

FEATURING  
FROM THE ANCIENT TOMES: "Fairy Land" by Edgar Allan Poe  
FICTION: "Scota" by Kristin Roahrig  
POETRY: "This Night" by Michael Fantina, & "Oath of the Five" by Colin R. Claymore  
EDITED BY KAY CHRONISTER



Cover Art: "A Fairytale" by Arthur Wardle

# *Into The Willows*

an e-zine of fey music & verse

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# *From the Ancient Times*

## FAIRYLAND

Edgar Allan Poe

Dim vales-and shadowy floods-  
And cloudy-looking woods,  
Whose forms we can't discover  
For the tears that drip all over!  
Huge moons there wax and wane-  
Again-again-again-  
Every moment of the night-  
Forever changing places-  
And they put out the star-light  
With the breath from their pale faces.  
About twelve by the moon-dial,  
One more filmy than the rest  
(A kind which, upon trial,  
They have found to be the best)  
Comes down-still down-and down,  
With its centre on the crown  
Of a mountain's eminence,  
While its wide circumference  
In easy drapery falls  
Over hamlets, over halls,  
Wherever they may be-  
O'er the strange woods-o'er the sea-  
Over spirits on the wing-  
Over every drowsy thing-  
And buries them up quite  
In a labyrinth of light-  
And then, how deep!-O, deep!  
Is the passion of their sleep.  
In the morning they arise,  
And their moony covering  
Is soaring in the skies,  
With the tempests as they toss,  
Like-almost anything-  
Or a yellow Albatross.  
They use that moon no more  
For the same end as before-  
Videlicet, a tent-  
Which I think extravagant:  
Its atomies, however,  
Into a shower dissever,

Of which those butterflies  
Of Earth, who seek the skies,  
And so come down again,  
(Never-contented things!)  
Have brought a specimen  
Upon their quivering wings.

# *Fiction*

## SCOTA

Kristin Roahrig

*He went into Egypt through valour  
Till he reached powerful Pharaoh;  
Till he bestowed Scota, of no scanty beauty,  
The modest, nimble daughter of pharaoh...  
From her are the Scots named.*

Lebor Gabála Éirenn  
The Book of Invasions

Look beyond the two points of the rising sun he always said. And in her dream Scota would stare, trying to distinguish in-between these two points. The two suns were far apart, one nearer while the other was far to the north. The sun closest to her was a dark yellow and warm; the other was a pale reflection of the one near. Never would she find them, even though she squinted her eyes until she gave herself a headache. Instead of finding anything beyond the points, Scota's eyes would see flashes of color. A mixture of dull shades of grey along with brilliant greens the likes of which she had only ever seen on jewels. The green color would flash across her sight, blinding her momentarily. And she would fall backwards as if in a fit.

But a man whose face she never saw clearly would always take her arms, helping her to rise again, keeping her steady on her own two feet. Brushing her off as if she were a one-year-old learning her first steps, he would assure Scota that she wasn't having a fit. And what had Scota seen when she fell? Nothing, Scota would always answer. It was after all true, a few colors, nothing more. This wasn't unusual: she associated many things with colors. With him, she saw yellow with splashes of a brilliant orange. His colors were so vivid they burned her sight as if she stared straight into a fire's flame.

As for herself, on the other hand, she saw very little. She only saw the colors of green and gray in her dreams. They brought a feeling of dampness similar to that of water soaking into her skin. He once told her it was a land she saw. At the time she thought if his words were true, a strange world that would be. Different from her land where there was only green along the Nile river with the browns of the desert stretching beyond it with a sky always blue. But then Scota would wake from the dream, into surroundings she had always known.

On this day after her dream, Scota went to the market with her older sister and two servants. She was near a marriageable age but that didn't stop anyone, including her sister, from treating Scota similar to the way one would a young child. Scota was sometimes surprised her sister didn't force one of the servants to hold her hand.

This morning, the sun was especially warm and on such days she always felt there was sand stuck between her teeth. Running her tongue over them, she rarely felt any of the grains to actually be there. As the daughter of the pharaoh, she lived in too much comfort for that. She followed her sister through the market where metalworkers and goldsmiths gathered and sold their wares. There were many goldsmiths placing gold metal on balances for weight and measurement while others were shaping pieces of it into forms that would become necklaces, bracelets,

and earrings. Much of the metal was probably from Nubia. Her sister was searching for a necklace to add to her already large collection of jewelry. She and her servants had wandered ahead, momentarily forgetting Scota.

That is when she first noticed him. Not a man whose image she could never make out, as in the one in the dreams, but a man whose features she clearly saw standing on the street corner with a small crowd surrounding him.

He stood unflinchingly in the blazing heat under an awning that provided little shade. He spoke of strange things that sounded like nonsense to Scota. However, his words captivated her and there was a presence about him, one that was a mixture of sharp acuteness and peace. She drew closer to the fringes of the crowd to listen more.

Suddenly he called out, "What is your question about the colors?"

Scota looked around along with everyone else before realizing he spoke to her. Wondering how he knew, she guessed maybe he was a priest from one of the temples – though she never seen him before.

"What colors do you see when you look at me?" Scota asked.

"Your colors?" he asked, frowning slightly.

"Yes, what do you see when you look at me?"

He thought a moment, studying her.

"The sands," he said. "I see sands of the desert, that has formed you from birth."

He stopped speaking while his eyes widened a little in studied interest. She wanted to ask what it was but refrained herself. If he was a priest, he would answer on his own time.

"Behind the sands I see green. And gray," he finished.

"What do they mean?" she asked.

"The life you are to have," he said.

His answer confused Scota even more. She wanted to ask further, but he already turned away, dismissing her without saying a word. Scota could have forced him to answer her, she could have ordered it, but then she would have had to reveal her identity. And she didn't want to do that while she was alone. She left the crowd, only walking a few paces before her sister found her and, dragging her away, rebuked Scota for wandering off.

"Take greater care, will you? How would I explain to our parents how I lost you in the market?" she asked Scota repeatedly until they reached their home.

Scota said nothing. She thought over the stranger's words. Once home, Scota ignored her other sisters, finding her nurse Amunet instead. She was too old for a nurse but had incessantly begged her mother to let the woman stay on until Scota had her way.

Grabbing the woman's hand, she pulled Amunet into a corner away from prying eyes and, even worse, ears that heard everything.

“Amunet, I must go to Thoth's temple,” Scotia said.

The God was one of great learning. He was the sacred scribe. He would have written and therefore had knowledge of the will of the Gods.

“Thoth's temple? Whatever for?” Amunet asked.

“To ask Thoth what it all means,” Scotia said. “Remember the colors I've seen in dreams? A man at the market knew of them and more.”

“You will go to the House of Life there at the temple and have one of the priests transcribe your dreams then?” Amunet asked.

“No, it's not the dream interpretations I need but the answers from the God Thoth himself. I'll go to his sanctuary.”

Amunet hushed Scotia, her older fingers fiddling with the worn Sa around her neck as if to rub protection onto herself from her amulet. Scotia had tried presenting her with a new amulet before. The woman's own looked too much like a fish with stubby arms on either side. Amunet accepted the gift at the time but never wore it, clinging to her old piece instead.

“Almost no one is admitted into that sacred space. You think yourself a priest or your father the Pharaoh? Go to the House of Life there instead,” Amunet advised. “The God will hear you and then you'll learn of what he has to say soon enough.”

“I want the truth, not a vague interpretation. You do remember the dreams I told you of?” Scotia asked.

“Of the terrible land that is cold? Why find out about that? It isn't real. And if such a place even exists, why pursue it? It's so nice and warm here in your home, be content,” Amunet said.

“I need to know what the colors mean, there must be something important to find about my life else. Why would the man in the market be able to see it as well?” Scotia asked.

Amunet tightened her grip on the amulet, scowling. She muttered words Scotia didn't catch. Scotia thought the words sounded like Amunet complaining about the young needing to know everything instead of letting things be. Why didn't Scotia just buy herself a new necklace such as her sister? She likes necklaces. Scotia asked her nurse to speak louder. Amunet's grip on the amulet loosened.

“I'll go only to be sure you get into no trouble,” Amunet grumbled.

~

The next morning Scotia dressed carefully so she wouldn't appear any different than the others who came to seek answers or favors of Thoth's priests. She wore one of her plain linen dresses with the loin cloth and sandals. Little jewelry was worn, only a necklace and belt. Wearing one of her less conspicuous wigs, she finished by painting around her eyes so they showed larger and clearer than they normally would have. For the last thing, she hid on herself a bribery for a servant at the temple to look another way when no one was near when she went into the

sanctuary. It should be easy enough to convince one to help her; she was the daughter of a pharaoh, the link between the Gods and mortals, the highest priest.

At the temple, Scota waited longer than she normally would have. Impatient at first, she kept reminding herself this was to be expected. Finally the servant she bribed gave her the signal to let her know the coast was clear for the God's sanctuary and no one should come for a long while.

Incense smelling of jasmine and another sharp spice she couldn't identify nearly overwhelmed her when she first entered the sanctuary. To either side of the door low-hanging oil lamps gave a dim lighting to the darkened room.

Towards the far side of the space was a large statue of Thoth. Food, flowers, and other offerings were laid around his feet. The statue's features were mostly hidden in the shadows, showing only an outline of the familiar birdlike head of the ibis with a long slender beak on the body of a man.

Laying her own offering down before the statue, she backed slowly to stand at a respectful distance. The flames wavered, causing shadows to play across the statue, making the head appear to turn to look at her. Scota's first instinct was to run or apologize. Swallowing, she kept her fear hidden. A God could smell fear quicker than a dog sniff out blood.

Silently she willed for an answer. None came. Then Thoth's head turned more, staring straight at her. With a start, Scota sprang back, for the face she saw was not the God's but the one of the man she saw the day before at market.

“Daughter of the Pharaoh Nectanebus, you don't trust my words?” he asked. His tone was more jesting than angry. However, Scota said nothing, remaining mute.

“Well?” he prodded.

At last Scota found her voice, saying, “If you are truly the God Thoth then you know what I've come for.”

“You came to find out what you will become. Are you certain you want to know?” he asked.

“Yes,” Scota said.

“Very well, but you may not like what you hear, few ever seem to be content when they learn of their fate,” Thoth sighed. “You will marry a man who you'll grow to love and travel to a distant land whose existence is little known of. A land different than this, often a cold wet place, but a land that shall be your home. Its people shall carry your name longer than your family shall be remembered.”

“Is there anything else you can tell me?” Scota asked.

“You shall die there, killed in battle by a fall from a horse.”

Despite being in the presence of a God, Scota snorted at this.

“One doesn't ride horses,” she said, standing straighter.

“In that land the people do, you'll learn and become a great horsewoman. But you will still die there,” Thoth repeated.

At the statement, Scota was quiet, absorbing what she learned. Then she asked a question that came to her. Losing a confidence that had bordered on arrogance only a short while before, she forced herself to ask the question out loud.

“And I must leave when I'm old enough to marry? I cannot die in my homeland?” Scota asked.

The God hesitated, his face momentarily returning to the well-recognized visage any of her people would know. She believed he would say no more, for a god wasn't required to answer every question a follower may bring.

Then he spoke, telling her that being mortal, she had a choice to refuse that life. She could choose instead to remain in Egypt. He then turned his gaze from her, facing straight ahead as he returned to stone. Scota knew he would speak no more.

As Scota left, Amunet quickly ran up to her side. The nurse watched every passing person, even the priests, giving them scathing glares as if sniffing out any who intended to harm her mistress.

“What did he say?” Amunet asked.

“Nothing more than what I told you yesterday,” Scota said.

It was the first time she lied to Amunet. Not ever intending to tell anyone about what Thoth spoke, she spent the following few years only thinking about it occasionally. She wasn't certain when the choice came what path she would choose. To stay and live in her familiar surroundings where the sun warmed her every day and the sounds of the Nile were as familiar to her as Amunet's voice? Leave her comforts and the world she recognized behind? Or go to an unfamiliar land that sounded inhospitable where she would die among strangers?

Instead, while she reached the age when she was no longer a child but a woman, she participated more in court life. Playing the game senet each morning and attending banquets and parties at night, she became too busy to worry over a choice given to her as a child.

At one of the banquets her father gave, she saw a man across the room speaking with him. Fires from the oil lamps softened the room's features, showing the people and furniture in a light that created an atmosphere of comfort. A warm breeze stirred from the open windows, adding to the temporary security of the scene. People were scattered around the room, many seated while servants moved through the place, offering a never ending supply of refreshments. The music of strings and lutes played a slow air from the corner of the room. It was a well-known piece Scota had many times heard.

Noticing Scota, her father touched the man's arm, indicating for him to follow. Her father walked across the room towards her, the man trailing behind at a discreet distance. When they were closer, Scota recognized him though she never met him. He had arrived only the day before. His name was Mil, and was both a general and a student of differing languages. He moved with signs of the quick reflexes learned from a soldier's training but his face showed a quiet intelligence one expected of a scholar. Her father stopped in front of her, introducing Mil as he would a new jewel he had just found for her.

“My lady, you are as they say,” Mil said when her father finished speaking.



“And what do they say?” Scotia asked.

She kept her expression serene but was amused because his nervousness at being introduced to her was evident.

“Your beauty can easily be seen as graced by the Goddess Hathor,” he said. He began to say more but stopped himself. Scotia grew even more amused as she thought, despite his reputation as a student of languages, he managed to remind her of a tongue-tied young boy speaking with a girl for the first time.

Beneath her amusement, Scotia didn't mind the overused compliment; for this time it was spoken from sincerity, not as simple flattery. She heard enough of them to distinguish the difference. Despite his stammer she held her hand out to him.

Tentatively he touched her fingers. Scotia smiled warmly at him, knowing she had met her husband. She had made the choice Thoth once offered with no hesitation as she expected to have felt. She knew him as her husband and not because her father obviously had the plan in mind, but because she realized it instinctively. For at looking into his eyes, she saw the gray sky and ragged green cliffs of what she knew with certainty now to be her home.

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**Kristin Roahrig's** work has appeared in various publications, most recently in *Indiana Science Fiction 2012* and *Gothic Poems and Fiction* anthology.

# Poetry

## THIS NIGHT

Michael Fantina

This riven realm will face thee then  
Though some incredible glamour,  
This night across the shadowed moor,  
Beyond the ghoul infested fen.

With none to aid thee ere the dawn  
Comes tripping up here easterly,  
Out of this cold twice haunted sea,  
To splash its glow across the lawn.

This night a witch shall lead thee there,  
She is petite and girlish, bold,  
Her nose ring is a hoop of gold  
And braided is her scarlet hair.

This riven realm will face thee then  
And she shall be thy paramour  
This night across the shadowed moor,  
Hard by the ghoul infested fen!

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**Michael Fantina** has had hundreds of poems published in North America, the UK and in Australia over the past several decades. He has appeared in such journals as *Dark Horizons*, *The Lyric*, *Midnight Echoes*, and many others, and has had three chapbooks of his verse published in England by Rainfall Books.

# THE OATH OF THE FIVE

Colin R. Claymore

More than two days and nights they fled,  
The five sons of the grim king dead,  
Fearing the wrath of many foes,  
Dreading their thoughts and deepest woes.  
Over the plains, along the shore,  
They fled two days and two nights more.  
Beyond the pass between the sea  
And mountains gray, sheer and lofty,  
They came at last to a safe place  
And hoped their foes forgot the chase.

In the southeast they camped at last,  
In that woodland where in days past  
Many of the Eohfolc dwelt  
(Until that day when cruel fate dealt  
To them an end, in flame and smoke,  
The grief of which three only spoke).  
But now beside the glowing flame  
Men spoke at last their dead king's name.  
The princes five with gray blades drawn  
Stood midmost of the vengeful throng.

The night was dark and stars were cold  
When the five swore an oath so bold.  
The eldest spoke with brandished sword,  
And the fears of his heart ignored.  
"Upon myself this oath I take,  
This vow that none should ever break;  
Upon myself this oath I swear,  
Never in my life to forbear;  
Upon my soul, I swear this thing:  
To take vengeance for my slain king!"

Then said the five brothers most grim,  
Beneath the light of stars so dim,  
"Upon ourselves this oath we swear,  
Never to in our lives forbear;  
Upon our souls, we vow this thing:  
To take vengeance for our slain king!  
And this also we now would say,  
So let our foes at last dismay:  
To the farthest lands shall we go

In pursuit of our wary foe.”

To his brothers the eldest said,  
“Revenge we’ll have for our king dead,  
Upon the one who struck him down,  
Upon him who has won renown  
In his own lands, among his kin,  
For committing this dreadful sin.  
But he’s akin to my own wife,  
And doubtless she would fret at strife.  
Wherefore I shall on my return  
Confine her to fetters iron.”

“Henceforth we’ll take the friendship of  
Only those who have little love  
For our foes and all their allies,  
All those who we greatly despise,”  
Said the five sons of fallen lord,  
Each standing with his own drawn sword.  
Their faces shone in glowing light  
Of golden flame in starry night.  
But their own oath would be their bane,  
Doomed to suffer in endless pain.