

## April and the Mystical Forest

I was very little when I lost my parents. Shortly after my parents had passed away, I was taken in by my uncle and his family. He had no children and was very happy to take me in, however, my aunt did not think the same. She hated me from the day I arrived. My uncle lives in a huge mansion on the top of a luscious green hill, far away from the town. The mansion is around 200 years old and is always passed down to the most responsible one in the family. Unfortunately, my father was not the most responsible. Instead, he was the troublemaker of the family. When I arrived at my uncle's he had told me, "My dear April, this mansion will belong to you once you reach a responsible age. I believe you will do a fine job in taking care of it."

My aunt despised the idea of me and the fact that one day I would be the one to inherit the mansion, and so as any other evil character in any other fairytale would do, she began to abuse me. I suffered day after day at her hands until I decided I had enough. So, like any other child in any other fairytale I ran, and ran, and ran. Then, I fell. This is where my real story starts.

"Ahahaha, look, look she fell!"

"I know, I know. I can see that." I started to hear laughing voices from all around me, I was a little scared, but not worried.

"Stop that! Show yourselves!" I said.

"Oh, look at that. She's mad."

"You are so childish. Silver!"

As they started to show themselves, I stopped to take a look at my surroundings for the first time. I was surrounded by beautiful trees that were over 50 meters tall. Deep blue waters ran through the streams. Shimmering lights filled the cracks in the rocks. But what was most mesmerizing was being surrounded by all the mystical creatures around me. As scared as I was, I somehow felt safe, safer than I've ever felt before.

"So why have you come here, little April?" the faerie said.

"Me? I don't know. I was running without any thought and somehow ended up here. More importantly, how do you know my name?"

"People only end up here when they have turmoil in their hearts. We know your name because...well, we just do!" said Silver.

"You are right. I am very troubled. You see, my aunt has been treating me terribly and I just can't take it anymore. Can I stay here for a while?" I asked.

"You most certainly can, but it seems you want more than just shelter," said Mithril.

"You are right. I want my aunt to disappear."

"Well then, as the leader here and in the name of the kelpie water spirit, I shall grant you shelter here for one week. We will make your wish come true."

"That must come with a price, I suppose."

"How clever you are, little April. Hahaha, we shall settle that at a later time. Now do you agree to the terms I have set?" asked Mithril.

I said without hesitation, "I agree."

With that, the deal was made and I stayed in the forest for one week, no more, no less. When the last hour had come on the last day, I prepared to set out on my way back home.

“Little April, when you return you shall find your wish granted. Your end of the deal will be dealt with in due time,” said Mithril right before I had left.

By morning I had reached the mansion. When I had arrived, my uncle ran over to me crying and said, “April where have you been?! I have been worried sick.”

I was so shocked to see him break down on his knees, I knew that something else had happened other than my mysterious disappearance.

“April, it’s your aunt. You see she passed away from a grave illness while you were missing.”

I was so shocked to hear this. I had only asked for her to disappear, not to be killed. Despite the fact that I had known that it was my fault, I had to move on.

“Uncle, I’m sorry for going missing. I went for a walk and got lost in a forest. I’m so sorry that you had to go through this alone.”

“A forest? Sweetie, there is no forest around these parts. Did you possibly hit your head?” said my uncle.

After hearing the words of my uncle who has lived here much longer than I, I began to worry. I then knew that what I stumbled upon was much more than a poor little girl like me could ever handle.

So, I had no choice but to go along with what my uncle was saying. “Maybe so. I seem to be feeling a bit tired, do you mind if I rest in my room?”

“Not at all, run along now and get some rest. I shall call a doctor to come see you in the afternoon.”

So, like an innocent little girl, which I most clearly was not, I ran off to my room and took a nice long nap. When I had awoken, the doctor had come to see me. I had already known that I was perfectly fine since I knew I did not hit my head.

Days, then months, then years passed by, and I greatly enjoyed the peace of those years. Still, I feared in my heart that the day would come when I would have to pay for my end of the deal I made all those years ago. When I turned 30 my uncle passed away in his sleep of old age and the mansion was then passed on to me. More and more time passed, and the fear continued to grow in my heart. After turning 40, it was finally time. I was peacefully enjoying my sleep when I felt a cold, ominous wind flush right through my room.

“I have come to pick you up, dear April,” said the mysterious creature before me as I arose from my bed.

“What are you?” I said, my voice shaking.

“I’m your escort. I am what you would call a Banshee. If it is my name you would like to know, it is Ivory. Lovely, isn’t it?”

“Well then, Ivory, is it finally time?”

“Hahaha, I guess you already understand the situation you are in quite well.”

“As the fear grew in my heart, I knew that this day would come,” I said. I had no doubt in my heart that I would greatly regret the deal I had made in years past.

“Then off we go!” said Ivory.

So off we went, down the hill, past the road to town, and deeper than ever before into the land until we arrived. When we got there, it was nothing less than a grand welcome, or so I had thought.

“It’s April! It’s April!” said all the fairies. All of them slowly made way for Mithril to come through. I stood there with as much bravery and readiness for what was to come as I could.

“Welcome! Unfortunately, the time has come for you to complete your end of the deal”

“I am prepared. Now spit it out, what is it that I must do?” My hands began to shake as I waited to hear his answer.

“Now, now, what’s the hurry? It’s simple. All you must do is reside here for a week to prepare for your death.”

I couldn’t believe my ears despite knowing that this was going to happen. I began to stumble and fell over in disbelief.

“Why must I stay here for one week before I die?”

“It is just the way that things work around here. You should really read those story books more often. Creatures like us are more deadly than you think. After one week's time you shall be killed without any bloodshed and will become a form of support for us all,” said Mithril.

“What does that mean? I have somewhat come to terms with my death, but what do you mean by a form of support?”

“You shall become one of these trees, in other words, a shelter and the source of our magic. All these trees you see here are the countless lives that have wandered into this place due to the turmoil in their souls. As foolish as they all were, they unknowingly agreed to our plans just like you,” said Mithril.

I could not deny the fact that I was being foolish and fell so deep into the trap that I could not get out. When I was younger, I preferred to read books other than the ones that contained these kinds of creatures due to my disbelief in them. Now I see all the many mistakes that I had made.

One week had passed and the time had come.

“Come now April and become our support!”

Just like that, no questions asked, I had given up on life and became a part of the land that I had once thought of as beautiful.

This is the story I shall leave behind and had written only hours before my passing for all those who dare step in this forest. With my last dying wish, I say may all those be forewarned and beware for the mystical beings are there. Waiting and waiting for all who dare, to step into their care.