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# A HISTORY OF GLITTER AND BLOOD

BY HANNAH MOSKOWITZ



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[Author dedication—tk]

*i do not know what it is about you that closes and opens*

—*E.E. Cummings*

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ONCE UPON A TIME there were four fairies in the city who hadn't been maimed.

The second youngest, the only girl, was Beckan Moley.

She was sixteen, and there were fifteen fairy children her junior in the city, but most of them had been in a day care a few years ago that was attacked by a gnome custodian, and others had lost eyes and tongues and fingers in various other incidents. Another handful around her age lost feet when they were ten and went down to the mines on a dare at a birthday party. Beckan hadn't been invited.

Missing body parts were nothing to cry about and nothing to take too seriously. Ferrum (the oldest fairy city, the living, gasping legend) was nine square miles of cracked cobblestone and iron scaffolding and playgrounds and libraries and hardly a hazardous space, all in all, so the chunks of fairy that ended up in gnome stomachs were reasonable collateral damage. They were conveniently located around the waterways and farmlands, and they had gnomes to drive their buses and sweep their streets. Sometimes some fairy limbs had to be sacrificed to keep all of that. Call it a tax.

It was only an interesting coincidence that had Beckan make it to this age unscathed, and to have Josha, her best friend, tall, happy,



several years older; Scrap, two months and two centimeters below her, eyes like something burned; Cricket, Scrap's cousin, music in his ears, eyes on Josha—somehow slip through as well. Somehow the four of them came to feel like their own generation, as if they were the last vestiges from an old world where things didn't eat each other. But if a world like that had ever existed, these fairies wouldn't know. These fairies had never been outside Ferrum.

So if someone could have predicted the start of the war, which to this historian's approximation was three hundred and forty days ago, it would not have been Beckan. She didn't need a job, as she lived comfortably off her father's money who, with only a tooth left by way of a mouth (and only an eye and an ear besides), could protest very little as she spent it how she pleased. She stayed home and worked on her welding and thought about skirting around the city on roller skates delivering newspapers, like Josha, or doing whoknewwhat with Scrap and his cousin, Cricket, who somehow afforded to keep one of the cottages dotting the hills on the rims of the city that otherwise housed the richest and oldest and most exhausted with city life. But for Beckan, usually, her father was her only company. The gnome king, Crate, ate most of him when she was ten. A boy gnome—one she didn't realize until much later was Tier—respectfully delivered his remains. She didn't cry. She knew her world. She made hot-glued flowers and stuck them to the lid of a jar and tossed her father inside. Like most of the fairies, all of whom came from non-fairy mothers (due to every lady-fairy's lack of uterus, a condition that sometimes left Beckan in front of her mirror for long periods, smoothing imaginary lumps on her belly), Beckan never knew her mother. Beckan was half gnome, and that was the only real burden she carried, that and her father in his jam jar, usually around her neck or stuffed in the bottom of her bag.

Beckan was invincible.

Now, it's a year later—a year into the war—and Beckan stands in front of the mirror thinking about getting dolled up in heels and hair spray (and she thinks about back when she used to wear whatever she wanted).

She touches her hair and immediately wishes she hadn't, because now she can't avoid thinking about how long it has been since she's showered. But the dirtier her skin gets, the less the glitter shows, and the less the gnomes glare and complain and gnash their teeth when she goes down to the mines. She figured that trick out on her own.

She shoves her hair under a black cap. Her sleeves are long enough to cover her hands.

She knocks on Josha's door and says, "Sure you're not coming?"

He doesn't even grunt.

She says, "We'll let you know if we find him. Try to eat something?"

She is almost seventeen, and now she and Josha are the only fairies in Ferrum (in their whole world) who haven't been maimed (and she is the youngest).

Scrap and Cricket's cottage is home now, with its uneven maple floors and squeaky faucet knobs and peacefully necrotic bathroom ceiling. Even after everything, Beckan is still living in a dollhouse, where every chipped dish and mismatched mug and unread newspaper feels perfectly and cleanly placed.

The moonlight's hitting Scrap hard through the glass-paned kitchen ceiling. Beckan has to rub her eyes for a minute after stepping in before she's sure he's really there.

Her sneakers are so thin that she feels the chill of the tile.

"Scrap."

He looks up.

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She stands in the doorway, her hand on the frame, her fingernails scraping up a few splinters.

She says, "You okay?"

He smiles at her and nods with just his eyes, a bit of paper still clamped between his lips, another bit torn and captured between sticky fingertips.

The rain outside sounds like someone running.

"You ready to go?"

He looks down at his manuscript. "Yeah. When I finish this page."

"Soon?"

"Wouldn't that be nice?"

"What are you even writing about? Hardly much happening."

Throughout the war, Scrap has written dry diaries of the days. A few lines only, descriptions of the weather and body counts and what there was to eat.

The war has been so quiet these past few weeks, which doesn't explain why he's been writing more.

"Just transcribing," he says. "Cross-referencing. Moving things"—he gestures to a torn-out page, then to a different book—"to other things. You know."

She's confused and crosses to the table to take his coffee cup so he can tug on his boots. His right arm is gone now, from just below the elbow, and they're learning to make allowances for that, because there are things to do and pieces to find. (Not Scrap's pieces. Something more important.)

The immortality of fairies is a strange one; while it is true that no fairy can ever be truly without consciousness, the immortality is in no way protective. Documents of fairy lives invariably end in torture, dismemberment, or, unfortunately, consumption. It cannot be said that these fairies are truly dead, but the fate of the miniscule remaining pieces is likely neither hopeful nor noteworthy. As early as 30 years After Ferrum, there are accounts of the word 'dead' used to refer to fairy states of being, likely appropriated from the rather ill-fated NewtCreachers during the drought of 28. Famed fairies such as Sir Cornela de Frank, one of the founding fathers of Ferrum, have been shredded and lost entirely. Searches for lost fairy pieces rarely continue past a cursory look; a bit of a nose and a few specks of glitter cannot truly contribute to society.

The species of a fairy's mother seems to have no effect on his longevity, and indeed nearly all the traits of this other half are concealed or lost. This is merely an example of what makes the fairies the superior race; even the current generation, diluted at least to an eighth of pure fairy blood, remains, inexorably, fairy. It is a name that cannot be taken, an immortality that cannot be faked.

The oldest fairy is Lima Yon, a former glassblower currently residing just outside the Ferrum limits. As she is missing large sections of her mouth and hands, her methods of communication are as limited as her significantly dwindled memory, and, as she is at most only four generations above every currently documented fairy, she offers few answers to questions of fairy evolution, creation, and history, and no definitive evidence as to whether or not fairies ever had wings.

*Treben Barot, A Fully Comprehensive Fairy Study  
(508 A.F.), p. 39*



At night, in the rain, their city is more alive than it has been since the start of the war. Beckan watches glitter drip from her fingers onto the ground.

Above them, they hear whispers, giggles, a fire crackling.

They don't look up.

It still seems so quiet, compared to when Ferrum was a real city (when there were more fairies than just their lost little generation, when there was life) and when Ferrum was in the heyday of war (when there was only smoke and noise). Now everything is petered out, quiet. It's not in a fairy's nature to know what it means to sit still. There's too much time for that.

But it's been a year since the city was really theirs. The fairies used to rule this place, above the ground, with their steel apartments, their manufacturing plants, their white-collar jobs in their industrial city, while the gnomes handled their dirty work in exchange for scraps of meat and the promise of a future immortal baby with a fairy boy. They played nice for their future generations. They loved the hope of having immortal children more than they loved your bones between their teeth. That was the reassurance fairy fathers whispered in gnome-nibbled fairy-children ears.

But gnomes were unpredictable and irresponsible, and a few fairies would always lose a few bits, a few fairies would sometimes lose a lot of bits, but every other fairy threw an extra bit of lamb meat (there was always extra, back then; this was never a thought) down the potholes every once in a while and in return got their trash taken and their jewels dug and their money minted and their roads paved, so who would complain? (They hadn't.)

And then the tightropers came and brought the war and the fairies were caught, quite literally, in the middle of it all. The tightroper radio announcements and fliers used to call it a fairy liberation.

And maybe that was why, for the first time in decades, that the fairies counted maimed family members on the remains of their fingers and decided they needed to be liberated from a city they'd built and a city they loved.

Anyway, those radio announcements and those fliers had petered out too.

"Fucking freezing," Scrap mumbles.

"I'm hot."

The words *you're always hot* and *you're always cold* hang in the air between them, and she scrapes her shoe against the pavement to block out the silence.

"Meet back here in an hour," she says. "Don't wait past an hour and a half."

Scrap swipes his hand under his nose. He's in all black, like she is, but he's wearing one of the lockets Beckan made, the heavy brass one he and Josha share. It's empty. "Okay."

Scrap heads north and she heads roughly west, tracing the streets of the city she used to draw from memory when she was bored. Now, without the storefronts and street signs, she's embarrassed to say (she would never admit) that she gets lost. This is where the cheap apartments were, she thinks, where the newer immigrants, fairy families from other cities or visiting races foolishly trying to stay, usually ended up settling. There was a playground here once but it was gone long before the war, turned into a tiny restaurant with vats of vegetable soup served up by sweaty fairy teenagers. Josha worked there for a time. There were fairy protesters out front the year it was built with signs petitioning to get the elders to rebuild the playground. *Do we really need more food?* their signs said.

But they've already searched the square where Cricket died (was shattered), and there isn't a trace of him there. The gnomes cleaned up and they cleaned up well, but he has to be somewhere. They only

need a bit. Something to talk to and pet and give to Josha. Cricket could be a jar fairy like her father.

(And parts of Cricket have to be out there. Every time Beckan eats now, she counts crumbs that fall onto her shirt or onto the table. There are always a few. It's impossible to eat every single bit of bread. It's impossible to eat every single bit of fairy.)

Beckan feels her own glitter as it falls to the ground and crunches beneath her feet. She's used to it. She's used to feeling the ground and the bottoms of shoes and the grout in the bathroom tiles with the bits of her that slough off and stay sentient. She never used to think about these wimpy bits of pain until Scrap's stupid books about fairy anatomy started showing up everywhere in the house, stacked up on the floor just like their swept-up glitter, and no, she does not want to know about the complex sensory capabilities of every speck of her—she spends her time welding things together and laughing at stupid jokes and trying to feel *very very whole*—but now she thinks about losing parts, and she fucking has to find some of Cricket.

A voice above her head says, "What are you looking for, empty girl?" The tightropers are civil during the day—they need the fairies; who else is going to justify their war—but there are no rules at night.

"Bite me," Beckan says.

"So bitchy tonight, Beckan," the voice growls back, because of course they know it's her. They're just trying on gnome insults—*empty girl, empty girl*—for fun.

She does not look up. They can't hurt her.

They won't hurt her.

She's restless tonight. She can only dig through so many dumpsters and so many piles of rubble and dodge so many long, thin ropes hanging above her head before she has to be somewhere else. She's at the Laundromat now, close to the west edge of the city, and the walls seem like her best choice.

She thinks she remembers Scrap telling her once that Ferrum used to be a fortress. Or maybe she wants to believe there's something other than racism that made a modestly sized fairy city surround itself with walls too high for anyone to climb. For as long as she's known them, the gates have been unguarded and openable, and before the war, Beckan used to bring her father to the groves outside the city and keep her distance and avert her eyes from the gnomes tilling soil and scooping animal shit to stand on her tiptoes and pluck peaches from her trees. Now the gates are rusted over and some of the latches have been blown up and broken, so it's hard for a fairy to leave. But the tightropers swing over the walls and the gnome tunnels extend underneath them and out to the farmlands, and sometimes when she is close to the wall she can hear voices on the other side, gnomes or tightropers strategizing or yelling or crying.

Like tonight, for instance, there are voices. Quiet.

She finds a thinner bit of mortar and presses her ear against it. Two voices: one high and one low. A tightroper and a gnome.

Then soft footsteps come up behind her, and she startles so hard, her cheek scrapes against the stone. She bleeds thick and dirty.

"Just me," Scrap whispers.

She nods and tugs him to the wall.

They hear words—*treaty, peace, long enough*.

They hear them over and over.

Treaty, peace, long enough.

Scrap picks her up with one arm and wraps her legs around his waist and spins her in Northwest Park Square and then they're running home, breathless and incredible and *childish*, and Scrap says, "You should tell Josha. You should be the one."

"This isn't the news he's waiting up for. I'm going to tell him"—she can't say it, can't say *the war's over* because she's afraid the

words will fall off her lips and get lost—“and he’ll just be sitting there staring at me with that *look* until he figures out that I’m happy because of this and not because we found some of Cricket.”

“You’re better with him,” Scrap says. He and Josha hardly talk anymore, ever since Cricket died a few weeks ago. Ever since the world got so quiet.

They slow down, panting, blocks before they reach their house (which is just against the South gate, all the way on the other edge of the city, but Ferrum is small and they like to run). She presses her nose into the back of his neck when she smiles and smells sweat and glitter on his skin. Scrap’s glitter is blue and pink while hers is blue and black, but it somehow always surprises her to find a bit of Scrap’s glitter that matches hers. She’s always been used to looking like Josha, who is so close to her color that it would be hard for her to believe they weren’t related if she hadn’t spent her whole childhood filled with very unsiblinglike feelings for the boy (feelings that are, for better or worse, very, very over). Her feelings for Scrap aren’t nearly as complicated. Not for a while now, anyway. He’s the boy with the room next door. He’s the boy she leans into when she’s happy without any hesitation because she is just happy and he is just nearby. But it’s still hard to reconcile, sometimes, looking like him.

They hike up their hill and Beckan walks backward for a few steps, like always. From the peak of their hill, the city is a blur of gray, useless, half-bombed buildings. If there was anyone on the streets, they would be too small for her to see, but when she looks up and focuses very, very hard, she can still find a few tightropers skittering from rope to rope like spiders on a web. The tightropers are bigger than the fairies, really, but from this cabin on the hill, everything looks very small but the sky looks a little nearer.

Then she smiles and says, “Hey, Scrap. We’re liberated.”

He wrestles his way out of his jacket. “Liberated!”

“Look at us!”

“Hug again,” he says, and wraps her up.

Then they’re unlocking the front door and racing down the hall to Josha’s room. They pound on it together, Scrap’s one hand and Beckan’s two, until they finally stop so they can hear him answer, yell at them, tell them they can fuck off or come in. But he says nothing.

“Josha,” Beckan says. “We’re coming in.”

Still no answer. Scrap tries the knob. Not locked.

Josha is only a lump in the bed and a bit of black hair sticking out from the top of the comforter.

“Josha, the fucking war’s ending. Scrap and I heard.”

She is still excited, but it feels so different now, as if it has solidified and sunk to her feet. It is so hard to be happy in front of Josha now. Hard to be anything but guilty.

“Josha,” Scrap says. “Get up. Did you hear her?”

“Yeah,” Josha says.

Late at night, alone in her room, desperate, she would tell herself that the end of the war would be the thing to fix Josha. Since nothing else has worked.

Since they can’t find Cricket.

“Get up,” Scrap says. Harshly. Cruelly. Finally.

“I’ll make waffles,” Beckan says. “Do you want waffles? You’ll feel better.”

Josha sits up a little and says, “It’s the middle of the night.”

“I’m making waffles. I’ll waste flour. We can have so much flour now, y’know? We can have anything. Everyone’s going to come back and the shops are going to open and so much fucking flour, kid.”

“I’m not hungry,” Josha says, but he does raise his eyes to Beckan and give her the smallest smile she can imagine. “I love when you’re happy,” he says.

“We’re all happy. You had to do this war too,” she says, even



while she's realizing that maybe the problem is that it isn't Josha's war anymore. That Josha's war, somewhere along the line, became something very different.

"You should write a story about Josha and Cricket," she'd said, months ago to Scrap, while they were laughing their way through scrubbing the kitchen floor and Josha and Cricket were drunk in the living room.

Scrap threw up his hands and said, "I don't write love stories! I write epics and historical accounts and dry nonfiction!" and then grabbed a long stale stick of bread with one hand and snapped it in half with the other, threw her the larger bit, and announced that they were now sword fighting.

Now Scrap pulls Beckan outside Josha's room, closes the door on him. "He's getting better," he says. "He is. Talking and everything."

"Yeah. Definitely. Definitely, he'll be fine."

Scrap nods.

A pause hangs between them.

Recently Beckan has developed a habit of trying to catch the moments on Scrap's face when one thought chances to another.

When he starts to chew his cheek, she interrupts. "What do we now?"

"Waffles."

"After that."

"I . . ."

She feels triumphant for stumping him.

Lately, she tests Scrap like you'd check a limb after a fall. Looking for a break.

It's a hideous metaphor, considering the missing arm.

"I guess we wait for the cease-fire and go to work?" he says.

It feels wrong to go to work this morning, but at the same time, she doesn't know what else to do, and she has no idea if the cease-fire has really changed anything. Probably, the gnomes still need them. Who knows if the gnome women are back yet, and if they aren't, Scrap and Beckan should trick as much as they can before they are.

There's no point in a real cease-fire without even a little bit of Cricket, anyway.

And without any of the other fairies home.

And without Josha out of bed.

And without Scrap smiling like he used to.

She heads to the kitchen, but she stops halfway to watch Scrap leaning against the archway to the hall, writing in his notebook. He balances it against his half arm and the wall while he writes.

"Midnight, 5/9/546." he says. "The end."

"You'll have to find something else to write now."

Scrap's expression stays the same, but Beckan is good enough now at scanning his face to know that she has just terrified him.

A part of her likes that, and she doesn't want to know why.

*Enough.* She shakes her head, remembers what is important, and goes back to her room and wakes up her father to tell him the news. She smiles with all her might.

An hour later, there's cease-fire.

The thing is that (historically speaking) fairies are very, very bad at keeping histories. The thing is that they tend to give up.

In the morning, Scrap and Beckan take their usual route down to the mines. And shit, okay, a better author would insert a map right here. Remember that for the next draft.

Shit, what the fuck am I even doing? What kind of history book doesn't have a map?

• • •

Once upon a time there was a writer who couldn't write a fucking book.

I don't know what comes next. That whole last chapter's going to need to get thrown out anyway. You completely forgot halfway through that you'd said it was raining at the beginning.

Was it raining?

No one's ever going to know, and it's all your fault.

Put a fucking map in the next draft.

Chapter two.

## 2

IN THE MORNING, Scrap and Beckan take their usual route down to the mines. The sun is so bright that her own glitter hurts her eyes. Somewhere above her head, a tightroper is playing a string instrument that doesn't sound quite familiar. It's beautiful. She hears a tightroper yell—maybe something mean, maybe something that has nothing to do with her—but it makes her smile, because *they're not at war*.

The glass in the abandoned storefront windows on 5th Street glints as she walks by. Her reflection doesn't look as small and solid as it usually does, and the smears of dirt on the windowpane almost, at a certain angle, make it look like she has wings. This was once a jewelry store. She is allowed to feel lovely for a minute.

"Look," she tells Scrap, but he says he doesn't see it. He doesn't much like to look at his reflection. He is small as fairies go and inky rather than pretty. A little scrap of a thing.

They take the same route every time. To 6th Street, toward Fremont, cross at the shattered streetlamp, take the manholes to the mines at the intersection of 7th and West Streets. There are dozens of other entrances, but they always take this one, partly because it is the central way station with the manned elevator, but really because this

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is where they are expected and it is best not to surprise. Last night, they felt like bandits in a dangerous wasteland. Today, with the sun up, Ferrum and its shrapnel and split buildings look as harmless as a broken dollhouse (a broken doll city).

It isn't a big city, not really, but to them it is a whole world. None of them have ever been farther out than the groves right outside the walls. They weren't allowed to visit the houses of the strange children in school who lived in the stilted houses in the orange trees. And they didn't want to. They were in love with their city and anything not their city was wrong. Anyway, those houses are bombed-down now, so it shouldn't matter anymore.

They stop at the tightroper shop, and Beckan digs around her pocket for enough money for some candy. Tightroper candy, she discovered early in the war, is phenomenal. They put sugar in their mouths and spin it like they do their ropes. Scrap gives the man behind the counter a quick nod. Beckan thinks his persistent dislike of the tightropers is very, very tiresome. They might be creepy at night, but they're nothing to really worry about. After all, they're on their side (sort of). They're on their side more than they are not (probably). More than the gnomes, at least (possibly). After all, the tightropers came to help them. (Of course.)

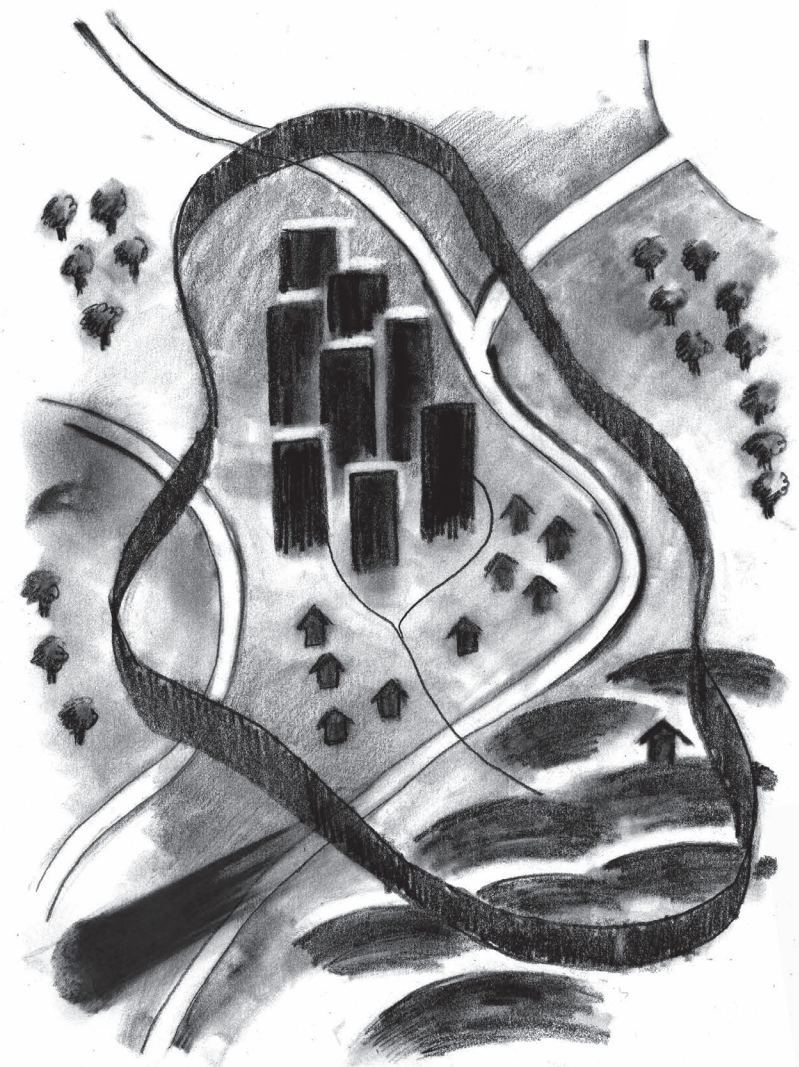
"Thank you," Beckan tells the tightroper soldier behind the counter, shooting him her biggest smile, and he smiles back and tells her, in his scratchy accent, that he likes her eyes.

She hums to herself as she and Scrap keep walking and she saws through the candy with her back teeth.

"C'mere," Scrap says. She stops, and he blows extra glitter off the back of her neck. His breath itches and she squirms.

He says, "I know Tier is a bitch about it," and sneezes and waves the glitter away from his face.

*A hastily drawn map of Ferrum's steel mills, adjacent farmlands, and access to waterways.*



*Not pictured: diamond supply in the mines, nice weather.  
Pictured: Reasons to invade. Not pictured: Fairy liberation.*



*I talk about Tier too much*, Beckan thinks, since Scrap and Tier have only met a few times and all Scrap really knows about Tier comes from her stories. Then again, it hardly takes much knowledge of Tier to know that he is a gnome, and gnomes hate glitter almost as much as they hate fairies.

“What used to be here?” Scrap says. He points to a bombed-out building ahead of them, down by Gramar Street (it always flooded a little here during big storms, and they would roll their eyes and call it *the river Gramar* and then hide behind this very building to watch the gnomes who lived underneath it come up shivering and half-drowned to gnash their teeth and warm up). “I can’t even remember anymore.”

“The bakery,” she says, and the minute the words are out of her mouth she’s filled with the taste of cracked crust, white chocolate cookies, gnome taffy hard as metal.

She so very rarely misses things. It always surprises her.

Scrap says, “I don’t think I ever went.”

“Missed out.”

“My mom and dad used to bake.”

Scrap’s mother was a backpacker. Their babies grow between the blades of their shoulders and their skin. Most of them died in child-birth, but she survived. Making an immortal baby wasn’t enough for her; she wanted to stay and raise it. She was stupid and stuck around the city, and she died mauled so badly that they buried her facedown.

No species any gnome had yet chewed was as sweet or as filling as fairy (once you scraped off that pesky glitter, anyway) but a hungry gnome is a hungry gnome, and generations of new, not-heartless gnomes who were taught it was bad manners to eat a fairy didn’t extend the rule to invaders. Everyone’s foreign mother either ran away or was eaten, and the fairies threw down lamb meat and closed their eyes.

They reach the manhole at 7th and West. Leak, the gnome elevator operator, is there, same as always, standing on the ladder beside his elevator car, halfway between the tunnels and the surface of the ground, the rope of his elevator car in his hands. He stands there every day and hauls gnomes and fairies up and down, and that is his only purpose.

He sees them and begins hauling the elevator up from the ground. “Did you guys win?” Beckan shouts to him.

Because they don’t know who won.

But Leak only spits and says, “Nah.”

She supposes this means the fairies won. She is still learning how wars keep score.

“Come on,” Leak says. “Aren’t you late?”

They clamber into the elevator and Leak stays at the manhole and lets them down, grabbing the rope, pulling, letting it slide between his fingers. They sink down into the tunnels, level after level of smooth, frozen mud and granite, all of it dimly lit into a soft brown.

“Be safe today, all right?” Scrap says. He isn’t looking at her.

Beckan’s throat hurts when she swallows. “Why today?”

“Always.”

She nods.

The elevator stops at the 3rd floor and Beckan lifts the cage and steps off. When he pulls the cage back into place, he presses his hand against the steel for a half a second. Smiles at her.

Just this ghost of a smile.

Then he locks the grate in place and he’s gone. The elevator always seems so much faster to Beckan when she is alone and watching Scrap go away.

She starts down the tunnel. The gnome guards hiss dirty things

at her, but they don't poke her or gnash their teeth today. One of them licks his lips, but he's just eating some sort of meat off a spit.

They're all eating. They have food. Burned bits of tightropers, or something the tightropers gave them, or something they'd been saving. They aren't hoarding it in preparation of the next cave-in. They're celebrating.

*The war is over.*

She enters the third doorway on the right, like always, and Tier grabs her and hugs her tight, so tight, and then he is laughing and spinning her around and kissing her cheeks, and Beckan has never been more relieved by a smile. This is the smile she wanted from Josha, and this is why she does not hate to be here, even though she is supposed to.

She kisses him, hard, and he remembers to slip money into the pocket of her skirt before he slides it off her. He always does.

Since it's a special day, she lets him chew on her neck a little. The risk tastes amazing to her, too.

He pays extra to fuck her twice, and she forgets for a while that they were never really on the same side.

At home, Josha traces words on his pillow, mouths words to himself, sings words in the back of his throat that he can't force into the air.

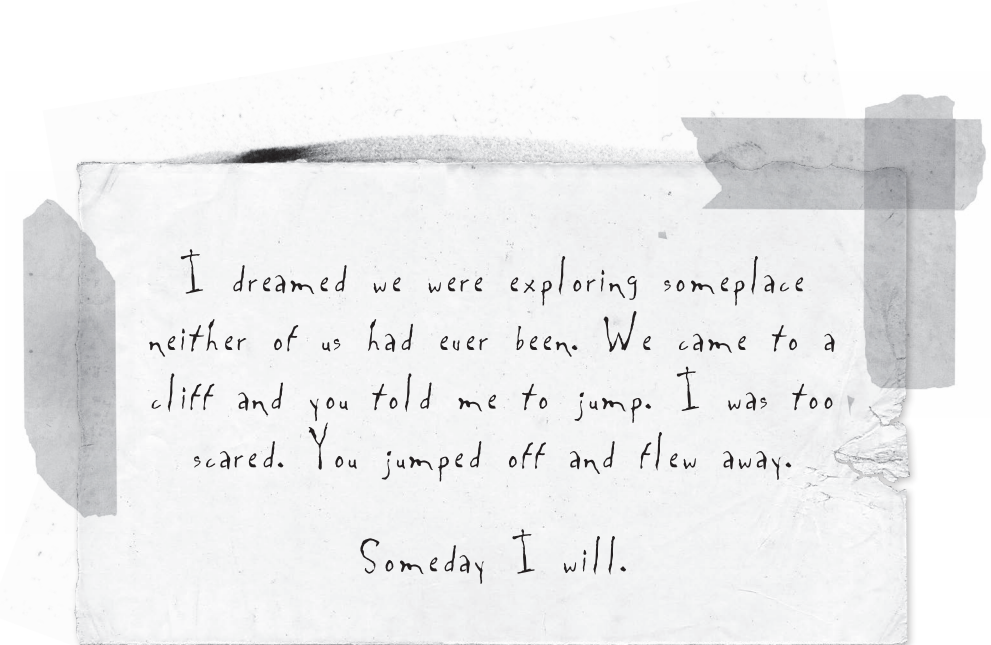
*The war is over. The war is over.* This is the end of something.

He hugs the pillow to his chest and closes his eyes. He should be used to the empty house by now. Every day, he had stayed here, too afraid or too proud or too spoiled to go down to the mines with Beckan and Scrap and Cricket and strip down and suck up. He'd stayed here and cooked, or read some of the hideously boring history textbooks in the basement, or fussed over the bean sprouts he had taped to the window. He'd listened to gunfire and maybe worried a little, but the sun still shone up here at the edge of the world and he

never forgot that in a few hours he would hear that laugh bubbling up the hill like it was a brook and this was a fairy tale.

He can still hear it. He squeezes his eyes into slits.

Beckan and Scrap will be home soon, and maybe he'll find something to say to them, or the strength to scrounge up something for dinner or to check the bean sprouts that are still taped to the window.



*An old note stuck to Tier's wall, from someone else.*

*Reconstituted.*