



“Come in, come in, Mr. Coupar. Ten o’clock on the dot.”

“I’m always on time, Mr. P. It’s been important for me to be on time all my life.”

“We’ve read the first six chapters of the story, the first six chapters,” said Mr. P., the publisher.

Mr. P.’s name was really Mr. Higginsbottom, but Mr. Coupar somehow could not get his tongue around the word. He called him Mr. P., for publisher, and Higginsbottom didn’t seem to mind.

“Actually, you’ve read six of the first seven chapters. I have chapter one right here.” Mr. Coupar put a hefty manuscript on the edge of Mr. P.’s desk.

“Sit down, sit down. Can I get you something to drink? Mmm? Something to drink?”

“Coffee, please, but I’ll fix it myself.” Mr. Coupar walked over to the coffee table. “If it were ten in the evening, a wee single malt would be nice.”

“Then have a seat, have a seat,” said Mr. P.

With his coffee, Mr. Coupar sat on a high-backed leather chair facing Mr. P.’s desk.

“So tell me, Mr. Coupar, are you the Ewan Colin Coupar in the story? Is this you as a young chap?”

“Aye, that would be me,” said Mr. Coupar.

“Tell me, what exactly is ‘a touch of the Fae’? Is it about people who believe in Faeries, or is there more to it than that?”

“It is more than that. You can believe in Faeries and not have a touch of the Fae. You can even see and communicate with Faeries and not have a touch of the Fae. But if you have Faerie ancestries, then you have Faerie blood and so have a touch of the Fae. Understand, though, that lots of folks who have it are not always aware. Unless you develop it, it can be lost.”

“Mmm...so we have the first *seven* chapters. Well, we love it. We will publish it, and when your agent arrives, we can go over a proposal. When can we read the rest of it?”

“Oh, it’s all here, finished,” said Mr. Coupar, putting his hand on the manuscript in front of Mr. P.

“Oh. All of it?” Mr. P. said with a note of concern. “Well, I never expected it to be finished. In fact, I was hoping it wasn’t, quite frankly.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, I was just wondering if you would be agreeable to a change or two.”

“Oh, like what?”

“Well, we love it—we do—but I was wondering if it was movie material. You know, sometimes books like this, fantasies, are great for movie versions. If this took place in England, it might sell better. You know, English accents and all that sort of stuff. Oh, I understand the book just fine, but I was thinking of stories like *Peter Pan* or *Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Treasure Island*—by Scottish authors but English settings, you know.”

“Aye, maybe, but what about *Braveheart*, *Rob Roy*, and *Local Hero*? They were big movies too,” said Mr. Coupar.

“That’s true...that’s true.”

Mr. Coupar didn’t say anything about how Mr. P.’s frequent repetition irked him.

“And,” Mr. Coupar said, “Would you move the Loch Ness monster into somewhere in England or put the Selkie folk from Scotland in the Thames, maybe? Besides, Scottish Faeries don’t like to be English, and, furthermore, it happened in Scotland.”

“Well, I agree with some of your points,” said Mr. P., “but it *is* a *fantasy*.”

“Well sort of, I suppose, although I didn’t make it up. I just wrote it down the way it happened,” Mr. Coupar said.

“The way it happened? Are you trying to tell me it’s true, Mr. Coupar?” Mr. P. said with a laugh. “Or is it a Faerie tale, and are you going to start somewhere with ‘A long, long time ago’ or ‘Once upon a time’?”

“Aye, that’s what I’m saying, in a sense. You see, by saying ‘Once upon a time...’ it puts the story in a definite point of time in the infinite. It all happened some time ago but with no particular time that I know of. I know that’s hard to explain, but then maybe it’s not.”

Is this guy loony? I didn’t quite understand what he just said but I think I did, thought Mr. P.

“But if it’s true, Mr. Coupar, you can take us to the Loch Ness monster or show us Faeries and dragons.”

“I can’t do that, Mr. P. If you read the rest of the story, you will understand. Go on. Read it.”

The book slowly rose by itself, gently dropped in front of Mr. Higginsbottom, and opened at the prologue. Mr. Higginsbottom, with eyes and mouth wide open, started to read.

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