

2012 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Fiction Category

Second Place: “Lost in the Great Woods,” by William Cromwell

Did I ever tell you about the time I found myself lost in the great woods? Well grab a seat and settle in for a bit. One fine evening, in late spring, as I sat in my chair on the back porch, my eyes, for no particular reason, wandered upon what appeared to be a stand of four oak trees in the middle of a field. I had noticed the trees before, but had not really given them much thought. I went over to see what there was to see.

When I got to the stand of trees thick, heavy grey clouds covered the sky, and an unseasonably chilly wind filled the air. I thought about going back to the house, when the earth began to rumble under me, which knocked me off of my feet. I felt disoriented and dizzy as if I were suddenly in a place I had never been. After a few moments the sky cleared, and the air warmed just as it had been a few moments before. When I got back up I noticed many more trees, hundreds, maybe thousands of the great oaks grew up, surrounding me in all directions.

I wanted to head back to the house again, but found I must have gotten turned around. I began to walk through the dense woods until I felt like I could hardly take another step. I hadn't seen a single creature, but felt like I was being followed. There was no way my wildest imagination could prepare me for what I was about to encounter.

Off in the distance I saw a glow of light, and heard the sound of festive drumming, horns, and an ensemble of stringed instruments. It kept getting louder and louder as I crept closer and closer. Suddenly the music stopped. Then as I looked from behind a wall of brambles, I could see a large dimly lit clearing with a long table, and many wooden chairs, but there was no one in sight. Cautiously I neared the table to sit at one of the many chairs for a bit, when a loud horn

storytelling of people mischief when they were younger, and of the different ancestries. The air was filled with the smell of the food that was on the table. This went on for so long, that I had lost all sense of time. which must have been a month or so.

I felt quite exhausted and fell asleep in a thick patch of grass that felt like I was floating on a cloud. When I woke up, I was sitting back in my chair on my porch as if it were all a dream, but I saw all around me several items from the festival like a flute from the satyrs, a cloak and quilt that the elves had made as well as other items.

Sometimes I swear I can see Klef and the others, whenever I notice a stand of oak trees. To this day, eventhough I would like to go and see my old friends, I have never been back, nor have I ever told anyone of the grand time I had while I was lost I the great woods.

Yep, one never knows where an adventure might take them when the go to see what there is to see, especially if they look hard enough.

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

“Lost in the Great Woods” begins with an element of meta-fiction, as the narrator invites the reader to hear a story about the time he was lost in the woods. The story itself possesses a dreamlike quality in which the narrator attends a springtime celebration with various woodland creatures, including: elves, dwarves, fairies, a talking tree, men with antlers, and goats with human faces. At the ancient-seeming celebration, they feast and play games before the narrator returns home. This imaginative, fairytale-esque story ends by encouraging readers to seek their own adventures.

Elissa Cahn was the contest judge. She is an MFA Fiction student at Western Michigan University, where she teaches composition and serves as the nonfiction editor for Third Coast. Her work has appeared in: NANOfiction, Midwestern Gothic, Harpur Palate, and Quarterly West. She is currently at work on a story collection.