

SALAMANDER STEW

OR
A METAPHYSICAL HALLOWEEN

by
Michael Fixel

Steven, *early twenties*
Susan, *early twenties*
Narrators
Gnomes, Dwarves, & Elves
Squirrels, Mice, & Birds
Salamanders

(All narration is read aloud).

A forest, fecund, green, but grim.
Double darkness settles in.

Stillness. Then
the Gnomes & Dwarves & Elves,
rustling in the leaves,
arise and dance among
the flowers and the trees.

GNOMES & DWARVES & ELVES:

We're sacred and we're ugly,
the source of all your verdant fears.
Carnivorous and cuddlesome,
we live a thousand years.

Their goiters bounce. Vile curses
lisp through sharpened yellow teeth.
The livid soulless lunar light
is mirrored in their eyes beneath.

We know the forest, know the night
we have our means, we have our ways,
clothed in leather, bark and leaves
invisible to most men's gaze.

The Gnomes & Dwarves & Elves rejoice
and dance with laughter for their might.
They fade like smoke among the oaks
the moon becomes the only light

and Steven wanders full of awe
for nature's ways
and nature's jaws
surround his insignificance.

STEVEN:

I'm all alone here in the dark
but feel no fear. The leaves and rocks
the moss the birds the night: my friends.
I amble out to ponder thoughts
tranquil here where there's no ending,
no duration, no beginning.
I let my soul with the forest blend.
I feel at home in this pregnant place
of surging growth and subtle rot.

Marine moss slime
the Gnomes & Dwarves & Elves contrive
to trap him in a circle
of dead animals and droppings.
Rotting
corpses are impassable
flesh once fallen is intractable.

The leaves are falling so much faster.
Is this just autumn, or disaster?
I can watch them turn
from green to brown
then yellow, white
cellophane,
and out of sight.

This dessication is the kind
that can prey upon the mind.
The forest's fallowed by a force
turns branches into giant claws.

The leaves like snow unto the ground

Steven sits to smoke some grass
and ponder the destruction's sound.

Rustle of descending leaves,
homynous and trembling.
Torrential travesty of twigs
ominous, crescendoing
Cracking kamikaze trees
collapsing and grumbling.
This forest is in disarray
alzheimered and mumbling.

He reclines and fills his lungs with smoke.
The leaves fall faster. He thinks it's a joke.

The leaves rain down upon my body
prone upon the black-brown ground,
the rotting matted forest floor.

The roots of oaks against my ribs
the wind at work, almost warm
entombing me in leaves
leaves
leaves
the danger of dying
uncaring and stoned in a mound of dead leaves
is a fear with which I'm pleased.

I'm unafraid.
I'll merge with the earth
dissolve in the marsh
forget my name laying in loam

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here in the double darkness.
Hmmm.

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