

FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN

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Editor's note: the following is fiction inspired by The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis.

Tearfully, she held the family photo close and remembered the happy times. Indeed, there had been joyous times with her three siblings in their small London home. Then followed the terrible sirens and explosions. Neighbours perished and gaping holes smouldered in once-quiet neighbourhoods. The evacuation came next, which meant leaving Mum and Dad behind; we siblings boarded a train and headed for the safety of the countryside and extended family.

"Don't love anything too much," she had whispered to herself back then. "It will be taken away from you." She missed Mum and Dad terribly but held it in.

Gradually, she and her siblings found adventure in the great, countryside house—particularly, in one great, wondrous wardrobe—but a seed had been sown: people and the things you love go away. That held true many years later when, growing up way too fast, she had believed a young man loved her. But he, too, went away, taking a part of her with him.

Her teachers at school had told her that reason was a virtue and belief in unseen things was folly. She resisted at first, but, gradually, she embraced the notion that reality was composed of what could be seen. Reason was something one could get their hands around. Faith was fickle.

"Is there a fine line between faith and foolishness?" she wondered.

Her thoughts went to the latest stir over the Cottingley Faeries. Two young girls had borrowed a camera and gone down to a creek where they photographed what they said were faeries. She'd seen the photographs. They looked like paper cut-outs to her. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the master detective Sherlock Holmes, believed the



Art by Kristina Elaine Greer (contributor)

faeries were real. Many other adults were fooled as well.

But what of her fantastic adventures with her siblings and that wardrobe? They could only have been the product of an elegant myth—one they had created as children to ease the stress of war.

“Youth,” she mused, her thoughts turning to more contemporary events. “Joys are fleeting. Only life’s sorrows last.”

Indeed, what people in London simply referred to as “the wreck” had come as a shock. A signal malfunction had set two British Rail trains on the same track, destined for a horrible head-on collision. Coaches crumpled into one another, and many were killed. Susan had lost not only her parents in that wreck but all of her siblings as well.

The accident had left her quite alone. She caressed the photograph. Everything warm and wonderful in her home had been reduced to black and white. That, too, would fade with time.

A distant aunt had taken her in, but she soon went off to university. More logic and reason were taught in the lecture halls. She felt empty, but neither did she have an antidote.

She visited a church but found it dry. Yet, the new world developing around her offered different experiences, and a new myth would embrace her and bring true happiness. Myth, she would discover, was not an untrue fantasy so much as a vehicle for inexpressible concepts.

She had ended up registering for Medieval Literature to fill her schedule. She had done so with an inward groan.

“This stuff will be colossally boring,” she had confided to her friend Alastair.

He had readily agreed. “I’ll bet the professor is some horrid old goat who smells of tobacco and brandy!”

When the class commenced, the two freshmen were surprised. The “old goat” turned out to be a young woman who seemed not much older than they, but she must have been. She was the kind of teacher who brought her material to life. She painted book covers on the wall of her classroom and took her dog on long walks around the campus lake. Susan and Alastair met her one day, and they walked together. This became a regular thing.

One day, Susan said to her professor, “It is a shame that all the great myths are just that. MYTHS! None of them are true!”

“Oh, but they are, for they communicate great truths!”

“How can that be?” Susan wondered. As they walked along, a bit of wind lifted

some leaves, sending them spiralling in flight.

"Unseen truths need a special language of their own," the professor answered.

Susan's change of heart towards the world of the unseen was not quick, but, like many great thinkers, the change was gradual. Dying gods, heroism, and unconditional love were the stuff of things imagined. But her professor had said that if one could imagine something in this world, the possibility must necessarily exist for its fulfilment.

Her thoughts turned to lions and then the fact that, for one who was not so athletic, she was a fine archer. That puzzled her. The stories of her youth, though myth, still felt more real than the things she was chasing after in everyday life. But, were those youthful experiences, like the Cottingley Faeries Sir Doyle felt were only visible to virginal young girls, no longer possible for her?

"Surely, it is too late. For me, truth must be simply that which I see before me. Reconciliation with the Divine cannot be possible."

The silence engulfed her. But, was that a growl she imagined? No, it was a voice, a kind, low voice!

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV).

She could choose the silence and loneliness. But, might there be the promise of another—hidden—path? Clearly, the truth was more complex than it seemed. Cracking it would require some hard examination.