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Fallen, The Adventures of a Deep Water Leaf

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CHAPTER ONE



Spinning Dreams

Once upon a Timeless Now, in the emerald realm of the Dreaming Tree, a little leaf swayed in the gentle breeze, humming softly as she spun a new dream. As one leaf among the thousands that filled the tree, there was nothing outwardly remarkable about her. But one must never judge a leaf by her appearance, for this gardenvariety, third leaf on the second bough from the bottom known as Letria was about to change everything.

As a dream spinner, Letria worked tirelessly to capture and express the thoughts and visions burgeoning within the Dreaming Tree's boundless mind. In a ritual she'd repeated countless times, she drew a deep draught of the tree's lifeblood and flooded it through the veins and capillaries that ran like a roadmap through her kelly-green, heartshaped body. The nectar of infinite consciousness exploded within her in a kaleidoscope of flavor, color and sound that blurred the borders of her senses. She smelled the fresh crispness of sapphire blue, tasted the tang of rolling thunder and heard the sweetness of honey as birdsong.

Once the initial rush of sensory overload had passed, she began the work of distilling a single dream scenario from the infinite possibilities available. Like an artist selecting a harmonious palette of colors, she chose this bit and that from the multitude of impressions flowing through her, by intuition more than by thought. The potential combinations were limitless, and never had she duplicated a past dream.

Through a miraculous process of inner alchemy, she transformed her selected elements into a gossamer substance finer than spider silk. With deft precision she spun this into a radiant dream orb that hung, glistening, from her leaf tip.

Throughout the Dreaming Tree, other leaves were likewise engaged. Their collective web of dreams sparkled like a jeweled crown in the canopy of the tree. The harmony of their voices as they hummed and sighed filled the tree with a symphony of sound. It was the sound of Om, the voice of creation. Usually it filled Letria with a sense of peace and belonging, but lately it left her feeling edgy and restless.

She sighed deeply, the pleasure she normally took in her work offset by a vague feeling of dissatisfaction. These dreams that she spun endlessly, each one precious and unique, were so fleeting. There was no beginning, middle or end to them, for this was the realm of the always Now. Each was a complete and perfect expression, a beautiful golden light of self-contained potential, frozen and suspended for the briefest moment in the amber of timeless time. It was like a series of stillbirths, thousands upon thousands of them. Each dream was here so briefly before dissipating or falling

off into the void, only to be replaced by another. They were expressions of the Great Mind, yes, but not experiences.

And so it was. And so it had always been.

But now, as Letria peered into the alluring diamond sparkle of her latest creation, a restless yearning hollowed her insides. It was a rather achy longing for something more, something she couldn't name. A flood of fierce and tender love for this creation of her heart swelled to the point of bursting within her.

As she gazed more deeply into her dream, its crystalline glow shattered into a rainbow of colors unlike any she'd ever known. The colors spilled into her as bright golden light snaked like fire up her midrib, rich violets and magentas flowed sweetly through her veins, and icy blue raised every downy fiber on her body.

She sensed, or perhaps only imagined, a flash of movement and sound within the dream orb. A tingling curiosity sent shivers through her as she trembled from stem to tip. Through the shimmering veil of the orb's surface, she thought she saw an ephemeral vision of herself within the dream.

No, not quite me, she realized; more like a projection or reflection of me. Yet she's alive, she marveled, spellbound. I shall call her Alora, my little dream. But I couldn't bear to lose her like all the dreams that came before.

What would it be like to live within the dream, she wondered? To hold it for longer than a moment? To be held by it? To really experience it? The very idea of living a

different kind of life than this one was so unfamiliar that she had no word for it. But the idea created a feeling of excitement within her that bubbled up and overflowed, as the answer to her question took shape in new, breathtaking language. It would be . . . an “adventure.”

The alluring word “adventure” tumbled and tickled inside her like an invitation. Her heart leapt with an instant *Yes!* in response.



Up the branch from Letria, the eleventh leaf, Lexi, had just spun his own dream. He juggled the dream across his forest-green surface repeatedly, kicking it in the air with his leaf tip, catching it near his stem and letting it roll down his midrib back to the tip. He wasn’t showing off, exactly, but he wanted to get Letria’s attention.

He had picked up on her restlessness. As connected as they all were, it was impossible for anyone’s thoughts or feelings to remain unknown to the others for long, especially those closest to each other. Lexi felt particularly close to Letria – and not just by proximity. She held a special place in his heart. Her kind and gentle nature moved him. She cared so deeply about everything. She spun her dreams with a depth of love and passion far beyond what he brought to the task.

His dreams tended to be random and wild. He relished the surprise of spontaneous creation and the unexpected results of his hit-or-miss selections from the flux of the

Dreaming Tree's mind. He enjoyed stretching the limits – like seeing how many elements he could bring into a single dream, or just how big he could spin an orb before it burst.

His dreams were like a field of scattered wildflowers; hers were a carefully tended garden. He let go of his dreams easily, always ready for the next experiment. But she seemed to grieve the loss of each one. He'd noticed recently that she often seemed sad and listless. He'd hoped to cheer her up with his silly antics, but she wasn't paying any attention to him.

He sent a mental message as he lobbed his dream orb one more time. *Look at this, Letria. How high do you think I can toss it?* But still she didn't respond or even look his way. She was staring into her dream orb with an intensity that worried him. He caught his tossed dream and let it roll slowly to a stop as he focused completely on tapping into Letria's thoughts.



CHAPTER TWO



Falling Dreams

The word “adventure” resonated within Lexi, and the echo of Letria’s resounding *yes* pounded like a drumbeat through his veins. As he felt her grief and longing, and her overwhelming desire to hold on to this dream – to truly experience it – he suddenly realized what was happening.

“Be careful, Letria! You’re falling!” he shouted.

But it was too late. She didn’t even hear him. For an instant, Letria became the dream and forgot that she was the dreamer.

In that instant, the Dreaming Tree’s infinite consciousness spiraled through Letria and into her dream, refracting like rays of light through a prism. The timeless presence of the infinite Now unwound and expanded, exploding into time and space within the world she dreamt. The love that she felt for her dream turned inside out, birthing fear and a whole spectrum of unprecedented emotions into the new world. The perfect quantum balance held in the mind of the great Dreaming Tree stretched and flowed into long threads of discrete possibilities, spanning like bridges between polar extremes of light and dark, hot and cold, good

and bad. It was the collapse of the quantum wave or the big bang of a universe being born. Into the maelstrom, a fragment of Letria's consciousness fell.

Lexi watched, dumbfounded, as a phantom-like replica slipped from Letria like a second skin and passed through the thin membrane of her dream orb. As if the weight of her essence within it was too much, the dream stretched and dropped from her grasp. It fell, siphoning light from Letria as it went, bleaching her shining, spring-green surface to dull olive.

Lexi didn't waste time trying to process what he was seeing. His only thought was for Letria. She needed his help. He needed to keep her safe. Somehow she'd slipped into her dream and he had to follow her.

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