



Just a
Smidgen
of Magic

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Excerpts of Just a Smidgen of Magic

Just a Smidgen of Magic (anthology) <http://bit.ly/Smidgen>

\$5.99 paper \$2.99 Kindle

Five short-short stories from the edge of the realm of magic--enchanted moments, realizations, answering the call and returning to the mundane.

- Artifacts: Pay attention to the Mothers' warning.
- The Croning: Every woman's time will come
- Not Even One Wish: No only should you be careful what you wish for, but whom you wish to.
- Taffy's Tale: A high price to pay to be fed by the Fae
- Zen of Cool: A full moon, festival, a fool and a fiddler in the hills of Appalachia

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Artifacts

"There she is!" a voice screeched as Maribel Barnes jumped out of her cab and dashed up the back steps to the museum. The reporters were waiting for the opening even in the rain, or they'd been tipped off somehow, always, everywhere she went. Even with a wig and bulky clothing, the press recognized her. She knew that was what she'd asked for, and now she must put a stop to it. She wanted her life back.

She didn't bother to dodge the cameras, but just ran in the building as quickly as she could. Security knew she was coming, and Nigel was on duty, both to open the door for her, and to block anyone else coming in. He didn't ask her why she needed to get into the exhibit again tonight-it was ready to open in less than twelve hours. If she could do what she came here to do, the nightmare would be over.

Joe unlocked the gallery for her and turned on the lights. "It's okay, Ms. Barnes. Nobody is going to bother the artifacts tonight." He smiled, probably thinking that she wanted to protect them herself, her path to fame, her footnote in the anthropology books. ...



The Croning

She cut off the radio as the news came on. Yellow leaves swirled by her window, fading to brown like forgotten photographs. She felt the change of weather in her hands for the first time this fall, though she was well into middle age. The wind howled. She shuddered as if someone were walking on her grave. She put on a sweater and started water heating for tea.

Outside, the trees writhed against the keening wind like women fighting storm troopers who tore at their clothes. The wind screamed, prophesying a winter to try men's souls, making them kill their neighbors for bread. She watched, shivering, as the wind scoured away the last shreds from the naked trees. It howled, ravenous.

Winter always came, but it had never felt like this. She thought of her grandmother who used to massage her hands when the wind blew. An image of Grandmother's face appeared in her mind, a serious expression on the face etched with lines of laughter.

It is my turn. Do I remember what to do? ...



Not Even One Wish

As she was washing the dishes, a strange green mist bubbled out of the soapsuds. She knew the dishes had been sitting in the sink for quite a while, and she had put a little bleach in the water, but not that much!

The mist coalesced into a small genie, green and wizened, decked in jewels. He folded his arms and began to intone, "Thank you, O Mistress, for..."

"Wait a minute. Where'd you come from?" she asked. Jerking the plug out of the sink, she began to rinse off each piece left revealed through the suds...no lamps nor unusual bottles, not even a pot with a lid. "Where did you come from?" ...



Taffy's Tale

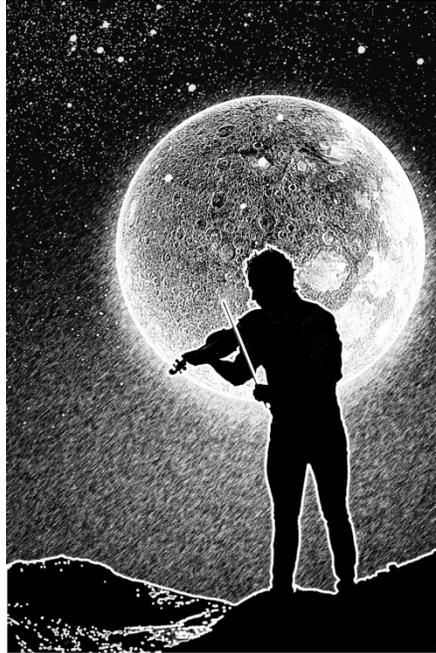
The only sound in the quiet evening was the lonesome wail of John Winston's old fiddle weeping 'Wildwood Flower.'

I'd heard it many times, my fur bristling along my back as I ran to hide behind the woodstove. Rue the day I first heard that loathsome tune.

The chill was on the mountains, and the fallen leaves rustled with the scurrying rodents gathering winter food. How I longed to run in the fields and pounce on them, fat with their windfalls. Seven years passed since I set my paw across the doorstep, ignoring the twitch in my tail, never to lie in the sun again, or stretch against a tree, my claws in its bark. That longing tune wove its spell across the doorways and windows, keeping all within and luring those who wandered too close.

No mice creep through this house, though the wind slithers through the cracks in the walls. No insects, reptiles, or any other living thing but those of us who hear the tune. No one outside questions how he keeps the farm, never going into town or paying taxes.

I know...



Zen of Cool

I have seen the Devil, and He is beautiful. But is that a Good Thing or is it a Bad Thing?

Why is it that the Devil never goes to Montana to play the Tuba against some gifted Soul? Never graces Palm Beach with a Golden Golf Club? Never toots a Flute in Beijing? No, He always heads towards Georgia with his fiddle.

Catgut and horsehair, wood tortuously shaped into the most moving of instruments, the one most capable of the range of feeling in the human voice, a range envied of mere singers: the instrument of the wild gypsy, the nine-fingered hillbilly and the elegant classicist. The instrument that has no frets, that changes tuning with any butterfly's flapping, even as it is played—it takes magic to play a violin. Wizards know that white magic is poetry, and black magic is anything that works.

I was almost in Georgia, in the nearby Carolina Mountains, on a frosty midnight with the requisite full moon, a time of manifestation, of immanence, as we gathered to hear him play: hippies and skas, vixen blondes and doofus boyfriends, elders and children, and me, sober and cold, having left my hung-over buddies behind and walked alone to see the fiddle player.

Who knew?...