

Fairytales

The following tale was written as part of a Scottish College exercise that encouraged staff and students to use fairytales as a medium to convey stories and meaning. The topic was the process of assessment and learning which ministers undertake having received a call to become ministers in the Church. This one sums up the ethos of the Scottish College but also explores some of the issues the story of Mary and Martha raises about learning and service.

Tales from the forest: The pool of reflection.

Once upon a time a young quester, eager of heart and noble of spirit, looking for inspiration to lead others in the journey of life enquired earnestly, 'where should I go to receive wisdom and find out more about the true life?' 'I have heard a rumour there is place in the distant north, a place of imagination and creativity where I could learn.'

'No, that is not a real castle. It has no turrets or a fire hall, simple campfire stories are told there and they eat picnics in the woods.'

The young quester was sent away with booklets to read and choices to make. Her eyes grew heavy and she fell into sleep. In her dream she was transported to the edge of a forest. Peeping through the trees of the forest she spied a bearded wizard singing gently the hymns of the Dane, Grundvig, for no one else would listen. 'Have you heard of such a place where people tell stories at the campfire and eat picnics in the woods?' 'Of course young quester, such a place exists – if you want to find it just follow the path' and he pointed to the road she should follow.

Together they made down the path – still singing Danish hymns which the young woman picked up remarkably quickly.

As they walked the quester asked, 'what are these whisperings – is it the wind?' 'Listen again, my dear', said the wizard, 'they are the voices of the cynical elves' and she heard

'It is too dangerous'
'It is all in your imagination.'
'There is no wisdom here'
'You will not learn all the facts you need.'

'Follow the light' said the wizard and they continued, sharing their songs, walking towards the light.

On the edge of a clearing a second wizard, holding a lantern, guided them to a campfire. There were people sitting around, telling stories of their experiences and sharing laughter. 'Who are these people?' she asked. 'Some are fellow questers like yourself,' the second wizard, who also had a beard, replied, 'and others who live in different parts of the forest and have come together to tell their stories.' She listened to their adventures of the true life and discerned within them a deep wisdom. The wizard invited her to share her story and she was affirmed by the way in which the people appreciated her wisdom and insight.

As the embers of the campfire died down, a third bearded wizard appeared. 'It is time to eat' and the entire company rose up and followed the wizard to the back of the clearing where a picnic unlike any other she had known awaited them. 'Come and eat' cried the wizard, 'there is enough for everyone and every dietary need is catered for.' With cries of joy they fell upon the food and devoured it eagerly. It was delicious. The story telling continued as they ate. She noticed some people's stories were told with laughter and other with tears and she began to feel she was part of a large family. 'Who pays for all this?' she pondered, and as if she had spoken out loud, the third wizard replied, 'Generosity is our vocation.'

After they had eaten their fill, they fell into a deep sleep, dreaming of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Morning dawned bright and fresh. A young woman was approaching. 'Last night I heard from another quester about a pool which I must visit. Do you know where it is?' asked the quester. 'Come with me and I will show you', said the young woman. They walked a short distance to a crystal clear pool with no wind disturbing the surface so that the bottom was clearly seen though it was obviously deep. 'How still the water is. How beautiful!' 'This is the pool of reflection,' explained the young woman, 'everyone who comes here sees themselves more clearly. Here is your castle. You have been here ever since you arrived in the forest.'

As the quester gazed into the pool, she saw, not only herself but everyone she had met in the forest. As she looked up the first wizard began to speak, 'You are all ready to start the next part of the journey.'

And with that she awoke. It was morning and she realised that the magical forest was not a dream after all.

The End.