

*Strange lights in the sky,*

*Time slipping by,*

*Voices in the night,*

*Fires by twilight.*

*If more than one; run!*

*For fairies are playing nearby.*

– *Common Wisdom*

Gaelin rose up early from not-slumber to check on the children.

It wasn't strictly necessary, of course, especially in their House. But somehow, they liked this part a lot. Gaelin appeared before the door to the nursery and opened the door wordlessly.

Before them stood the silent, stoic cribs of the daycare, each holding their treasured occupant. The kids were still sound asleep, only the occasional twitching of a limb or sign of snoring hinting anything to the contrary. Gaelin guessed they had about twenty minutes before the first little ones began to wake up, and so they closed the door and moved to make breakfast first. Their comrades could “get up” later.

Gaelin swiftly prepared some oatmeal back in the kitchen, getting six nice bowls ready. While they only anticipated handling a couple kids at any given time, it would be good to get them all fed.

Mid-way through warming the bottles, Gaelin heard some stirring in the nursery. They swiftly packed the rest in for readiness' sake and returned to the children.

“Mmm...”

Gaelin heard a little mumbling as they entered the room, eyes quickly focusing on the source of the sound. A little ways away, Daniel was beginning to stand up in his crib.

“G, Ga!” the boy's eyes lighted up as he noticed his caretaker, making grabby hands even as he unsteadily held onto the bars. Gaelin simply walked forward and began to work on unlatching them.

“There there. Someone's up early this morning.” Gaelin spoke softly. Daniel just fell into Gaelin's awaiting arms as soon as the bars were down. Luckily, they were able to pick him up just fine. Surprisingly, Daniel was a rather short boy, only 5 foot 8 or so.

“If you're up so early, I suppose you could have breakfast early too. Would you like that?” Gaelin asked, slowly stroking the overgrown baby's head leaves.

Daniel just nodded and slurred a bit at the din din sounds. Gaelin chuckled a little. He was cute, certainly, but not much for conversation these days. He'd been at the daycare for practically a full cycle, of course. And, admittedly, was kind of losing his entertainment value. They'd probably have to clean him up and plop him back on Earth soon.

“Bweakfast?!” another voice pierced the nursery, louder than Gaelin would have liked. Unphased, though, they turned toward Ashley.

“You can come only if you keep your voice down, OK?” Gaelin enunciated lowly.

Face suddenly “serious,” the girl gave a couple nods of “OK.” Gaelin couldn't help but smile a little.

Gaelin quietly unlatched the bars of Ashley's crib and let her carefully clamber down. She still had enough wits to accomplish the feat by herself, something she took a fair deal of pride in, at least in comparison to Daniel. Even as Gaelin held onto Daniel throughout the entire trip to the dining room, Ashley kept a watch on Daniel. She considered herself something of a big sister to him, and reveled in the status that held in her mind. Nevermind the fact that she was just as diaper-dependent as him. Speaking of which...

“Ashley?” Gaelin's voice came to just as the pair reached the dining room. The fairy paused before strapping Daniel into the chair.

“Wha?” Ashley's head bobbed over towards Gaelin, body still in something of a bigfoot gait.

Gaelin took a moment to sniff the air. They already knew, of course, but theatrics worked wonders on guests.

“Did you know you needed a change before coming over here?” Gaelin said in a tone that was the faintest bit cross.

“Noooo...nono...” Ashley vigorously shook her head. “It's Danny! He's poopy.”

“Really?” Gaelin said, humoring her as he checked Daniel's diaper. He already knew that the boy was only wet.

“Huh. Looks like Daniel's alright. That must mean that...” Gaelin quickly caught onto the rear waistband of Ashley's diaper before the girl could get away. The tell-tale stench of a full rear emanated from the opening before Gaelin was satisfied with the check and let it snap back. “...*you're* the messy one, missy.” Gaelin tutted.

Ashley shied away and whined a little.

“Hungry though.”

Gaelin smirked. Ashley *was* the type to delay a change for any number of reasons. Despite her seeming of maturity in other areas, she never minded having to wait around in a messy diaper. Really she often seemed to fill them up to the brim, though half of that was from her physiology. She was big; really bigger than many of the forms that the fairies in the daycare used. Back on Earth there were special diapers cut for adults of her unusual size, and the simulacrum used on her here were quite similar. If the maximum absorbency possible and being designed for vigorous playful activity wasn't too much of a stretch, at least; somehow Gaelin doubted the ones back on Earth had the same types of colorful designs that Ashley's diapers did.

“Alright, I guess our noses can wait until *after* breakfast.” Gaelin pretended to be defeated a little, and Ashley giggled (she thought) to herself.

Breakfast went by fast, all things considered. Daniel dutifully sucked on his bottle after being buckled into the highchair, and Gaelin carefully fed him his oatmeal that was subtly honeyed afterward. Ashley got a seat that was for ever so slightly bigger kids, and voraciously ate her oatmeal by herself (to the point where Gaelin had to tell her to slow down). The fairy made a mental note to let other caretakers be around her when her meal finally passed through. Nevertheless, though, breakfast was an enjoyable time.

Gaelin could hear the movements of the others in House by the time that they were wrapping up breakfast, and assumed that the others were getting the rest of the kids ready. So, the fairy unbuckled their own charges and began to guide them toward the playroom, Daniel sitting in his grasp and Ashley hopping in front of them. First, however, was a detour.

Gaelin stepped into a room with a powder-blue door. The changing rooms were few, all things considered, but still strategically placed. Gaelin thought to work on Ashley first, before they noticed how she was readily occupying herself, walking around the room. The fairy thus began to set Daniel on one of the changing tables, the boy not fussing much as his old diaper was untaped. Gaelin cleaned the boy in short order and taped up a nice flower-patterned diaper; one of his favorites. While Daniel was still giggling, Gaelin carefully hefted Ashley onto the bonafide “girls” changing table, which was not exactly a low feat given her size. This cleaning task was on the surface more troublesome, though personally Gaelin never saw too much work in it. Really, they almost found the work meditative in a way, even when it dealt with fluids and the unpleasant substances of the mortal body. It was just part of taking care of their charges.

Sometimes, Gaelin thought they felt some emotions when they were changing them, like the kinds that living people had. But that would be ridiculous, and so they often put such thoughts aside.

After a good minute and a half of work wiping Ashley down, Gaelin let the girl pick her next diaper (she was an easy victim for this tactic). She picked the city-themed one and Gaelin obliged, applying powder and lotion in the correct proportions. After everyone was set, Gaelin returned to guiding the two to the playroom. As they were already almost there, this part was really quite easy.

“Alright then you little scamperers, get on in there. Your friends should be waking up soon.” Gaelin said, slowly lowering Daniel onto the ground. He wasn't quite as good at walking as his friends.

“Ooh Danny! We can make fort before they get here! Have all the blankets.” Ashley suggested, looking toward Gaelin hopefully. Despite the fact that she was taller, she still often expected adult help with the work.

“Oh, uhuh!” Daniel made out some words.

Having been locked into it now, Gaelin began to follow the “little” plant person's direction.

The fort was rather easy to set up, and finished before anyone else came into the playroom. Daniel was sequestered further back into the structure, like a wriggling worm, while Ashley was far too active to bother actually being *in* the fort. Having a sense of ownership alone worked wonders for the girl. Once the first of the other kids – Will, to be precise – made it into the playroom, Gaelin took the opportunity

to escape the directorship of Ashley. She'd be too busy dealing with other playmates and fairies soon enough anyway.

“Wanted a couple to yourself this morning, Gaelin?” Celi mused. To Gaelin's sight they still had the faint fey visage anterior to their perceptions, though behind it was the plantman visage that the kids were accustomed to.

“Eh, I wanted to *check on* some this morning, and these two sort of selected themselves.” Gaelin shrugged.

“Heh, fair.” Celi nodded.

Gaelin turned toward Will, who had almost silently moved toward the corner of the room. Will wasn't too new of an arrival, but he was certainly stronger, well, *willed* than the others, though even that hadn't been enough to really help him much. Granted, much of his resistance wasn't due to his willpower per se. Will had a certain propensity for second sight, though he honed this talent through magic rather than science. Because of this, he had been more immediately ready to entertain the possibility of fairy capture than many of the others had been. He'd steeled his soul early on; a normally laudable gesture, but somehow he had forgotten that it was already impregnable. It would have done him better to realize the vulnerability of his mind, Gaelin thought.

Either way, Will was already used to his incontinence now, so Gaelin didn't anticipate any trouble going into the future. Of all the points of no return, that was often the cincher.

“How's the morning, Will?” Gaelin asked.

“Mmm...kay.” Will reflexively blushed. Early on Gaelin had teased him through many of the hard parts. The fairy could be like that, though once they were broken in, Gaelin didn't consider himself very mean.

“Well, that's not too bad. Were you going to play with anything?” Gaelin asked.

“Well, I...dunno.” Will shrugged, gaze not falling on Gaelin.

“C'mon, kiddo. You know the quicker you get to playing the quicker you'll get back home...” Gaelin rambled on.

“I knooow...” Will grumbled. After a few silent seconds, he turned away more fully from Gaelin. He'd found a few stuffed animals and figures peeking their way out of the toy chest.

Gaelin smirked to himself. It was a good enough strategy, they thought. Appealed to his greater knowledge of the situation, let him feel more in control, and still satisfied the designs of the House. And it was true. It was just that Will would have go through embarassments unbearable to his current mind before he would have provided sufficient entertainment to be released. Not that he'd care by that point, of course.

Gaelin could take their time. Given Will's current adorability, the fairy could guess that he'd be very *fun* in the future.

Gaelin was snapped back to attention by the scattered sounds of Ashley as she chased some of the other kids around in some sort of chase.

Gaelin smiled, shaking their head.

Not that they were lacking for entertainment at the moment.

Gaelin mostly held back for the rest of the playing session. A few other fairies were at work “on the ground,” so to speak, like Idris in their northerly form, but for now Gaelin simply watched. Half of it was to enjoy the fruits of labor, and the other half largely because the fairy always let the kids just be kids once they were suitably minded.

Like all things of the world, though, eventually Gaelin's quiescence was interrupted. This time by a scent. Gaelin frowned briefly. He hadn't noticed any of the kids get into a squatting position.

Just at that moment, Gaelin felt a tug on his pants.

“Yes, Will?” Gaelin turned to the face he had anticipated like clockwork.

“Ello, Gaelin...” Will mumbled. The boy was still clutching a few dolls from the fantasy world he had long since immersed himself in, but for the most part he was covering his olfactory canal. Strong sights and smells tended to disrupt his playing, the poor boy.

“Well hello Will. Say, did you notice by any chance wh-” Gaelin went silent when they noticed Will open his mouth.

“Daniel is pooppy. Err, went poop...” Will corrected himself.

“Ah, thank you Will! Such a sharp boy.” Gaelin patted the lad on the head, and he couldn't exactly hide a bit of a dreamy smile. “I'll be sure to clean him up, don't worry.”

Will languidly nodded and went back to covering his “nose.”

Gaelin took the time to count their blessings. It wouldn't do for the boy to be *so* preoccupied with strong smells; after all, messy diapers were supposed to be an everyday occurrence. Nevertheless, it was certainly useful that he had such a keen eye for who in a crowd had soiled themselves, as it avoided a lot of the hiding games that kids like Ashley enjoyed and which annoyed their caretakers. Sometimes Gaelin did wonder exactly *how* Will had such a specific sense, but they assumed that his psychic sight also came in handy for more emotionally-relevant matters.

Gaelin reached Daniel soon enough. He had been brought out of the blanket fort slightly and fussed over by Ashley like a mother, a bit of a pawn in some game that he didn't care for, or have much awareness of. Luckily, since he had pooped himself, the fairy didn't have to fight off many of the kids playing House. Gaelin deftly scooped up the lad and held him above the throng of still-playing children, moving quickly to escape the room before any nastier accidents could occur. The two exited the room without incident and entered into the adjacent changing room. Daniel was making some of the sounds he made to “talk” with Gaelin, but didn't appear otherwise perturbed.

Smiling, Gaelin set him down on one of the changing tables. Some of the other fairies might have

considered Daniel so regressed as to be boring, but truth be told, they didn't mind the destination so much. Well, at least not as much as them.

It was kind of funny how many internal disagreements one got in even such a group as them, Gaelin thought as they began to untape Daniel's diaper and steel themselves against the stench. After all, they had self-selected away from so many other groups that played with mortals, including the ones of exceedingly close nature and specificity, like the classicals who physically returned men to toddlerhood. Gaelin just shook their head at the thought. It was hard to tell if they were like men or if men were like them.

Gaelin worked to change the diaper quickly and efficiently. They weren't the best, but they were certainly better than some other fairies. Gaelin was still firmly in the Childmind camp, and not the circles which dealt more strictly with just adults and diapers, but they recognized the utility of the garment in truly establishing babyhood. Few other tools were so strong in psychologically transporting their charges, and the fairy was often at disagreement with some of the other fairies, especially those who dragged on the Untraining routine. Sure, it may toy with their minds more, and some just enjoyed the process more than actually dealing with incontinent pseudo-babies, but Gaelin always felt it played with the *caretakers* more than the children. Instead of having to deal with a kid asking for the potty every hour or so, you could just leave them in a diaper and change them at your leisure. As was appropriate for babies.

“Alright, all done.” Gaelin said, helping Daniel to stand up on the changing table and patting his bum. The boy slurred thanks and looked on shingly, so Gaelin swiftly plopped his pacifier back into his mouth and set him down on the ground. He was far more compliant with changes than some of the other kids.

Gaelin elected to take Daniel to the lounge room instead of the playroom. It mimicked a living room quite closely, and they'd probably be filtering out soon anyhow. It'd be best for Daniel to avoid the inevitable stampede that would result. The boy tended to crawl and kids rarely ever watched where they were running.

Within a few minutes of Daniel watching, Gaelin's prediction was confirmed. They could hear Ashley leading the charge, though it was ultimately some of the other children who crested the hallway first. Their caretakers only lagged behind slightly; Gaelin could guess that they had some activities planned or were simply intending to watch them play in a bigger space. In general, the lounge served as a good staging area of sorts; the adults could conduct what little other business the house had while they kept an eye on their charges. It even seemed like Celi was cycling out; as made sense. Given how their charges were physically adults, there was precious little nap time to make use of. Not that it bothered anyone that much, of course; they wouldn't have joined the clave had they not been particularly interested in this line of mortal entrancement.

Gaelin's eyes wandered from Daniel more and more as the other caretakers settled into their vigil. They did like the boy, but Gaelin's claims on individual children tended to waver past their personalized indoctrinations. Some other fairies held onto “their” children, like parents, and Gaelin didn't have a problem with it. He simply preferred to shepherd them all more broadly.

“BLAH!”

Gaelin was surprised from his reclined position on a couch by the sudden presence of Ashley. She had

jumped onto him, shouted the phrase, and now simply laid on him. Since her body was quite cold, Gaelin elected to put more effort into rectifying this situation.

“What did you do that for? You could have scared me.” Gaelin said. It was a lie, but she wouldn't know that.

“Wan'ed to.” Ashley mumbled. Her maw was currently resting between the cushions and Gaelin's chest, so it was a bit hard to hear.

“Hmph. Well I'd better see you with better behavior next time. Unless you want Yiva to know-” Gaelin spoke the traditional words until Ashley piped up.

“Nooo...I won' do it next time...pwomise...” Ashley spoke, though her voice was clearly strained from fatigue.

“Alright. That's what I wanted to hear.” Gaelin spoke as he thought one was supposed to. As he had expected, the girl kept lying there half on top of him, even after her apology. She felt like a stone left in the shade.

“Are you cold? Is that why you came up here?” Gaelin asked.

“...Yis.” Ashley spoke. Her eyes were still closed.

Gaelin just started to rub the top of her head a bit. The girl started to grin languidly, shifting into a more comfortable position.

Gaelin found it interesting, all things considered. They did find her current “big girl” act quite amusing, though truthfully they were rather interested to see how she'd look younger. She was only middlingly regressed for the “proper baby” phase, but time moved fast. Either way, it seemed like she was perpetually youthful in some aspects.

Gaelin saw Ashley twitch a little, and remembered one of the most prominent of them.

Gaelin didn't flinch when Ashley urinated. She just went around in her diapers, and they could clearly see that it hadn't been anywhere close to leaking when she had jumped on top of him. As she was a baby, it was only expected that she'd be using them at any place and at any time, even when such a space-time point was while on top of one of her caretakers. Judging by the sound and the rapid warmth that was growing over part of his pants, Gaelin could guess that it was a pretty big flood. Luckily, he didn't feel any sign of wetness whatsoever. They got her the most absorbent sorts of diapers for a reason.

While her bladder finished reflexively emptying itself, Ashley's bowels initiated their own movements. The girl was still somewhat conscious, and bothered to stick her butt out to complete the act more easily. This took a bit longer than her urination, but easily matched it in magnitude. Gaelin could hear her grunting a little, but knew she wasn't in too much pain from “pushing”; she couldn't control when she went consciously due to her incontinence. So soon enough the plant girl was done, resting back into her sleepy position on top of a grown-up. Gaelin could tell that it was a large load, but wasn't worried. Her diapers prevented blowouts under even the most vigorous of playing circumstances, and predictably enough Ashley didn't look to be bothered by her elimination at all. Truthfully, she just felt

it to be natural, an everyday occurrence. The warmth was a nice bonus as well.

Gaelin let Ashley continue to sleep on them, and turned back to other thoughts. This was just part and parcel of caring for a kid, after all. Really, she was quite cute like this. Gaelin petted the girl some more, and wondered how she might look like once she was more dependent on grown-ups. But mostly Gaelin's mind twisted in the alien eddies of the fair folk.

Gaelin only rose when Ashley was pulled away by the lithe form of caretaker Yiva. The two fairies themselves didn't really communicate, as they didn't need to. Gaelin kept looking on as Ashley was guided away to the changing room, the woman as docile and compliant as a "real" little girl. Once the two had vanished, Gaelin got up from their position on the couch.

Gaelin remained in the study for the rest of the evening. Not like their usual routine, though their mind was never truly very amenable to prediction anyhow. By the time they had finished up their plans, dusk had fallen outside. Gaelin thought their thoughts to the rest of the House, and the other fairies agreed. With only some parties thus blindsided, Gaelin continued on with the rest of the day. After more playtime, bathtime, dinnertime, and finally bedtime, Gaelin went to work.

The first thing Daniel did when he woke up was check the clock. He did not know why he did it, but he did nonetheless. Luckily, his car was very helpful in that regard.

"1:11 PM."

That was right around the time that he passed out, on the mountain road that the man had been travelling along. Or...had he passed out? Perhaps he had only zoned out, really...why had he parked in the little rest stop they had here? Daniel tried to sort out his mind, but couldn't really make much sense of...anything at the moment.

Daniel thought to properly think things through, before he remembered that he'd have to reach home by nightfall.

As Daniel started up the car, though, preparing to continue the long drive to come, he thought of something.

Something ineffable, nameless, and very much not traditionally thought of by the salary man. But it came to his mind for a very important reason.

He could not tell if he had gained or lost it.