

# **The LEGEND of Shiloh Woods**

*by Joe Scavetti*

## **NEW KNOWLEDGE**

**- *the Caretaker* -**

In the recent past, as we humans understand time, I had a most remarkable and quite fascinating experience. A new world was revealed to me. Well, not really a new worldview only that I was unaware of it in the past. The basic workings of nature were explained to me. I learned about many things that I had previously assumed or taken for granted. There is a mystic - a magical - side of life most people never experience. Is this true? Did all of this actually happen to me? Do elves, fairies and nature spirits really exist?

I think it will be best if I tell you the story as I lived it and allow you to conclude the meanings for yourself. Don't make up your mind, however, until you've heard the whole story. Between journalistic assignments, I took a brief vacation and retreated to a friend's cabin in the mountains. The solitude was exactly the change I needed from my hectic life in the city.

The early October weather provided mild days followed by cool nights. During the early mornings, fog often lay in the valleys. It usually lifted and then evaporated as the sun warmed the rocky earth. A brisk walk early each morning stimulated my appetite for breakfast and reinforced the joy I felt in this isolation.

Various paths led me to different natural wonders. I found interesting stone formations, meadows still rife with autumn flowers and everywhere stood vast groves of cedar, pine, oak and elm. Wildlife was in abundance. I was delighted to see deer grazing and I often watched squirrels scampering from limb to limb.

On one particular morning, I decided to walk south. In the predawn light, I followed the ruts of a long abandoned road. Near the cabin, erosion had exposed large rocks in the tracks. I chose my steps carefully and used my sturdy hiking stick to keep my balance. The path sloped downward and I could see a patch of fog in the hollow below. After passing a barren, washed out area that had once been mined as a source of stone for gravel, the walking became easier. Then I was able to concentrate more on the environment and less on avoiding a twisted ankle. Perhaps, I reflected, the road and the quarry had once served one another. Now, both had become a waste that erosion continued to accentuate.

I looked for signs of wildlife and realized that the hour was too late for the nocturnal animals, like owls, and too early for most daytime feeders. Bluejays are among the first creatures to stir about in the morning. As I walked, a pair of them began screeching intimidations at me from the branches of a nearby tree. In silence, the sun made an appearance on the eastern horizon.

Clean, clear air filled my lungs and I contrasted it with the brown, polluted air of the city. The scents of pine tar and damp earth were calming to me. I felt the tranquility of being one with nature. The road led downward in gentle curves- first to the right and then to the left. As I

walked, my thoughts drifted to earlier times when, as I imagined, all people had been one with nature. Humans once lived on the bounty of nature without destroying the delicate balances of preservation.

I was in the fog before I realized I had reached that level on the mountain. The fog gently swirled as I moved through it. I slowed my pace- then stopped. Within the fog, I found both silence and warmth. I had never known that experience before and I was delighted with the feeling. Such must be the security felt by a butterfly in its cocoon or a child in its mother's wombpeace, quiet and nurturing warmth.

I moved on, following the forgotten road, I was filled with a sense of discovery and well-being. My boots soon stepped on soft loam. The first fallen leaves of autumn made a muffled crunching sound underfoot. The path leveled and I moved out of the fog as quickly as I had walked into it. I emerged from the mists to see the road crossed by a rocky outcrop. Small pockets of water identified it as a streambed in wetter times of the year.

"Top a tha mornin' ta ya, Chronicler." The voice startled me as it shattered my reverie- it was totally unexpected. Sitting on a fallen tree trunk beside the road I saw the old man. He crossed one leg over the other knee as he smiled. I stared in surprise. His attire blended into the colors of the forest around him. "I did na mean ta startle ya. I be a friend who's been awaitin' yer arrival," he continued.

As my wits returned, so did my manners. "A good morning to you too, sir", I managed to respond. I crossed the dry streambed and approached the stranger. He appeared to be no more than four feet tall including his tasseled cap. His clothes were rather rumpled - light green shirt and brown pants. What appeared to be a cow's horn hung at his side. It was attached to a leather strap over his shoulder. Later, I noticed he was also carrying a leather pouch and water flask.

"I was startled only because I thought myself completely alone out here. I am ..." "Tha Chronicler, a teller a tales," he interrupted. "I've been expectin' ya fer quite a long time now. Come sit a spell and catch yer breath. There be much I wish ta share wit ya this day."

I was ready for a break and accepted the invitation to share his log. I removed the top from my canteen. "Try mine, Chronicler. I think ya'll find it more ta yer likin'." said the old man as he handed me a flask. The liquid had no aroma. I prepared myself for the burn of liquor since many of the old-timers in these hills were noted for their "moonshine whiskey". I took a quick sip- then a long drink- of the purest, sweetest water I had ever tasted. My canteen was filled with the brackish, medicine tasting water piped from a well to the cabin.

"Where did you get such wonderful water?" I asked.

"From Sparklin' Creek near Adrien's Dam- a few miles from here as yew would say. ...narth ta be exact. I've traveled from there this mornin' ta meet wit ya." His tone was confident and I was enraptured by his voice. It was rather high in pitch and he spoke with a lilting accent that could have been either English or Irish in origin.

“You couldn’t have known where to find me. I didn’t decide which direction to walk until I left the cabin a few minutes ago.” I wasn’t argumentative, just confused.

“Aye, think what ya like. Yew an’ me, we’re both here sittin’ on this old relic of a tree now, ain’t we?”

“True enough.” I responded to his inescapable logic. “I am a writer, of sorts; but, how do you know me and why do you call me Chronicler?”

“I know all I need ta know. I know the past an’ can personally testify ta several centuries a history. I know the future, at least in part. Yew be in the part that I know. I been expectin’ ya ta come an learn the present so as ya can record it in the annals a ‘uman knowledge. We been expectin’ a teller of tales - yew be that person. “I be known by some as Sylvanius Worten. That be really more a title, tho, ya see. I be also known ta tha older spirits as Elvan Artumen Merlanium. Yew may call me by any name ya prefer.” He crossed both legs and sat on his feet looking as comfortable on the log as if it were a sofa or settee.

“May I taste that delicious water again, please, Mr. Worten?” He passed the flask. Although I had taken a long drink moments earlier, the flask was still full. I returned the water as he continued, “I hope yew be na alarmed nor think me crazy. Just listen ta what I be sharin’. I know ye’ll use tha information as ‘tis meant ta be used. “I worked closely wit tha Merlins who attended tha Pendragon family in tha middle years a England. I be beggin’ yer pardon, yew ‘umans think that ta be early ‘istory, don ya now? Well, when Arthur Pendragon, tha ‘igh King, be killed by his son- who also died- there na remained much ta be done in England. Some a us moved on and I were fortunate enough ta be assigned here as tha guardian and caretaker a this forest.

“The Devas called this tha ‘Pine Oak Forest’ long afore any ‘uman set foot in it and so ‘tis called by all tha others ta this day. Yew ‘umans ‘ave never bothered ta consult us about existin’ place names when movin’ into new territory”.

I had a fleeting thought that, perhaps, I was still asleep and this was a dream. My senses told me I was awake but my logic questioned whether I was really sitting on a log talking to a mythical creature- even though he seemed to be such a friendly and charming one.

“Tha Pine Oak Forest covers lotsa earth. It be bordered on tha south by tha Wide River an’ on tha north by tha River that Roars”, he continued. “There be na boundry ta tha east an’ west. Me responsibility goes so far in each such direction as there be trees. “I be the arbitrator, tha peace maker, among all tha Elves, Fairys, Devas, Sprites an’ other spirits what live throughout this forest. “Yew be smilin’. A job tew big fer a man so little, ya think?” His smile told me that although he seemed to read my thoughts he had taken no offense. Logical or not, awake or asleep, I wanted to know more about this little person.

“You read my thoughts, Mr. Worten. Is there other magic you do?” He jumped off the log and walked slowly away. His short-legged gait was almost a waddle. I was intrigued by his story and had been thinking about another drink of that wonderful water.

“Don’t go. I really want to know more!” I stood and caught up with him in three quick strides.

“I know yer intentions be right, Chronicler, but ya must learn ta see wit yer ‘eart an’ ‘ear wit yer mind. Ya must open yer spirit ta new perspectives. There be na need fer magic. Ya need only learn tha whole truth a nature. “umans have become less an’ less attuned ta tha other spirits and entities what share tha planet. Yew consider yerselves first an’ only in tha scheme a things. But, walk wit me and we’ll talk a some notable exceptions.”

He offered me the flask, which I gladly accepted. “In tha very ‘eart a this vast forest, there be a place called the ‘Enchanted Woods a Shiloh’. Some a tha younger Fairies and Pixies choose ta call it tha ‘Forbidden Woods’ but such be a na consequence as both be one and tha same place. “From tha earliest times, sacred ceremonies ‘ave been conducted in these woods on a beautiful rock formation which be surrounded by smaller clearin’s. Since afore time were measured, each group ‘ad open access ta tha Enchanted Woods. ‘Owbeit, some five ‘undred years ago, as yew count time, there be a great argument bout who could use tha area - and when. Many a the ceremonials coincide, ya see, so a schedule or calendar did na work. A’course, it be up ta me ta keep tha peace. “Argument led ta bitterness an’ bitterness led ta a total lack a cooperation. Trees an’ animals began ta suffer acause their ‘elpin’ spirits were tew busy wit infightin’ to minister an’ nurture. I be disappointed ta say that these kindly spirits began ta use their powers ta harass an’ even ta injure one another.

“I have na told another soul this, but, I was at me wits end. When nothin’ else would work, I swallowed me pride an’ took tha problem ta tha Great Mother. Can ya ‘magine me ‘umiliation!” He stamped his feet to emphasize his point. “A former assistant ta the Great Merlins be na able ta keep a few Elves an’ Fairies from fightin’! “Needless ta say, She ‘ad tha answer. I was advised ta banish all spirits from tha Enchanted Woods. If they could na live in harmony, they could na use tha Shiloh Woods a’tall. They would have ta find other locations.

“I recognized tha wisdom a this but also knew tha extreme disappointment they would all feel. This ground’s been sacred fer some twenty rennons - in ‘uman terms that be, well, many thousand years. Other sites would be less desirable an’ would lack tha rennons of tradition - tradition be important ta all me charges. “Wit this plea, I asked tha Great Mother that tha spirits be allowed ta return at some future time- when they ‘ad demonstrated their willin’ness ta cooperate.

““Very well, Worten.’ I be never forgettin’ tha power a ‘Er voice. ‘Tell them that in my own chosen time I will send a wise King, a compassionate Queen and a stron Priest. Under their direction I will reestablish the use of the Enchanted Woods of Shiloh!’

“I published an’ enforced this ban. I offered tha promise a tha future reprieve as a gesture typical a tha Great Mother’s love. “Tho unhappy, they all obeyed. We love, respect an’ trust tha Great Mother. ...a relationship yew humans lost somewhere along tha path a yer evolutionary development. Tew bad, yes, tew bad.” he muttered and shook his head from side to side.

*- the Spirits -*

We walked on in silence for a while. My little friend seemed lost in his own thoughts and I began to process all that had happened since I left the cabin. I must confess, my thoughts just tumbled over one another like acrobats in a circus act. The more I thought, the less I understood.

Worten stopped and turned. "Wha ya need, Chronicler, be an introduction ta some a tha others!" He swept the cap from his head and began shaking it - jangling the bell on the end of the tassel.

"I'm sure ...I, well ...I think..." I stammered. Before I could get my tongue and mind coordinated, I saw a round, yellow, ball of light circle a giant pine and approach us along the trail.

Worten smiled and waved his free hand while continuing to shake the belled cap with the other. The light moved without a sound and stopped in front of the elf on a level with his eyes. The soft appearance and beautiful yellow color were almost irresistible. I wanted to reach out and stroke it. I felt no fear in this new experience. I had not been apprehensive about being with Worten Either. I saw that Worten had a round bald spot at the crown which, usually, the cap amply covered. The little old elf nodded his head toward the light and replaced his cap.

"This be Ambertine, Chronicler. He be a Deva. He an' his clan be responsible fer tha care an' nurturin' a all tha trees, flowers and grasses in this valley a tha Pine Oak Forest. Amber knows who yew be. We just been discussin' it. Na, na, a'course you did na hear us. Speech be unique ta 'umans an' certain other limited life forms."

Worten folded his arms across his chest and looked up at me. I thought he was weary of my slow grasp of things. I wanted to tell him that I'm known among my contemporaries as very alert and quick witted.

"What do I do? Can I touch it, er..him? Can we communicate?" Words fell from my mouth like a waterfall.

"Nathin', na, and aye, in that order!" The words just occurred to me. I must have heard them in my mind. The yellow light moved to a place in front of my eyes.

"Think or speak and I'll respond. It is really unfortunate that you have to do that work twice. You think a thought and then you put it into words. How unnecessary."

The words kept appearing in my mind as the light moved slowly around me. I stood still as Ambertine looked me over, checked me out.

"I expected something more spectacular, Worten." ...more words in my mind.

"We work wit what we be given, Amber." Another voice was active in my head and I knew it to be Worten's. "He `as a lot ta learn. He's `ad na groundin' in spiritual things...probably does real well in tha material world though." I thought to contradict his analysis but realized he was right.

“Na need ta be defensive, Chronicler. Amber an’ me be yer friends what wan ta help ya in evry way.” They knew my thoughts! At that point, I realized that the conversation was fully three-way.

We stood there on the dusty road as Amber floated in mid-air and held a nonverbal conference. He elaborated on the condition of the growing vegetation and the work load of the Devas in keeping the forest alive. I gained a profound respect for these beings. I had never heard of them before but I have always admired the results of their work- the greens plants of spring and summer and the brilliant colors of fall. I’ve sat in the shade of trees on almost every continent of the world without knowing that a Deva, a little nature spirit, kept it alive and functioning.

Another light sped across the nearby clearing and made a sudden halt next to Ambertine. I didn’t hear this voice in my mind, but Amber excused himself and the two vanished in the direction from which the messenger had come.

“Would ya prefer ta listen wit yer ears or yer mind, Chronicler?” Worten posed his question in spoken form.

Being exhilarated by the new experience, I instantly opted for telepathy. We walked on and Worten’s words appeared in my mind as pictures and images - just like my own thoughts. Yet, I knew the difference in his input and my own. I had to agree with Ambertine, humans lose a lot in speech and hearing. What usually takes five steps- thought, speech, sound, hearing and thought - we were now doing as two- thought to thought.

I visualized a drink of water and Worten handed me his flask. The water was still cold and as refreshing as the first drink I had taken some... well, however long ago it was. Time had lost relevance for me. The flask was still full. Through Worten’s thoughts I knew that there was someone else I should meet. Further, I felt that the meeting was to be the fulfillment of a dream from long ago. I was also glad to learn that lunch was available around the next bend of the road.

The excitement I felt caused me to realize that now I was receiving emotions as well as images in Worten’s thought transmissions. I didn’t have thoughts of my own for quite a while after that. I absorbed the thoughts and feelings of my companion. The abandoned road we were following had become a path where the valley flattened into a level plain. I was learning about the vastness of the spirit world and was astounded at the numbers Worten was transmitting to me.

We turned aside and left the path. A row of trees had screened a beautiful meadow from my view. On approaching, I saw a shallow stream flowing lazily around the near side of it. Beside the stream, on a large flat rock, sat a basket and a leather case. No one was in sight. Worten explained this was our lunch. He proceeded to sit, cross- legged, on the rock and began to unpack the basket. First, he took out a soft green cloth, which he spread in front of us on the rock table. Images of Devas weaving the grasses and dyeing the cloth that was before us filled my mind.

Worten’s thoughts conveyed other images to me. I knew that this new flask was filled with peach nectar gathered by little creatures dressed much like Worten. The orchards were at the eastern edge of the Pine Oak Forest. The cheese was soft and very white. Cows residing not far to the

north of the valley provided the milk from which it was made.

A long loaf of crusty brown bread appeared next. I saw images of wheat fields on the western edge of the forest. Many tiny hands were involved in grinding the wheat and baking the bread. Last, from the basket, came two large and beautiful red apples. I saw apple orchards adjoining those where the peaches were grown. A wonderful feast had been gathered from all across the Pine Oak Forest. My thought, or rather Worten's thought for me, was to slice and serve the cheese and bread while he opened the peach nectar. As I began using the knife, something distracted me - a movement seen out of the corner of my eye. A butterfly passed between us and landed on Worten's shoulder.

"Allow me ta introduce ya ta Chrystallis, we call her Crissy." Worten was using speech again. I looked up and saw that the beautiful butterfly was actually a Fairy! Sunlight through the translucent wings gave the pastel colors a wonderful glow! I stopped breathing. This creature was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I was totally in awe. My mind tried to communicate in thoughts. The flashes of color that I received confused me.

"Da na be concerned, Chronicler. Her energy level be tew high fer ya ta exchange thoughts. It be like a television station usin' a frequency wha yer receiver be na set fer - all ya get'll be static. I'll translate fer yew, Chronicler. "Crissy be a Fairy like ya always imagined a Fairy ta be. Da na be misled by her size. She be very powerful an' 'as a great deal a responsibility. She says she be pleased ta meet ya.

"She senses that ya be a very gentle an' carin' person an' that be pleasin' ta her. She offen werks wit 'umans who be 'ard-'arted an' uncarin'."

I exchanged pleasantries with Chrystallis- through Worten- and inquired about her work. She flew from Worten's shoulder to the handle of the basket and we each enjoyed a better view of the other. Her petite body had an almost human form. Her eyes were large and surprisingly blue- sky blue. For some reason, I had believed that all Fairies have brown eyes. A small scar marked one delicate cheek. Her long hair fell across her chest and extended to her waist. In a simple gesture that thrilled me, she ran her hands under her ears gathering the light brown hair between her thumbs and index fingers and flipped it behind her wings. She sat on the basket handle with the bottom edge of her wings sticking over the far side. She crossed her legs and cocked her head to the right as she surveyed me and the cheese I was holding. Worten sent me images of Fairies in great numbers throughout the forest. I saw them responsible for everything that blooms or flies. They nurture flowers from the first crocus to the last mum. The buds of shrubs and trees are coaxed into blossom by these beautiful creatures. Every butterfly, insect and bird is a part of their legacy, too. Chrystallis stood atop the basket handle and turned to Worten. I watched in amazement. He nodded and then spoke to me, "Sit vera still an' da na tern yer head." Chrystallis jumped into the air and fluttered her wings. She landed lightly on my left shoulder. I resisted the desire to turn and look at her. She walked to my shirt collar and leaned across it to kiss my cheek. Another thrill swept through my body. Then, without a sound, she was gone. Truly, this was a dream come true. As a youngster I wanted to see a Fairy.

In part, I wanted to know that they existed and I wanted to see their reputed beauty. Of course, as I grew up the dream was put away with the other treasures of childhood. Then I knew that more

than one dream had been fulfilled. I discovered in that brief moment that as an adult I had been dreaming a new dream as an extension of the old. I had never found a human female who fulfilled my hopes of fairy-like beauty. The woman of my dreams had just kissed me. I sat on the rock with Worten and together we enjoyed the bread and cheese. We washed our food down with the peach nectar.

As we ate, Worten continued to fill my head with images of spirits working, unseen by man, to maintain the balances of nature. He explained that these creatures are the enforcers of the “laws of nature” taken for granted by humans. As I was cutting an apple into wedges, Worten stood and took a few steps toward the stream. He raised to his lips the horn he had been carrying on the leather strap. I heard no sound but he seemed pleased with his efforts. He smiled as he returned to his place on our rock. In our shared thoughts, I saw another surprise was being arranged for me. I crunched my apple, enjoyed its sweetness, and waited in contentment for whatever my friend had in store.

Never had I felt such a high level of trust in anyone as I experienced with Sylvanius Worten, the Caretaker of the Pine Oak Forest. Across the meadow I saw someone making their way through the brown weeds. I didn’t realize the grasses were so tall out there in the field. I could just see the face above the tops of the blades- at times, not even that.

As our visitor came to the stream, I knew that the weeds weren’t tall - our visitor was very, very short. The distance had confused my perception. He leaped from one stone to another in crossing to our side. He was agile although squat and powerfully built. His clothes were light brown and he wore no hat. In some ways he looked like a smaller version of Worten. I laughed as he climbed the bank. I felt giddy- beyond reality. He stopped when I laughed. I picked up his thoughts as they were being transferred to Worten.

“Does this massive heap of human dung think my appearance humorous, Worten?” His coal black eyes flashed at me and I instantly regretted my outburst. “He be learnin’ a lot this day. He images well, ole friend, so ask `im yerself.” Worten replied. The twinkle in his eyes let me know that he was going to let me sink or swim on my own.

My thoughts were all of apology and begged forgiveness. Reluctantly our visitor accepted my sincerity and remarked that humility was a rare quality in the humans known to him. I was introduced to Rantkin, a chief among the Brownies. The Brownies, Elves and to some extent the Leprechauns attend the creatures that walk, swim or burrow. Rantkin was one of the more outspoken chiefs. He quickly pointed out to Worten that all the Brownies and Elves were quick tempered and many of them gave in to swearing.

Working with deer was usually pleasant enough, he shared, but cows and pigs were as stubborn as the mules in his district. They were enough to drive a spirit to curse if not drink...or worse. They rarely listened to good advice and then wondered why they had pain when they overgrazed or felt panic when they became lost.

He went on and on about his work problems and the irresponsible attitudes of the young Elves and Brownies. Finally, Worten interrupted the chief’s gripe session and thanked him profusely for taking time from his very busy schedule to meet me. I saw the ploy and added my



thanks and my admiration for his handling of so much responsibility under such difficult circumstances.

Rantkin almost smiled as he waved from the far side of the stream. We held our opinions until he was beyond the range of sound and thought- then Worten and I both burst into peals of laughter. “Rantkin be a dedicated wurker an’ his people love ‘im, but this day yew met him at his best- or wurst, as ya might take it.”

“Are all the Elves as depressing as he is?” I questioned.

“Well, tew many take their selves wit seriousness. Most young Brownies be fun lovin’ an’ tha Leprechauns often be little imps. Overall, tha Elf species be very ‘ard workin’ an’ down ta arth. “Yew’ve now met a samplin’ a tha entities what take part in me forest. These be tha folks what form tha background fer tha story ye be ‘ere ta research. Tha rest a what ya need ‘as been recorded in this book.”

Worten picked up the leather case that had been left with the picnic basket. Opening it, he pulled out a large leather bound book - something like an accounting journal. This he handed to me.

“Sit under yon tree an’ read this. I’ve a bit a business ta tend ta then I be returnin’ ta clear up any questions ya ‘ave.”

I took the book and opened it as I walked toward the oak he had indicated. I couldn’t read the handwriting. There were pages of writing and here and there were sketches of what seemed to be maps with dimensions. I sat down and leaned against the tree as Worten waddled past me.

“Keep this ‘till I return - hep yerself, a’course.” he said, as he sat the flask of water beside me. I removed the cap and took a drink. “Yew’ll be able ta make out that writin’ wit a wee bit a study’.”

With that remark, he was past the tree and out of sight. I decided to start at the beginning and turned to the first of the worn and slightly yellowed pages.