



The Legend of the Stag and the Apple

Many, many generations ago when our ancestors were still new to this land and forming a bond with the earth, a huntsman was out in the woods near his home searching for game when suddenly he was startled by the appearance of a great silver stag standing in his path, staring at him intently. For several long moments, the two continued to stare at each other. The huntsman felt a great sense of awe at the sight before him and barely dared to breathe.

Then without making a sound, the stag turned and started down a path the huntsman had never seen before. After a dozen or so steps, the magnificent creature stopped and looked back at the human, exhaling loudly. He thought this might be a signal that perhaps he should follow the stag and took a few tentative steps towards the animal. The stag bobbed his head twice and continued down the new path with the huntsman cautiously following a short distance behind.

They walked for quite some time until finally man and beast emerged into a large, sun-drenched clearing that much to the huntsman's surprise was planted with neat rows of trees bearing what appeared to be some kind of fruit. Some were red. Others were yellow, and still others were green. The stag paused at the edge of the clearing for several moments, allowing his human companion to take in the sight before them.

The stag then walked further into the clearing, stepping carefully around the fruit strewn on the ground. He chose a red fruit and using his muzzle, pushed it along the ground in the direction of the huntsman. He came forward, meeting the stag halfway, and picked up the fruit. The animal bobbed his head at the huntsman, placing his muzzle under the man's hand and pushed upward. The huntsman took a bite of the fruit and was rewarded with the sweetest taste he had ever known.

With slow, deliberate movements, the huntsman then removed his hunting knife from his belt and cut off a slice of the fruit, and proffered it to the stag who accepted it gracefully and munched contentedly as the human continued dividing up the fruit in this manner, sharing it with the animal until it was gone. The stag then turned away from the huntsman and began walking deeper into the orchard. As before, it stopped to look back at the human who began to follow immediately.

They walked to the center of the orchard where the huntsman was once again surprised by the sight that met his eyes. There in the middle of this unlikely orchard in the middle of the woods stood a gleaming silver tree. Its limbs were heavy with the weight of its silver fruit. The stag walked a slow circle about the tree then used his great antlers to shake loose a single fruit from the tree's branches.

Once again, the animal used his muzzle to push the fruit along the ground towards the huntsman, who, sensing that he was being offered a special and unique gift, bent to one knee to pick up the fruit. Upon touching the silver fruit, the huntsman received a vision that started with this word – Apple- and thusly, was he given the name of this sweet fruit. Then suddenly he saw the shire spread out beneath him. It was as if he was a bird high in the sky looking down at the earth below, and from border to border, he saw orchards of apple trees and farms throughout the land. He also saw the good people of Sylvan Glen tending these orchards and farms with great care and dedication, and they were rewarded with bountiful harvests and the protection of the Sylvan Stag. Finally, he saw the return of the Great Sylvan Stag, and the people

rejoiced at his return, holding festivals across the shire in his honor to express their gratitude for the prosperity he had bestowed upon them.

And so it has been for the countless generations since the huntsman returned with the gift of the Sylver Apple. This Apple is kept hidden away in a secret location. At each festival within our lands, we bring forth the Apple, and display it with great reverence as we offer our gratitude to that magical creature and re-affirm our dedication to the land, to the Apple, and to the Sylver Stag.

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