

The Candle with Memories --- Moths Drawn to a Flame

Unbeknownst to the people of the world, the stories of their lives are cast to the air and mingle with the air around them. Their spoken words and conversations, their reactions and emotions, and even their thoughts, both new and old, interlace with the air. These memories merge with the air currents and they drift together, going wherever the winds might take them.

At night, the moths dance and flutter through the air, untangling the memories from the wisps and eddies of the air currents. The moths absorb the memories into their bodies as they breathe, and they carry these memories as part of themselves to a remarkable candle whose light lures them through the shadows of the night.

This candle is a receptacle that collects all the bits of memories that the moths have absorbed. As each memory is collected by the candle, the fire snuffs the life of the moth and sends a flame that shoots like a flare to signal the memory fairies to come and gather these remarkable glimpses of mankind. It's quite labor intensive for the

small forest beings because they must strip the candle of the drips of wax that cascade down its sides. Each piece of wax offers a portion of a whole story which must be woven back into a cohesive portrayal of a being's life, vignette by vignette. The memories must be identified, sorted, and ordered for some semblance of meaning to be wrought.

On this particular night, the candle could tell that there were some very special memories that had been deposited. It was not its job to censure or decipher the memories that it collects, but it realized that some of the memories captured this night were very old, maybe even ancient. They were rife with smells and experiences, with majesty and tragedy. The candle sent sparks and pulses into the air to alert the fairies to come quickly, quickly.

As the fairies arrived, you could feel their excitement, too. Their skittering and twittering became more agitated with each piece of wax they shaved. The wax was burnt brown with age as the candle spewed it down its sides. Had the memories been kept alive in the air for eons or were they merely reminiscences of ancient

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memories? Or... are they current memories?

As the fairies carried the memories to the fairy ring, the fairy sages were summoned. Can you tell us how long ago this memory was sent airborne? All of the sages were demanding to know where the moths had been when these memories were collected. It could help them determine how old the memories were. Of course, the moths had been snuffed so it was impossible to glean the answer from them. The sages had branches of experts for different periods of the past, but only a handful had knowledge of the ancient eras.

The fairies started to weave. Their best hope was to stitch the memories together to see how cohesive and how detailed the memories were. Maybe then, they could determine the age of the memories.

Targa, the fairy king, decided to send patrols out to see if they could find any moth stragglers or sense any similar memories aloft in the winds. Arlo, a memory fairy apprentice, was sent to accompany them.

Arlo suggested that they head towards the highlands to where the patrol

might catch the drift of some older memories amongst the crags and vents of old earth formations. The patrol fairies had been selected because of their keen tracking abilities. Very seldom had they tracked down memories that were this old, though, and they certainly had not ever been sent to find stray moths.

Arlo reasoned that a stray moth may not have made it to the candle for several reasons. One, the moth may have been too small to withstand the buffeting wind and might have been carried away where it could easily have gotten lost. Two, it was dashed to the ground by a burst of air and injured. Or three, it was afraid of the snuffing and chose to hide. They needed to find a moth, and find it fast, before its life would end naturally, and the memory they were hoping to find would be lost forever.

As the fairies climbed to the summit of Old Molten Mountain, they picked up the sound of a moth's wings beating rapidly. The fairy patrol honed in on the sound which led them to a rocky outcrop that covered a crevice. Wedged into one of the small cracks, was a tiny moth

that, try as it might, could not take flight. It was stuck. The fairies released the poor moth from the hold of the rocks, and Arlo insisted that they accompany it to the candle immediately. He was sensing a contemporary but ancient memory. How could that be—current and ancient at the same time? He was sure that this memory was a piece that would help the fairies unlock the puzzle of what the memories were all about.

The candle stood awaiting the moth and as soon as it was snuffed, the wax containing the memory dripped down its side. The fairies had to make sure the wax was set before they collected it so that it wouldn't be a melted, muddled mess. They immediately went to King Targa with the latest memory, not even stopping to have it woven into the other memories. It was from the present and it was obvious. Eggs were hatching in alcoves inside a volcano with an ancient, green-eyed dragon standing sentry. The lore was not just stories. The stories had been memories. Memories collected from dragons.

The dragons... are back!