

Fables From Faraway
By Lucy Waterman

Somewhere we may never know,
In a land we have never seen,
Those we do not know
Were gathering for the first time,
And were beginning to retell their lands' greatest,
And most outrageous
Tales of the curious, the peculiar, the magnificent.

The Botanist
The first storyteller stands,
Clearly unprepared to tell her land's tale.
Still, she gets up,
A tremor in her voice as she
Begins the tale of the botanist
Who saved the kingdom.
Long ago, the tale begins,
A fascinating young woman,
Her name unknown,
Arrived in the kingdom,
Nothing but her flowering oddities to her name.
She had owned a menagerie of plants
In her old land,
And had immigrated to this foreign land
To save a gradually withering kingdom.
For the kingdom was being eaten
From the inside out,
By a species of plant unbeknownst to the citizens
Of that little land.
But this young woman,
A strange soul at heart,
Was determined to save this land
That wasn't even her land of birth.
She rode in at the crack of dawn,
A cart of everything she would need

Trailing behind her.
There was nothing unusual about her appearance;
A plain dress,
Hair tied back in a simple style,
And goggles perched atop her head.
No one noticed her,
Not until she trekked through the plant-ridden
Village, unfazed by the deadly flowers surrounding her.
She had arranged a meeting with the king,
And the two of them met and discussed the matter at hand
Within the safety of the castle.
The king insisted she find a remedy for the kingdom at once,
She asked for a place to do so,
And she was given a laboratory to do her work.
She would disappear there for hours at a time,
No one ever knew what went on.
She remained quiet as a whisper,
Vanished fast as a ghost,
To do whatever it was she did as a botanist.
And so, agonizingly long weeks later,
The curious botanist had come up with a solution.
She ventured out into the village,
The villagers run out of the kingdom by the plants,
And the young woman held
One of the poisonous blooms in her hand.
The king demanded the girl
Be rid of the plant, say what her remedy was,
And she merely said,
“Leave it to grow.”
The kingdom was abandoned,
But the girl remained,
In the center of the village,
Holding the blossoms in her hands.
No one ever knew what happened to her,
Not until they came back a time later,
And found a statue,
Forever cradling a blossom in the palm of her hand.

The first storyteller sat down again,
Allowing the next to take his turn.
And he stood, his land's tale ready to be told.
The Huntress and Her Enemy
Once, this new land
Had been ransacked by wars.
This particular land,
And its leaders,
Had proudly displayed their land's greatness,
Much to the disapproval
Of the neighboring lands.
Wars had been waged,
Enemies gained,
Allies – and soon lives – lost.
Battles were fought,
Sometimes this land came out
On the other side
Victorious,
Other times they lost,
But hope was never lost.
Until the land's heir was lost in battle.
That threw the land into turmoil.
The soldiers fought harder,
A newfound, terrifying
Bloodlust instilled in them.
Revenge was all anyone had their hearts fixated upon,
Especially the sister to the heir,
The new heir to the land.
She would need to lead,
When the time came.
But she still wanted vengeance
For the brother she lost.
She contemplated what she would do,
And realized her best plan
Was to go rogue.
Become an outlaw,
In the eyes of the neighboring lands, at least.
To her land, she would still be heir,

But to the lands that had taken her brother,
She would be the huntress they all feared.
She adopted a second identity,
Armed herself with a signature weapon,
And set out to avenge her brother,
Her land,
Her family.
Through each land,
She would find soldiers, fighters,
Enemies to her land,
And would be rid of them.
The war, though becoming more lopsided,
Inching toward an easier victory,
Didn't stop for a young huntress killing,
Or even kidnapping,
Soldiers and fighters.
She wouldn't stop until her land won,
Until justice had been doled out appropriately.
That is, one day the huntress ventured
Out onto the battlefield,
Becoming bolder, stronger,
In her violent art.
Enemies were taken out,
Her land would surely emerge victorious,
She could feel it.
But she soon came across an enemy fighter,
Struggling against other soldiers, enemies of his.
The huntress could see the fighter,
The enemy,
Was injured
But still fighting for his land.
The huntress, seeing an easy target,
Went in for the kill,
Was braced to level the field again.
That was the moment the huntress
Had a realization,
Seeing the pain and defeat
On the fighter's face.

She had forgotten mercy,
Thrown it away.
But now,
Faced with the opportunity to help
The enemy,
She remembered what mercy felt like.
She remembered that,
In the end,
Mercy was a choice,
And it was the right one.
She threw down her weapons,
And with them,
Her thirst for vengeance.
She escorted the fighter
From the war,
And from that point on,
Her identity as a ruthless huntress was gone.
She chose peace,
And made the bravest decision of all.

With the end of the story
Having been reached,
The second storyteller took his seat again,
In anticipation of the story yet to come.
The third storyteller,
Taking the hint that it was now his turn,
Stood up
And let his tale begin.

The Songbird
This tale opens with
A young singer,
Bold only when alone.
They refused to sing to others.
No one knew quite why this singer
Mastered their art in the temporary safety
Of shadows,

Rather than embracing the spotlight
Beaming down onto their face.
But that was simply the path
This singer chose;
They didn't want recognition
Or fans,
Praising their name.
And that was fine,
But no one was sure why.
But one day,
A songbird,
Its head and body
Purely white,
But the feathers
Making up its wings
Were a radiant array of colors.
The singer,
Entranced by this odd visitor,
Looked away from their music,
To take in this small beauty
Perched on their windowsill.
The singer inquired as to where
The songbird had come from.
The songbird began to sing its own song in reply,
No words were uttered,
But a gorgeous melody
Spilled from the bird's beak
All the same.
The singer,
Enchanted but still wondering all the same,
Listened intently to the little bird's song.
And so the singer began to write their first original piece.
They wrote a song
About the songbird,
Melodies composed into a masterpiece,
Delicately written lyrics turning into
A gentle but powerful tune.
And the songbird returned,

Day after day,
As though she wanted to observe the singer's progress,
Ensure they hadn't given up.
And the singer didn't give up,
Not until their work was complete.
There was only one thing left.
The singer had to perform a song as beautiful as this.
In spite of a muse coming to them,
The singer knew they couldn't perform,
Not unless they were alone.
Their anxiety about performing
Before others hadn't let up at all.
Not even writing their first song
Had helped their confidence.
The singer had been contemplating this
For days before the songbird arrived again,
Not just perching herself on the singer's windowsill,
But flew into the singer's workspace.
The songbird,
Through some foreign intuition,
Knew the singer was in turmoil.
The songbird walked up to the singer,
And looked up at their face,
Seeking out their eyes,
Hoping she could help in some way.
The singer eventually
Looked down,
Locked eyes
With the songbird.
And in that moment of silent realization,
The songbird knew what she had to do.
She flew up to the singer's piano,
And pointed at the singer's piece
Using her multi-colored wing.
She was trying to tell the singer
That they could try to perform their song
Just for the two of them.
Then, the songbird thought,

The singer might have the confidence
To perform their masterpiece for
The waiting world outside.
The singer, taking the hint,
Stood up,
Walked over to their piano.
Looked to the songbird for any confirmation,
And the songbird just
Looked back at the singer,
Waiting for them to make the first move.
The singer nervously
Looked down at the keys,
But still placed their fingers,
Bracing to play for their first audience.
Despite any anxiety the singer
Might have had,
Their first performance before an audience
Was beautiful.
Perfectly executed,
The melody and lyrics
Comprised to enchant.
The songbird found herself
Accompanying the singer,
Singing along in her songbird tongue.

The storyteller ended his tale,
Concluding that the songbird
And the singer
Remained a pair
For as long as they possibly could.
And the final storyteller
Was beckoned to tell her land's tale.
She stepped up,
Her tale burned into her memory,
So that she might not stutter
Or ruin the story.
Something she forgot to tell

Before she began:
The tale was emotionally heavier,
But aren't some tales written for the pained of hearts?
The Bravery in Love
There were once
Two small creatures
Of metal and tiny gears,
Assumed to be incapable of emotion.
Anyone who knew of their existence
Immediately believed they felt nothing,
Thought nothing,
Were incapable of the best
And yet most painful human experience:
Love.
And yet,
In some unknown way,
This story tells about how the
Small beings
Found their individual ways
To the other,
And how they were introduced
To that thing called love.
They lived in the same
House of humans,
Trapped in separate rooms.
They were treated poorly
By the human inhabitants,
But still endured whatever
Was thrown their way.
They had known the other existed,
And wanted to see each other again,
But neither was sure how,
How they might find each other yet again.
Escape routes planned,
And interrupted,
By the humans who would not
Relent,
In their attempts to unknowingly

Mistreat the metal creatures.
But, the little windup beings knew,
As long as their gears turned,
They would fight to find each other again.
And, one day,
When no humans were around,
The little toys
Ventured out,
Just enough left in them
To reach each other.
Only a flight of stairs stood between them,
The final barrier to stand in their way.
They both moved as fast as they could,
A desperate hope
Pulsing through them,
That they might make it to the other
Before their time is out,
And their gear-hearts
Stop altogether.
It's a battle to make it,
Climbing stairs
Like we climb mountains,
All to wrap your arms
Around the one you love.
But they did not quit,
Until they finally reached each other,
Mid-way up and down the staircase,
And, just before the invisible energy
Keeping their gears going
Gave out,
They reached toward each other,
And embrace.
The keys embedded in their backs,
The source of their lives,
Stop turning,
And the toys,
In their own way,
Were gone.

When the humans returned,
They barely noticed the toys,
Embracing in the stairway.
And the toys were all but abandoned,
Their gears never to turn again.

The storytellers stared
Incredulously at the storyteller
Whose tale just ended.
They demanded a better ending,
A happier way in which
The toys had lived their lives together
Happily ever after, as they say.
She insisted that was where the tale ended,
And refused to rewrite the tale,
Saying that,
If she were to alter the tale
Handed down from generation to generation
In her native land,
She would not be forgiven.
The others, defeated and discouraged,
Left the site of stories,
The final storyteller following far behind.
But something the others never noticed:
That last storyteller had been a witness
To the tale she told.
She reached into a hidden pocket
In her skirt,
And pulled out two embracing windup toys,
Mementos from her childhood.

Fables such as these
Have been told since humanity learned the art of stories.
But something we still cannot be sure of:
Are they ever true?
I like to believe that, in some way,
They just might be.

In whatever time,
In whatever place,
Something magical had to have taken place.
Erased from history records,
Banished from human thought,
Somewhere we may never know,
In a land we have never seen,
Told – or experienced – by those we do not know.