writing the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis felt the form of the fairy tale could “steal past a certain inhibition which had paralyzed much of my own religion in childhood . . . supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could,” (Lewis). Utilizing the form of the fantastic, Lewis was able to tailor his story, so that the frame of the form actually softened the impact of the mode, his Christian allegory, rather than intensify it. By embracing the signifiers of the form – talking animals, magic, epic battles – Lewis was able to weave his Christian allegorical work into his story underneath the form.

Magic creates a break in the border between worlds, and usually uses a character or device by which the real world counterpart can be recognized. Lewis' uses the character of Aslan the Lion, whose role within the magical world of Narnia is both creator and savior. Aslan is such powerful conduit of the land's magic that even at the mention of his name, there is an effect felt, like the answering of a prayer. At the mention of Aslan, who is nowhere in sight, “each one of the children felt something jump in its inside,” like when a strange word in a dream has, “some enormous meaning – either a terrifying one . . . or else a lovely meaning,” (Lewis, 74).

The effect of Aslan's name is indicative of his status within the world. As Kaufmann says, Lewis is showing "that the human heart can recognize all sorts of wonderful things that are somehow present even in their absence. This would be true . . . of high things, of the things above us, supernatural and lordly, kingly, eminent, up and out-of-sight, the implied ideal. Aslan is the king of the beasts . . . a picture of the God who becomes incarnate," (Kaufmann, 12-13). Aslan, as the god incarnate of Narnia, is everywhere and nowhere, and his presence, when written by Lewis, drives home his godly nature.

Aslan sings Narnia into being. Invoking Genesis, in the final moments of Narnia's birth, Aslan says, "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters," (Lewis, 138). It is a command given, much like the Christian God, and from then on, the world is alive. From the, "valley of . . . earth, rock, and water," (Lewis, 119), to the "crumbled earth . . . from each hump there came out an animal," (133), Aslan goes through almost every step of Genesis from the Bible. That is because for Lewis, as Hartt says, "the Christian myth is the key to an antecedent order in the universe . . . all of life is a movement back into this objective basis, an affirmation of order and control," (Hartt). According to Hartt, Lewis felt that all stories must move back to this place of birth, as according to the Christian myth.

The exposing of reality his magic creates, is ultimately realized in the death and rebirth of Aslan, in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. Aslan sacrifices himself to save the Pevensie children from the Witch, invoking "a deep magic, according to which one life can be offered for another," (Kauffman, 16). Willingly, he sacrifices himself for man, and so dies. However, after his death, he is reborn in the sunrise. When asked how he survived, Aslan tells the children, "there is a magic deeper still . . . if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness

and the darkness before time dawned . . . she would have known that when a willing victim . . . was killed in the traitor's stead . . . Death itself would start working backward," (Lewis, 178-79).

Aslan, though he mentions the concept of a deeper magic beyond space and time, is actually fulfilling a sacrifice of himself, to himself. In the same way Jesus Christ had to die before the gates of Heaven could stand open, Aslan is reborn through his sacrifice. However, it is clear that Lewis is drawing from the Christian myth, and transposing it into his own story, to complete the Christian cycle he has created.

Despite being a Christian himself, Tolkien did not evangelize his beliefs through his works. Rather, "Tolkien shared Lewis's conviction that God implanted natural law underlies everything created. Yet for Tolkien it was the imagination, far more than the reason, that discerns this divine order . . . He wanted his work to stand on its own intrinsic merits, to glorify God as a compelling and convincing story, not for it to be propped up with even so noble a purpose as evangelism." (Wood, 4). Tolkien's world is born of the idea that there are multiple stories, not just one mythos, and each can reveal a different facet of God. This ties into the universal human experience, and already, his narrative is more accessible to others. As Wood states, Tolkien used his world creation, "as an opening up of that (human) existence," (Wood).

Tolkien wanted to tell a story with many possibilities, "in the confidence that a real story is even yet in making within the differentiated being of God," (Hart). Tolkien was smart to not just focus on one monomyth in the creation of his world and magic, but rather, drew from many different cultures. Tolkien's ideas of nostalgia are the magic that helps expose reality; his magic is born of ancient races and the land itself, before it has been torn asunder by war and modern technology. Tolkien though, according to Wood, maintains that because he opted to go for more well-rounded inspiration of his world, he is able to appeal to, not only more readers, but to their

sense of story. Tolkien is not forcing his readers to read his story in one angle. He is aware of the broad range of human experiences and moves to embrace that.

Magic has a temporal, racial element to it in Tolkien's works. Of the non-human races, elves, and wizards have the most control over magic, being ancient races, of the land. Extremely reminiscent of Earth fairy tales and fairies, those of "Faerie in the West," (Tolkien, 164), were the "Light-elves and the Deep-elves and the Sea-elves," (Tolkien, 164), who "invented their magic and their cunning craft," (Tolkien, 164). These are a people for whom magic is indigenous; it was born with them. They have not lost it, because they do not travel to the, "Wide World," (Tolkien, 164), presumably the rest of Middle-Earth as a whole. Wizards belong to the same cloth as Elves; these peoples both have unique relationships to the earth and the magic therein.

Even races that cannot control magic are still bound by its natural laws, as they exist because of magic. When Bilbo and the dwarves are captured by the three trolls in *The Hobbit*, not one of the party bats an eye when, come the dawn, the trolls revert into stone. Because as everyone of this world knows, "trolls . . . must be underground before dawn, or they go back to the stuff of the mountains they are made of," (Tolkien, 52). This magical transformation evokes a cyclical form of nature, much like water will convert to mist and then to rain and over again, there is a natural, magical lifecycle to these beings and this world, reminiscent of our own.

However, as man begins to thrive, magic begins to die. In *The Lord of the Rings* especially, as Hinlicky says, "The fulcrum of power in Middle Earth is shifting. It is no longer in the moral certainties and magical assurances of ages past. Now it is in the morally ambiguous governance of men, who shortly will take center stage in the unfolding drama of the planet. The Elves leave for the Grey Havens of their own volition, but the hobbits will be marginalized, the

dwarves swallowed up by the earth, and even Tom Bombadil will be seen no more,” (Hinlicky). Magic is dying as the age of man arrives; the power of the old races, the Rings of Power, the wizards, the elves, all must make way for modernity, in an effort to destroy the evil of Sauron.

Gandalf the Grey, a wizard, plays the same role of Aslan in *The Lord of the Rings*, as he is reminiscent of a classic figure of our reality. Just like how Aslan played the role of Jesus Christ, so too does Gandalf live the role of Merlin, a major player in Arthurian legend. Gandalf, our agent of magic, must choose when and where he performs his magic to, “deflect attention from wizardry in order to emphasize the importance of working through ordinary human means,” (Riga). While he often has many companions, he is our primary glimpse into the magic of Middle-Earth.

Gandalf seems to be a great purveyor of manipulating and creating light, and flame. He had “made a special study of bewitchments with fire and light,” (Tolkien, 100), and in battle, combats others with “bright blue fire,” (Tolkien, 107). Also, as shown in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Gandalf can manipulate light in the opposite direction; when confronting Bilbo about letting go of the ring “he seemed to grow taller and menacing; his shadow filled the little room,” (Tolkien, 56). Even in the epic battle against the Balrog, Gandalf cracks the bridge between them with, “a blinding sheet of white flame,” (Tolkien, 392) before falling to his death at which point, “the fires went out,” (392).

One aspect of Gandalf’s magic that supports his tether to the natural world is the talent in communicating, and understanding different animals. He is a known friend to the Great Eagles, and converses with them frequently. Even the “dreadful language of the Wargs,” (Tolkien, 105), Gandalf can understand. Despite his talent with fire and light, Gandalf’s magical abilities still

lend themselves to creatures of the world too, reinforcing that connection with more than just the elemental, but also the environment.

However, all of this is just a study of Gandalf's magic, not a look into what he does, or rather what he abstains from. Gandalf cannot use his magic as he would. Because "when the magic goes, human beings will be thrown back on their own natural resources. As a teacher of those who have no magical powers, Gandalf demonstrates in word and deed how to overcome the enemy without magic. To do otherwise would be to teach them what they cannot possibly learn," (Riga).

In that light, the magic of Tolkien almost comes to represent the price of progress; when faced with the siege engines of Saruman, and the iron and steel of man, what good can magic do? It is tragic that "Gandalf must renounce magical power in order to free the peoples of Middle-earth and to teach them how to develop their own powers," (Riga). What good is magic than, when the machines of tomorrow can accomplish what can be done through magic?

Man, the growing power in *The Lord of the Rings*, will not inherit a world of magic, but rather, build one with their own magic: technology. As stated above, industry and technology were growing as *The Lord of the Rings* ran on, and for Tolkien, who, "regarded much of modern technology – precisely because it seeks to put nature under its command . . . – as a disguised form of magic," (Wood), this industry would be the new face of magic; no longer working with nature, but commanding it, and utilizing it as one deemed fit. In the same way, Tolkien is using this to comment on the loss of man's connection to nature, which one could assume is our form of magic in our reality. Even if it is a tad romanticized, Tolkien laments the birth of machines and technology for it is a separation from man's natural bond to the earth.

Finally, one cannot mention magic in *The Lord of the Rings*, without exploring the One Ring, the great burden that Frodo must carry across Middle-Earth, and destroy. The One Ring's, power will ultimately corrupt the wearer, so that they "becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the dark eye of the dark power that rules the Rings," (Tolkien, 71). The One Ring embodies the magic of control, of imposing one's will over others, even as the bearer suffers for it. In this, the break in worlds helps exposes the horror of war, and dictatorial regimes. As Attebery says, in his analysis of *The Lord of the Rings*, "Tolkien conceives of the Ring as a tool with one function: mastery," (Attebery, 33). It is not a device made specifically for great evil, but despite the willingness to do good, the corruption of the Ring would infect even those who are pure. As Attebery says, "the same taint affects even those characters we take to be the embodiment of good: . . . Elrond, Galadriel, and Gandalf," (Attebery, 33).

The One Ring and its magic of domination, embodies the idealism of war itself. While not an exact allegory like Lewis' work, Tolkien did see action in World War One, and witnessed "the destruction of nature, the deadly application of technology, the abuse and corruption of authority, and the triumph of industrialization," (Ott, 1). War, no matter what side wins, will always result in destruction and death, just as the Ring, no matter who ends up wearing it, will always corrupt, and destroy. With the One Ring, no matter how good one's intentions, there is no winning, only death.

Tolkien through his magic creates many breaks in the border between worlds, in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. At one moment, magic represents the nostalgia of a bygone time, celebrating the connection between man and nature, as represented by ancient races. And yet at the same time, magic is seen as a dying concept, something that must make way for a new

age. And the One Ring especially, is a device to represent the horrors of war, and the corruption of power, no matter the wearer.

With the end of *Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf, and the Elves will leave, because they cannot exist in a world without the Rings, without magic, where industry is blooming. They cannot sustain themselves in a world of encroaching modernity. Gandalf does his best to train and prepare mankind for a world without them, by using his magic sparingly. When he does use it, it is representative of a time gone by: a nostalgic era of natural power from the earth. Fire and light, shadow and earth, magic comes from the world. But as the world is reborn, through industry, it is not reborn with the magic of its better days, making it all the more tragic.

A comparison between the two works does bring to light one interesting observation: in both works, the main purveyor of magic has to die, or rather, sacrifice himself, so that the heroes may live. Just as Aslan has himself die for the Pevensie children, so too does Gandalf sacrifice himself to the Balrog, so that Frodo and his companions may live, to finish their journey. If there was one commonality between the magic of these two works, it is, despite their differences in agendas, in both worlds, magic is ultimately used to protect, and must be sacrificed so that the heroes may live.

J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. used their fantasy narratives to not only shape great fantastical journeys, complete with the raiment of fantasy as form, but also used their narratives to not only expose real world agendas, but to also comment on their reality itself. Through the magic of Tolkien, we see that reality has lost its innocence, something that the inhabitants of Middle-Earth were only just experiencing. For Lewis, reality is a godless place, with the holy, religious figure and land of Narnia offering salvation for all.

Candle is a story which sits comfortably in the niche of urban fantasy, a branch of fantasy where not one, but two worlds exist: our own and another. This second world is filled with fantastic beings, usually inspired from myth, folklore fairy tales, etc. The inspiration for *Candle's* secondary world comes from fairy tales, where the people of Earth and the creatures of the Fae meet. *Candle* operates in both realms of Attebery's Schrodinger-esque take on fantasy. At one glance, it is the story of a young man, learning about a world-ending crisis, that he must stop through the use of cunning, magic, and courage. And at the same time, it is a piece that examines the struggle for identity, the sins of fathers, the nature of magic, the price one pays for a vision, and the question of violence.

Lewis and Tolkien each offer a perspective on my creative piece. By this analysis alone, it's clear that these authors had a clear intent for their magic. Lewis's magic is a natural extension of his religious figure, while Tolkien's is indicative of the price of tyranny and the price of progress. Each author had a motivation that drew upon real world images and concerns – loss of faith, religious propaganda, post-World War thought – thereby solidifying the relationship between their world and the real one.

The magic of *Candle* does have a Tolkien-esque quality to it. The Fae occupy a realm where the land itself has energy, a constant feedback loop of power between itself and its inhabitants. It is also reminiscent of Tolkien's magic belonging to certain races. Those born in the realm of Faerie, with the blood of a Fae within them, can tap into this feedback loop between fae and earth. However, there arises a problem with this notion, as the very identity of Faerie can be questioned due to its already been written on by numerous authors. More on this in Chapter 3, as Gaiman and Butcher address the same problems of working within real world tales. But for now, assume that this realm is Faerie, and if you are fae, you can tap into its latent energies.

With this in mind, I have to ask myself: do I have an agenda like Tolkien and Lewis did? Is this magic going to be aware of itself? Will the idea of immigration, blood ties, familial allegiance, and other issues be worked into this magic system? Or does the magic simply exist to tell a good story? Do I fall back into the form of the genre rather than the mode?

With these concerns in mind, I would have to say that the magic of *Candle* relies on identity, and how its influence can either strengthen the image of one's own identity, or fracture it. John Candle, the titular character, is himself, a bastard. He is half-human/half-fae, and his father left him at birth. Taken in by the Broker, Candle grows up harnessing what latent power his half-breed blood has, but it is not enough. He has the potential for trickery, but because of his half human blood, he is not able to access the power of Faerie.

As you will see in the creative piece, Candle grows to understand the exact nature of Faerie, as the Broker opens a Gate for him, to travel to the Homeland and claim a secret treasure that will unlock his Faerie gifts. As the Gate is opened, he must combat desperate fae on Earth, who wish to go back. In this, Candle learns of the power that magic has the power to not only shape a mind and soul, but also an identity, and how when he gets his first taste of Faerie magic, he feels whole for the first time in his life.

The thread of identity may be the key to understanding the magic of *Candle*. Magic in *Candle* then, is familial: it's in the blood. If you can tap into that magic, the power of the Fae, then that makes you a Fae. This search for identity and the pursuit of self through magic may just be the crux for Candle's character.

Chapter 3 – The Magic of Jim Butcher and Neil Gaiman: Bringing Tales To Life

With Urban Fantasy, a newer name for a classic aspect of the genre, we run into a different problem than in the Secondary World Fantasy of Tolkien and Lewis. While Tolkien and Lewis worked to establish a viable link of realism, Urban Fantasy already exists in our reality. Falling more in line with Todorov's stance on the fantastic, Urban Fantasy novels promise that uncertainty, because there is a world hidden within our own. What that means, is that the authors of Urban Fantasy need to find a way to link their fantasy to our reality, and not the other way around; they have to find a link wherein the fantastic can exist in our reality, rather than bringing reality to a fantasy world.

Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* series follow Harry Dresden, Chicago wizard extraordinaire. Placed firmly in our reality, modern day, Harry Dresden is a human being able to tap magic – seen as a form of energy, and emotion, subject to its own laws, plus the physics of our own universe. Already, Butcher works to establish clear rules about his magic, rules that will help ease the concept of the fantastic into this reality. Magic is subject to rules and laws, and must be studied with discipline. It does not so much reshape reality, as bend it, operating in a fairly solid take on real physics and science. Not only that, but Butcher incorporates the supernatural creatures of well-known fairy tales – fairies, werewolves, ghosts- and brings them to life in a modern context.

The magic of Neil Gaiman's novels has roots in another human narrative: mythology. Like Lewis, who used Christianity as a means into his fantasy world, Gaiman uses ancient mythology to place the fantastic in our reality, tying his magic into a real world belief structure. Following Shadow in *American Gods* and Fat Charlie and Spider in *Anansi Boys*, Gaiman

creates a world where the gods of myth walk among men, and are able to scrounge together power through belief, while combating newer gods of modernity. The magic of these works is through thorough research into the myths of ancient gods, and looking at them through the scope of modernity.

The magic in these urban fantasies tap directly into existing power structures of our reality, either physical or abstract. Harry Dresden draws from the energy around him, physical things, such as heat, light, elements, etc, as well as abstract, mental constructs like emotions, and the soul. Odin and Anansi, draw from socially constructed ideas, such as stories and song, warfare and vengeance, mischief and deceit, as well as the belief of their followers; this belief becomes a palpable, emotional fuel for them, with which they can use to manipulate the world around them.

Now older, I started asking myself questions as I read these novels, namely: How? Why? The effect of wonder had not diminished; these were still stories that made me think, made me believe in the fantastic. But being older, and more aware of the conventions of fantasy, it was not enough to just look at these works and enjoy them. I wanted to pick them apart, mull them over, and come to terms with why they worked the way they did.

Jim Butcher's first book of the Dresden Files, *Storm Front*, lives comfortably within the form of fantasy. Wizards, councils, magic, fairies, vampires, werewolves; Butcher revels in the standards of the genre, and does not make excuses for their appearance. His work is a fast, fun, and light read, designed to entertain. Gaiman's novels on the other hand, *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys*, operate in the mode of fantasy. However entertaining the stories may be, Gaiman

uses the standards of fantasy – epic journeys, heroes and villains, magic- to help question the nature of humanity, divinity, myth, and more, within the mode of fantasy.

In the *Dresden Files*, magic is actually created by humanity. Dresden says, “magic is created by life, and most of all by the awareness, intelligence, emotions of a human being,” (Butcher, 18). Tying magic into the existence of humanity immediately makes humanity a player in the world of magic. Humanity of this realm have an immediate contribution and investment in the magic of this series. This gives humanity a direct connection to magic. And that despite Dresden’s world consisting of “creatures of the Nevernever . . . vampires . . . trolls,” (Butcher, 17), humans still play a role, thereby strengthening their relationship to magic.

Another aspect of this border between the fantastic from our reality is that, despite being a world of magic, the magic of Harry Dresden plays by the rules of this reality. In other words, his magic, while powerful and at times inexplicable, still operates as though it were an aspect of science. In *Storm Front*, Harry Dresden is called in for a mysterious murder, whose origin seems to be magical in nature. Immediately Butcher begins laying down ground rules; causalities and boundaries about how exactly magic, and magicians operate in a world still bound by hard science. Harry starts taking into account the murder, and the means, running theories and practices through his head, but they are ruled out via scientific deduction, as what is possible and what is not, is contemplated.

His first guess is evocation, one of the, “most direct, spectacular and noisy form of expressed magic,” (Butcher, 19), but soon rules this out as the murderer has “to be able to see or touch,” their victims, “line of sight only,” (Butcher, 19). He determines another option: “‘Thaumaturgy,’ I said. ‘As above, so below. Make something happen on a small scale, and give

it the energy to happen on a large scale.” (Butcher, 19). In order to do this, “the killer would need . . . hair, fingernails, blood samples,” (Butcher, 19).

In one moment of pondering, Butcher expertly sketches out a pretty clear idea of how the world of magic works in his novels. Butcher first lays down a set of rules, mostly seen through the lens of common sense, such as the user, should they choose to use evocative magic, must have a clear line of sight, or hold on the target, thus establishing a connection between them in a physical space.

He moves onto the idea of thaumaturgy, a school of magic that follows the laws of causality: there is not just something from nothing; you cannot have B without having expressed A. There is a transfer of energy reminiscent of many scientific processes on Earth. There is a process, and a cycle to the magic of Harry Dresden. The biggest distinction within this scientific magic is the insistence upon a connection between magic user, and magical target. If that person cannot be touched, or cannot be seen, then there must be a physical connection, tissue samples, or a simulacrum, made to imitate the person. Human biology and psychology are both integral to the operation of magic in this world; the idea that two things must be linked for a transfer of energy is essential. There is a give and take to Butcher’s scientific magic, and is notable throughout the rest of the series.

Despite being something that “is inside you . . . a part of you,” (Butcher, 86), magic also is bound by the parameters of a logical world, a world of science; Butcher’s magic actually works *with* science, rather than against it. As author Susan Greenwood says in *The Anthropology of Magic*, “Magic has been seen as the anti-thesis of science,” (Greenwood, 145) in many studies. However, the idea of magic and science operating together is becoming more accepted,

in and in many cases, as Greenwood puts it, “incorporates differences and is summed up by my use of the expression, ‘not only, but also,’” (Greenwood, 145). If Butcher is following Greenwood’s mode of thought, than it makes sense that magic, whose origins go back many centuries in our own world, would start finding their place in his novels, working with the science of the time to create a system of magic that not only recalls the form of the genre, but works in tandem with the physics of this world. Butcher’s image of reality is actually a happier message than our previous authors. His take on magic actually paints reality as a place with hidden magic to it. It is present in the world, but must be sought out.

In Gaiman’s novels, the link back to the real world can be found in the exploration and conflict between the pantheons of ancient civilizations, and the birth of modern gods. There are two pantheons struggling for domination of America: there is the old guard, the ancient gods of Anansi and Odin and Easter and Pluto. And then there are the modern gods who hunt them: gods of television and radio, Internet and highways, cities and automobiles.

The way he introduces the fantastic to his reality, is the encroaching of Shadow’s world with that of Mr. Wednesday’s. As stated earlier, the fantastic seeks out the ordinary, rather than the other way around. Gaiman creates a way for the gods of these various pantheons to exist in our world, by mining valuable data from their mythologies. They operate logically within the description of their stories, personalities, what they stand for, etc. Gaiman is able to create a coherent fantastic narrative that not only keeps the mythology intact, but evolves it in a fashion according to his novel: belief is power, and where there is belief, so are there gods.

While there are many ways of gaining power, mainly through the use of human abstractions, such as song, sacrifice, identity, and more, Gaiman’s biggest source of power for

the gods, is through belief. It is the most essential source within *American Gods*, and *Anansi Boys*. Song, and sacrifice are simply the means by which to garner belief; the songs and stories of those who believe in him, fuel Anansi, as much as those who believe in Odin feed him the blood of the sacrificed.

In the beginning of *American Gods*, Shadow dreams of a buffalo man beneath the earth who tells him, “if you are to survive, you must believe . . . *Everything*,” (Gaiman, 15). Later, while planning a heist, Mr. Wednesday asks Shadow to “think ‘snow’ for me, will you? . . . think gray skies and driving winds coming down from the arctic. Think snow,” (Gaiman, 83). Shadow does so, and when he next looks up, the sky is filled with dark clouds, bursting with snow, where once the sky was clear.

Belief not only gives power to the gods, but also actually confirms their existence. As Slabbert and Viljeon say in their essay, “Sustaining the Imaginative Life: Mythology and Fantasy in Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*,” myth can be defined as “a system of belief that nourishes the life of the spirit,” (Slabbert & Viljeon, 142). When applying their definition of myth to this novel, it can be theorized that not only does belief grant power; it also affirms existence. Taking the spirit to mean the gods, the very belief of their followers helps grant them more life; belief is literally sustaining them.

This type of desperate clinging on to life can be seen early on in the novel, through the character of Bilquis. Bilquis, an ancient god of fertility turned prostitute, asks her latest client “Will you call me goddess? Will you pray to me? Will you worship me with your body?” (Gaiman, 23). He reluctantly obliges, but as he begins to describe her beauty, he is overcome with an ancient force, and waxes poetic about her, offering himself up to her and her alone. As

he worships her, as his newfound belief in her begins to take hold, her identity is reinforced, and there is now a clear connection between the two of them, goddess and believer. When he looks, she has consumed him through intercourse, and eaten his belief, a walking metaphor for what the most ravished of gods can do. This direct flow of belief is how Bilquis has managed to stay afloat, getting what she can before fading away.

In *Anansi Boys*, Gaiman shows that belief can cut both ways; while it is crucial for gods to have the belief of others, belief in oneself is equally as important. Anansi, Spider and Fat Charlie, all rely on the cultural touchstones of stories and songs, not sacrifice. They draw on the truths and beliefs found within storytelling, and use them to manipulate the world around them. But it is their own confidence that helps them reaffirm their identities, as tricksters, as storytellers, and as gods. At a party, Spider tries teaching the partygoers how to walk on water: “It was all a matter of confidence, he told them, of attitude, of attack, of knowing how to do it . . . they had forgotten and this man would remind them,” (Gaiman, 52). It is the forcing of one’s will upon the world, a supreme confidence that transforms the world around them. Belief in not only one’s gods, but also in oneself is extremely pertinent in both Gaiman novels.

The culmination of Shadow and Fat Charlie’s journeys leads them a realization: in order to transcend, they must believe. In *American Gods*, Shadow stands vigil for the dead Wednesday, and sacrifices three things: his life, his name and his heart, in order to go on “the path of hard truths,” (Gaiman, 369) and “choose your own destination,” (Gaiman, 377). He chooses to believe in something, in Odin, his secret father, and through his sacrifice, attains his own level of godhood and is reborn. By the end of the novel, Shadow will be able to, “reach into nowhere and (take) a gold coin from the air,” (Gaiman, 461), as a new god in the world.

Fat Charlie, the son of Anansi, and brother to Spider, has led a life of being laughed at, and embarrassed, growing more and more neurotic at his father's tricks and pranks. Finally, left in the void, powerless, and out of options, he begins to lose hope, until his father comes along, and gives him a hat. Fat Charlie, embarrassed, refuses to wear it, feeling humiliated. But his father tells him that he loves him, and that, "all you need to wear a hat is attitude. And you got that," (Gaiman, 294).

Looking in the water, it dawns on Fat Charlie that he does have confidence. He begins to believe in himself, and bit-by-bit, he grows more powerful. By the end of the book, when faced with the pantheon of the African gods, Fat Charlie can sing; he sings "them the song of a boy who was half a god and who was broken into two . . . he sang of names and words . . . the worlds that make worlds . . . the truth beneath the way things are . . . he sang the world . . . it was his song," (Gaiman, 321). He reaches behind the scenes of the world, and heals his family and punishes his enemies, finally fueled by the confidence of a master storyteller.

Gaiman brings a relatable, human touch to his link between the real world and the fantastic one. His protagonists must first overcome that which holds them back: their fears, their apprehensions, and their rage, in order to accept their true identity. Belief is the concept that helps expose reality in his narrative, and how its power not only shaped civilizations, and gods of old, but to this day can influence the world. His take on reality as exposed by his magic is empowering, if cynical. Through his magic of belief, Gaiman's magic exposes reality as a place of immense power, where belief in oneself is one of the most powerful things one can have. Reality is also a place exposed to be a place where even the gods can have faults and flaws.

Butcher and Gaiman have similar ways of connecting their magic to reality in fantasy novels that exist in both a fantastic and an urban environment simultaneously. They both explore the real world implications of having magic exist in a modern world, and explore various, previously established mythologies and narratives, testing them against real world logic. Butcher's use of magic actually embraces the physics and science of the real world, whereas Gaiman's gods seize upon the abstract and pull power from the idea of humanity. Together, these two authors have worked to create solid borders, of identity, and of science, so that magic may make its way into the real world.

Candle owes a lot to these works. Authors like Gaiman and Butcher show that it is possible to tell stories in this particular subgenre of fantasy, and still make them relevant in the same way that Tolkien and Lewis' work was relevant. The fantasy of these stories is reliant on the idea that the worlds of reality and fantasy can in fact co-exist. There are already hundreds of stories as told by humanity detailing the strange and the fantastic, existing as myth, legend, folklore, and fairy tale. Gaiman and Butcher use these established takes on fantasy as a way to tell original fantasy stories.

Candle is in the same vein as these works; it is an Urban Fantasy, already using previously established fantastic narratives. One thing these novels were very good at, and something I need to be aware of in *Candle*, is the idea of consistent rules of engagement with these established folkloric/mythic narratives.

When it comes to constructing one's own fairy tales, mythology, folklore, legends, etc., there are no rules, nor should there be. Fantasy literature thrives on the odd, and the strange, new perspectives and out of the box thinking; to limit that would be to limit your story. However,

there are certain stories that have to be treated with care. Many fantasy stories tread on old ground, in some sense of the phrase. They borrow ideas, creatures, events, traditions, and usually put some sort of spin on them, looking at them from a new perspective. However, many authors, much like Gaiman and Butcher, are aware that the narratives they borrow from already have a history, which needs to be honored through their writing. There are previously established rules, guidelines and boundaries when dealing with certain narratives. Werewolves can be killed by silver bullets, and transform in the full moon. Vampires don't have reflections and can be killed with a stake through the heart. Trolls live under bridges and have a penchant for riddles.

These stories and their rules of engagement have been around for centuries and are a part of many different cultures, each having their own interpretation of these rules. When working within these narratives, it is a must for the author to include these touchstones; to exclude them would raise a red flag for the reader. If the author chooses not to include these touchstones, or provide a new take on these narratives, then they need to be crystal clear as to why these changes are present.

One thing these authors have done well is to be conscious of these established rules of engagement. The Fae of Butcher's Dresden Files are attracted to milk and honey; they hate iron, and cannot lie. The gods of Gaiman's novels follow the clearly established takes of their pantheon: Anansi is the god of tricks and songs, while Odin revels in sacrifice and blood. These authors are keenly aware of what sort of inconsistencies can occur, by ignoring the established guidelines within these established worlds. Butcher's Faeries could no more tell a lie than Gaiman's Loki could. They work within the established norms for these fantastical narratives, just as *Candle* must.

Candle's world exists in our reality, intersecting with that of the Fae. There are certain rules of the Fae that *Candle* must follow; if they do not follow these rules or are somehow exempt, I must make clear why, or they cannot be identified as Fae. One of the conflicts in this story is that Candle is a bastard, half human and half Fae. In that respect, there are some rules that Candle does not have to follow; there are rules that his human blood lets him bend. For instance, should Candle wish it, he can speak lies, he can withstand the sound of bells and he can eat. He may even touch cold iron at times, as long as he is resilient. However, this also creates tension between him and his compatriots, and can drive the story forward: if he can do these things, then what is he really? A Fae or a human, or something in between, and what will he ultimately decide upon?

Another aspect of urban fantasy that Gaiman and Butcher do well in their novels that will assist me with structuring Candle's world is in balancing their fantasy reality within human reality. In their stories, despite the inclusion of magic, gods, fairies, and wizards, they still live in the modern day. They have cars and the Internet, and cell phones. They are firmly placed within this reality despite their fantastical elements.

In this way, I have a new perspective on *Candle*: how exactly I can integrate him and his world into the modern day, without losing any of the magic. Gaiman and Butcher show that not only is it possible, but there are ways to comment on both realities by doing so. Butcher shows the modern day problems of Harry Dresden, as he struggles to maintain a foot in both worlds, in his capacity as wizard and official occult investigator for the police department; the tension comes from when these two realities collide. In Gaiman's *American Gods*, the pantheons evolve, with new gods rising to claim dominion over modernity. And in *Anansi Boys*, the crossing over

between worlds, the gods' and our own, is what drives much of the conflict as they are forced to acknowledge each other.

Candle lives in a modern day city, packed to the brim, not only with humans, but Fae immigrants, expatriates, criminals, and more. The seamless weaving in and out of realities as presented by Gaiman and Butcher have given me a lot of inspiration on ways to not only explore the tension of two worlds colliding, but in learning how to balance them as well; the two authors move from one world to the next seamlessly, and keep their plots tight. That will be one thing to be aware of with Candle: not only the collision of worlds, but the tight interweaving between them.

English Thesis – Creative Piece

A Candle Story

By: Martin Cahill

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Candle stood between Stone and Rivers. Storm stood watch at the lip of the alley. Candle watched as the Broker stepped forward, and put a hand upon the stone that was not stone, the door that had no knob, no key but the one the Broker held in his heart.

The sky was darkening; becoming a bruise of faded purple and shadowy yellow, the healing rift between night and day. Candle was lost in its swirling colors, as he watched daylight fight a futile war. It made him feel sad watching the sun lose to the inevitable cycle. It seemed such a natural thing for Candle that even the sunset should fight to remain alive.

A nudge to his ribs; Stone nodded forward.

“You’re going to want to watch this,” he said to Candle. And though his voice seemed carefree, Candle saw him clenching his fists, rubbing the fingers across his palms. His eyes flicked from shadow to shadow, as they grew longer with the death of the day.

Candle looked ahead of him at the adjoining wall between two abandoned tenements, the brick and stone glowing rust and grey in the sunset. The Broker had his hand to it, and Candle could hear him whispering, in a language like water and flame: liquid and languid with brief sparks of guttural barks. With every word the Broker spoke, the stone and brick shivered and rippled, every sentence another stone thrown from on high, into the depths of a deep lake.

There came a rumbling sound overhead, the call of an approaching storm even though no clouds marred the swath of yellow and purple tinged twilight. Stone's fists closed and he sighed, as though he'd expected this; knives sprang into Rivers' hands, like plucking steel from thin air.

Rivers walked to the side of the Broker, whose speech had increased in speed and intensity. Stone turned around to the mouth of the alley where Storm was crouched, her hand to the dirt packed ground, her eyes raised to the sky, searching.

"Storm?" asked Stone, his voice low, almost growling.

She rose to her feet, and turned around. Candle saw her eyes shift from a dull brown to a startling shade of blue. Her brow knit, her mouth turned down, she suddenly laughed. "They're coming!" she shouted with excitement, over a sudden wind. "The miserable bastards are coming!" When she brought her hands before her, Candle saw a flash of light, as she began to channel the approaching storm. She then turned back to the lip of the alley, but not before Candle saw a wicked grin appear.

Stone widened his stance, and lowered his center of gravity. "Stay behind me," he rumbled to Candle who had been standing dumbly in the middle of the alley, his mouth slack, unable to understand what was going on. On instinct, he reached into his jacket, and pulled out a stiletto, which opened with a reassuring snap. He dropped into a fighter's stance and stood back to back with Stone.

The air was still and silent, save for the increasing cadence of the Broker's speech. Candle's eyes snapped to the Broker's wall, and he saw that it had begun to flicker, like a flame in the wind. Candle thought he could almost see something through to the other side, when there came a howling from the mouth of the alley, screeching and inhuman.

Just in front of Storm stood a man, or at least what Candle assumed was a man. The moment it approached the alley though, it dropped its glamour, gaining confidence in the darkening sky. While still man shaped, its hair disappeared, his ears becoming high and pointed; its lips were pulled back in a feral snarl, as its limbs elongated and ripped the clothing it wore. Another wordless yelp of ecstasy and it tried to rush Storm, headed right towards the burgeoning Gate.

Storm side stepped the creature, and placed her hands on the small of its back. Her eyes flashed, and the thing was propelled by a gust of gale force wind. It was lifted off its feet, and flew towards Candle; he gripped his stiletto tighter.

But there was no need. Stone raised his arms, and Candle felt the earth rumble. Two fists of stone and dirt and weeds rose from the ground in front of them, and caught the creature, which howled in fear and rage. Caught in an earthy grip, the creature began to struggle and panic, its round red eyes fixated on the Gate, which was now almost fully present. It feebly reached for home.

In one smooth motion, Stone spun in a full circle, and thrust his arms downward. The hands of earth, which held the creature tight, shot towards the ground. As they returned to the dirt, they dragged the creature down with them; the soil and stone eventually silenced the creature. In a moment, it was swallowed whole.

Stone held the pose for another moment, and then stood up, brushing his hands together. He saw Storm looking back in concern. "I threw it out about four blocks west. It'll stay away if it knows what's good for it." Nodding, Storm turned back to her post, her hands still sparking.

Stone caught Candle eyeing him. Rolling the tension from his shoulders, he said, “Some of the fae on this side of the Gate didn’t come here by choice. Most of them would risk it all to find a Gate and go home.”

Candle raised an eyebrow, confused. “So why don’t we let them? You’ve said yourself that Earth is a cesspool compared to Faerie.”

Stone locked eyes with Candle, and held them there, as if searching for a deep truth. Then, when he didn’t find it, he smiled sadly, and shook his head. “I forget you’ve never been. You’re still so gods damn young.” He rubbed his smooth head, and turned away from Candle, looking for the right words. Candle closed and put his stiletto away in the silence.

He found them in the rising moon, which was full and fat; he did not look at Candle as he spoke.

“Faerie is a world where the water tastes sweet, and the trees rain charming, little trifles. The soil feels right between your toes, and the wind touches your cheek like an old lover. Even the light is warmer, more vibrant. When you are in Faerie, your heart and the world’s beat in time. That’s the magic of Faerie: not being able to tell where you end, and the land begins.”

When he turned back to Candle, Candle saw that his eyes were damp, and he had crossed his arms, holding himself. “This is a dead world, John. Humanity has squandered her gifts, and left her rotting, barren. She is an abuse victim who cannot speak for herself, because humans will not listen. And yet I among them all can hear her. I hear her, but I do nothing. What can I do, John? To come from Faerie, to this?” The question hung in the air, the answer already present.

“It’s torture,” said Candle.

Stone nodded. “Aye. But if they are on this side, it is for a reason. And so they cannot go back, for they would abuse Faerie, just as humanity has done to this poor world.”

Candle nodded, sympathetic. For what was unsaid, he realized, was that while Stone could not let others go through to Faerie, he could not let himself go through either. There was a reason he was here as well, and it is a heavy thing Candle realized, admitting your place among the monsters, and not the heroes.

Out of the corner of Candle’s vision, there was a deep shadow. Turning to the wall, he saw a dark, shapeless blotch of emptiness where the wall had once been. The Broker stood back, his arms moving against an unseen force, a force threatening to close on him. His arms pushed horizontally, his hands gripping invisible edges, as he worked to force open something immense.

Candle heard pounding footsteps. Storm appeared at his left shoulder, while Stone, composed, moved to his right. Rivers stood with his back to the Broker, the knives in his hands ready and bright.

“Ah gods,” muttered Storm. “This is going to get messy isn’t it?”

Stone grinned. “It’s never easy, I’ll give you that. The moment the Border is punctured, it’ll be an open invitation to every desperate fae in the city.”

Storm whipped out a small dagger with curved edges. “First one to ten buys dinner for the loser.”

Stone cracked his knuckles, grinning. “I like steak.”

A flash of bright, white light broke from the space in front of the Broker. There was a howling sound in Candle’s ears, and he felt his ears pop as the pressure around him snapped.

Light was leaking furiously from the wound between worlds, and Candle threw up an arm to shield his eyes. And though the light was bright, Candle squinted against it, and glimpsed another world through the Gate: a meadow in the twilight, with four faded moons hanging silently in its sky. And above the howling in his ears, he could hear a faint whisper, as something called to him through the Border.

Faerie called to him. The Gate was open.

And from the rooftops around them, there came a chorus of chilling screeches, of joy and rage, and above all, desperation. Candle, eyes wide, frozen in place, watched as dozens upon dozens of fae fell from the rooftops, landing lightly. The fae had surrounded them, having heard the siren call of the Faerie Gate.

Without hesitation, Stone threw himself at the nearest fae, a small, but muscular creature with bat-like ears, and webbed appendages. It screamed as Stone's massive fists connected, its voice fading as it flew off into the darkness.

The rest of the fae engaged them, and Candle found himself whipping his stiletto around like a maestro's baton, orchestrating a symphony of steel. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw a flash of lightning as Storm struck at open ribs and kidneys, her magic and her blade moving in rhythm together. He heard the brutal roaring of Stone as he took on fae after fae, an unyielding mountain of strength. And still, he heard the chanting of the Broker, who worked to open the Gate further still, protected by Rivers, the air around him cold, his knives dusted with frost.

For every one that he stabbed, Candle saw another take its place. Fae of every size and shape came to him: winged and clawed and fanged, large and small and in between, eyes of jade

and onyx and gold. All fought with a desperation befitting a prisoner on death row; they would either escape this world or they would die.

And through it all, the whisper of the Land beyond the Gate grew louder, heavier, a drumbeat in his mind and his soul. It called to him, in a language he had never heard, but was as familiar as a heartbeat in the womb. It was in a language of light, for the words were hot, piercing; they seared his soul as he fought off the horde of desperate fae.

Candle could not have told you how long they fought; only that he was growing tired. His reactions were slowing, his knife dropping from its usual steady grip. His heart and his soul and his mind, all too tired, all too distracted from the whisper of the Gate, of the Land beyond it. Magic called to him, and he wanted to fall to its commanding call.

But then the stiletto was knocked out of his hand, and a clawed foot hit his chest, driving him back and down, onto the ground. Before him was a massive fae, seven feet tall, and muscled, like a bear. Its crimson eyes saw Candle as the only thing that stood between it and the Gate.

Candle glanced back, and saw that it was right. Rivers was off elsewhere, engaged with another group who had gotten too near. Whipping his head back around, Candle knew that the creature just had to snap his neck, do the same to the Broker, and slip inside the Gate before it closed. It was almost home.

It moved forward, closing the gap between itself and Candle in a breath, its fangs and claws bright in the flashing of magic around him. Candle scrabbled backward, but there was nowhere to go that the beast could not grab him.

His heart was racing, and sweat dripped down his face; it fell to his lips, tasting of dirt and blood. His ears were pounding with the sound of battle, and still he was overwhelmed with the language of the Gate, no longer a whisper, but now a roaring torrent of sound, begging, yearning to be heard. Candle stared up at his soon to be killer, and knew that this would be it. This would be his death.

Knowing he was to die, as the beast took another step towards him, bringing itself right over Candle, Candle closed his eyes, and listened to the sweet, roaring storm of language. If he were to die, it would be with the words of Faerie in his mind, so he might die a full fae, and not the half-breed abomination he had always been called.

He let the voice of Faerie wash over him, in a language that tasted like the sun. In his mind, he saw flashes of stars, of palaces and kingdoms lost to time, and those who once ruled, with the power of the heavens at their command. And he saw the flame. He saw a fire of red and white and gold, and it knew him.

Someone shouted his name, and he heard it as though far away. He opened his eyes to see who called for him. Looking up, he saw the creature had stopped above him; panic lined its bestial face. It tried to back away, and Candle instinctively lifted an arm in defense.

In doing so, a lance of light arced from his fingertips, and struck the creature, which burst into flames, flesh but a fond memory as the wind swept its ashes away.

“Holy shit, kid!” Candle looked around and saw Storm staring at him, her mouth agape. “You’re lit up like a gods damn bonfire!”

Staring down at himself, Candle saw that he was encased in a shimmering field, of red and gold and white. It swept over him in waves, mere inches from his flesh. It was warm, this cocoon of magic. Candle breathed deep, and saw the field contract, and then release as he breathed out. He felt at peace, as though something inside of him had finally been unlocked. Standing up, he saw that everyone had stopped to look at him, even the desperate fae.

Stone, bloodied but grinning, pointed at the ash in the wind. "Do that again!" he yelled.

Candle nodded and looked to the nearest fae. Immediately, the others knew what was happening, and they ran in all directions, away from the light-wreathed Candle. He flung his arms in all directions, reveling in the fire of the Fae. He felt summer in his veins, and the sun of another world sang to him as he wielded its light, its fire, and its fury.

He sent the light out in sweeping arcs, and caught some Fae, though most had already fled. Candle laughed as he moved the light, and the fire about him. He had never felt so happy.

But after a minute, the light around him began to fade, and with much disappointment, he saw it slither and move back towards the Gate, sucked back away to its home. When it was all gone, Candle stood as he had before, but inside there was a vast emptiness. He fell to his knees and held his head in his hands, his shoulder shuddering with heaving breaths and sobs of loss.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and looked up into Stone's eyes, who looked at him with compassion.

"I felt it," he whispered. "I felt it."

“I know,” Stone said. He helped Candle to his feet, and pointed at the now solid Gate, where Rivers and the Broker stood, both panting and exhausted, lit by the twilight of another world. “Now, let’s go get it back.”

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