

The Everlasting Lantern

By Mary and Maisie



Once there was an Aspen forest on the hill where the Celts used to forecast the weather .If the wind caught the leaves to make them rustle in the night it could mean rain the next day, or if the wind lifted the leaves to reveal their whiter side then a gale could be on the way.

The Celts believed that the Aspen had the best hearing of all the trees and trembled with all that it heard.

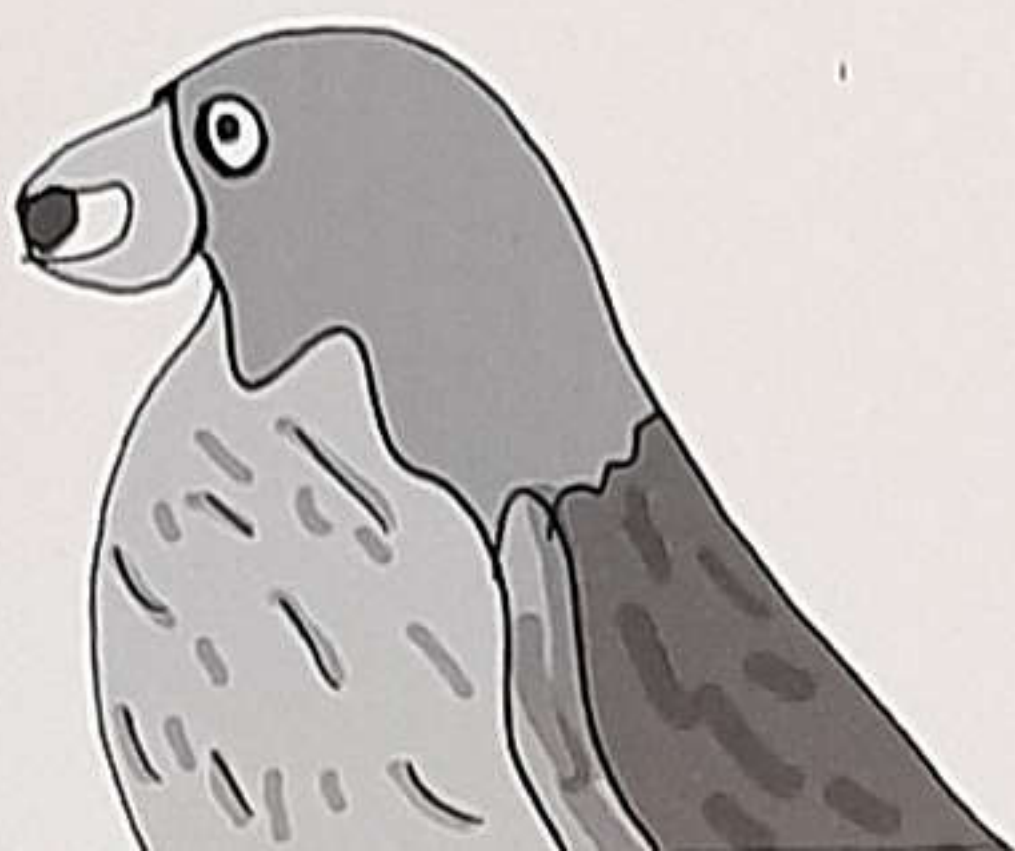
And, once upon a time
there was a troll called
Greg.

He arrived from the
mountains in the North and
didn't much care for
forests. He mostly loved
mountains and rocks.

So, Greg cursed the Aspen
forest and the curse was
everlasting darkness. He
didn't like the way the
leaves rustled and trembled.
They kept him awake at
night.

There was also a magic red squirrel and a redwing living in the forest.

People came from far and wide to try and see the two animals, but sadly the redwing turned to stone from all the darkness and the poor bird just remained as a statue.





The Old Celts could no longer use the Aspen as their weather guide. They were terrified! What's more - soon after they entered the forest they also turned to stone. In fact, everything that moved in the forest turned to stone, apart from Greg of course.

A terrible chill descended over the forest.



After that, no one dared
visit the Aspen forest for
months.

As autumn approached the
leaves turned colour and
began to fall.



It wasn't long before the leaves from the very last tree in the forest began to drop.

This was the magic squirrel's tree. As they fell it revealed a beautiful bright red light which shone from an everlasting lantern in the branch of the tree.

The red squirrel was the everlasting light.





The warm red colours of his fur glowed like the warmth from the sun and gradually brought life back to the forest.

Soon after the light came everyone who had turned to stone came back to life.

The people cheered and clapped because the darkness had disappeared.

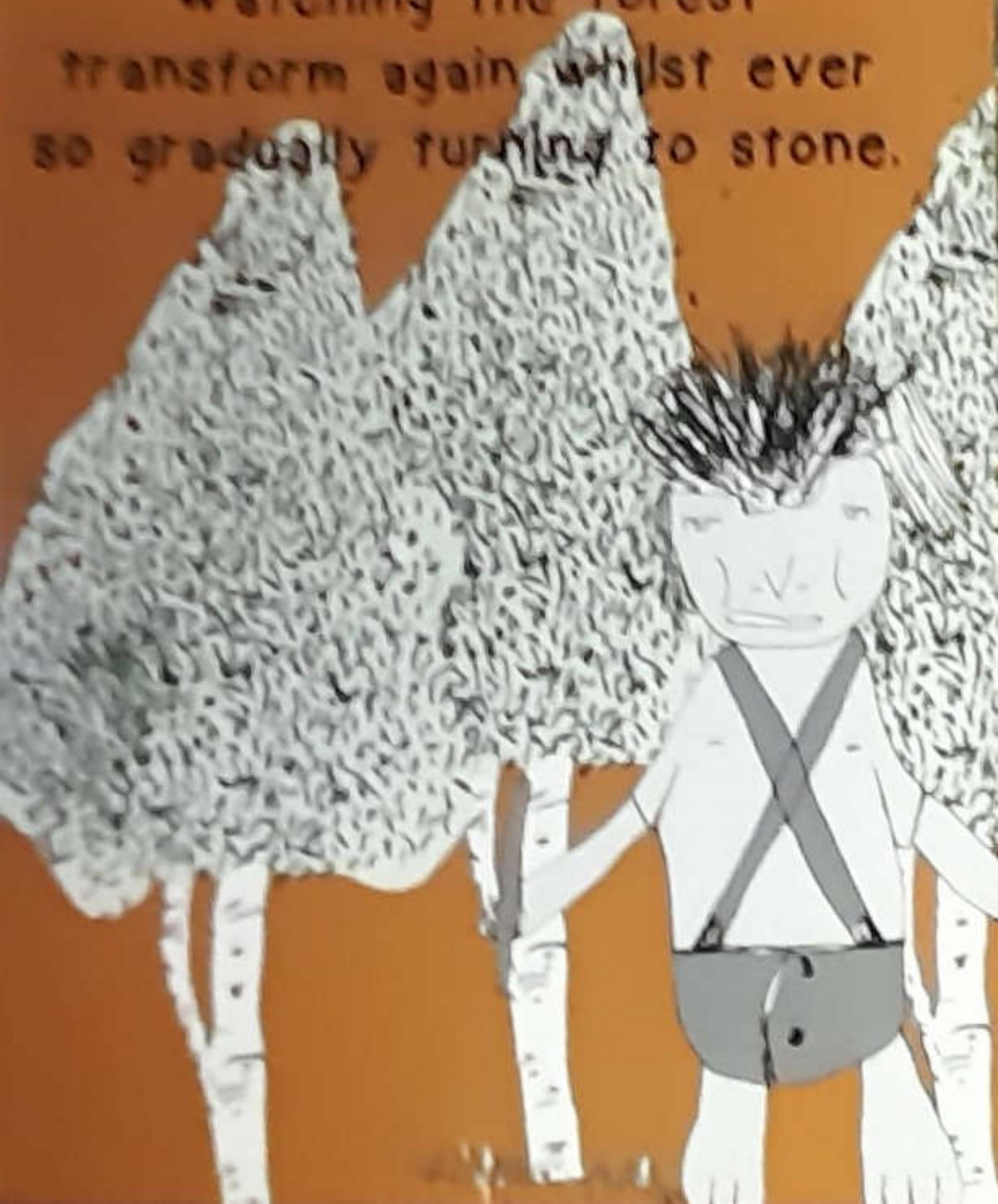
The little redwing was at last released from its destiny as a statue and free to fly through the forest once more.

As for the troll – he was quite fascinated by the glow of the everlasting light and happily looked at the forest come back to life again.

He was so mesmerised by it that he had completely forgotten that trolls should never be out in sunlight.

It was fatal to them.

so it was that he died - quite
happily and peacefully - by
watching the forest
transform again whilst ever
so gradually turning to stone.



The Celts saw the Aspen Tree as sacred because the wind to which it is so sensitive was the messenger from the gods. It was believed to have the most acute hearing of all trees and thus trembles with all it hears¹

The Aspen was believed to have protective qualities - by carrying a twig it could help prevent theft and could help overcome fear.

It was often considered bad luck to cut down an Aspen

Information taken from
The Forest
by Nancy Ruggin

Years ago traditional folk tales were an important part of entertainment and could sometimes be quite gruesome or scary, but they could also be used as a warning to young children to keep away from dangerous places like deep water or getting lost in the vast Northern forests.

According to old folklore the Aspen was considered a magical tree. In Celtic mythology this visual effect of its leaves trembling in the wind were said to be the tree communicating between this world and the next.



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Lantern
by Mary MacRae

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Illustration