

Tales from the Forgotten Wood

a mini-collection



Alicia Hayden

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For Erica, Olivia, Kat, Dylan, Ines, Sam,
and (of course) Will — keep having adventures.

Contents

Stepping stones (to somewhere else)

I am — crumbling

I twist

I want to let you find me

Stepping stones (to somewhere else)

My feet skip over stones,
Light as clouds, light as moon dust.
Following, chasing, finding –
The river pixies hiding under rocks,
Cuddled up with caddisfly larvae and whirly-gig beetles.

I touch my hand against bark, brittle,
Snapping against my fingers like cold chocolate.
A goblin pokes out; nose wrinkled,
Eyes sparkling like smooth river stones –
He is perturbed.

When I cross the stones to return,
My heart feels heavy – full
(Like cream – like the moon – a saucer of milk).
And when I close my eyes, I see them –
Pixies and goblins – jewels of the forest.



I am - crumbling

Water flows beneath roots,

A valley cut from moss and slate.

Inky water gushes; arteries of the forest.

Beech now stems - giraffes drinking from the waterhole.

And I -

the steps

that so many have

walked, stumbled, danced and kissed

on.

I crumble.

Returning to the Earth is bittersweet.



I twist

The steps that make up my trunk are actually many small trunks, twisting

Twisting around each other — like candy-canes or helter-skelters.

The steps are too small for most people, and too large for bugs.

They are (of course) redundant for harvestmen and spiders.

But for the Leonalder — a spider-like lion with long legs which breathes fire,

My steps are perfect.

It grips into them — long, thorn-claws scratching, digging,

As it moves up my stem. Into the canopy.

I feel its legs tingle with excitement — the hope for going home.

When the Leonalder reaches the top; when the last twist revolves into nothing,

There is a hiss of ecstasy — she runs to her family, dancing over my mirror-green leaves.

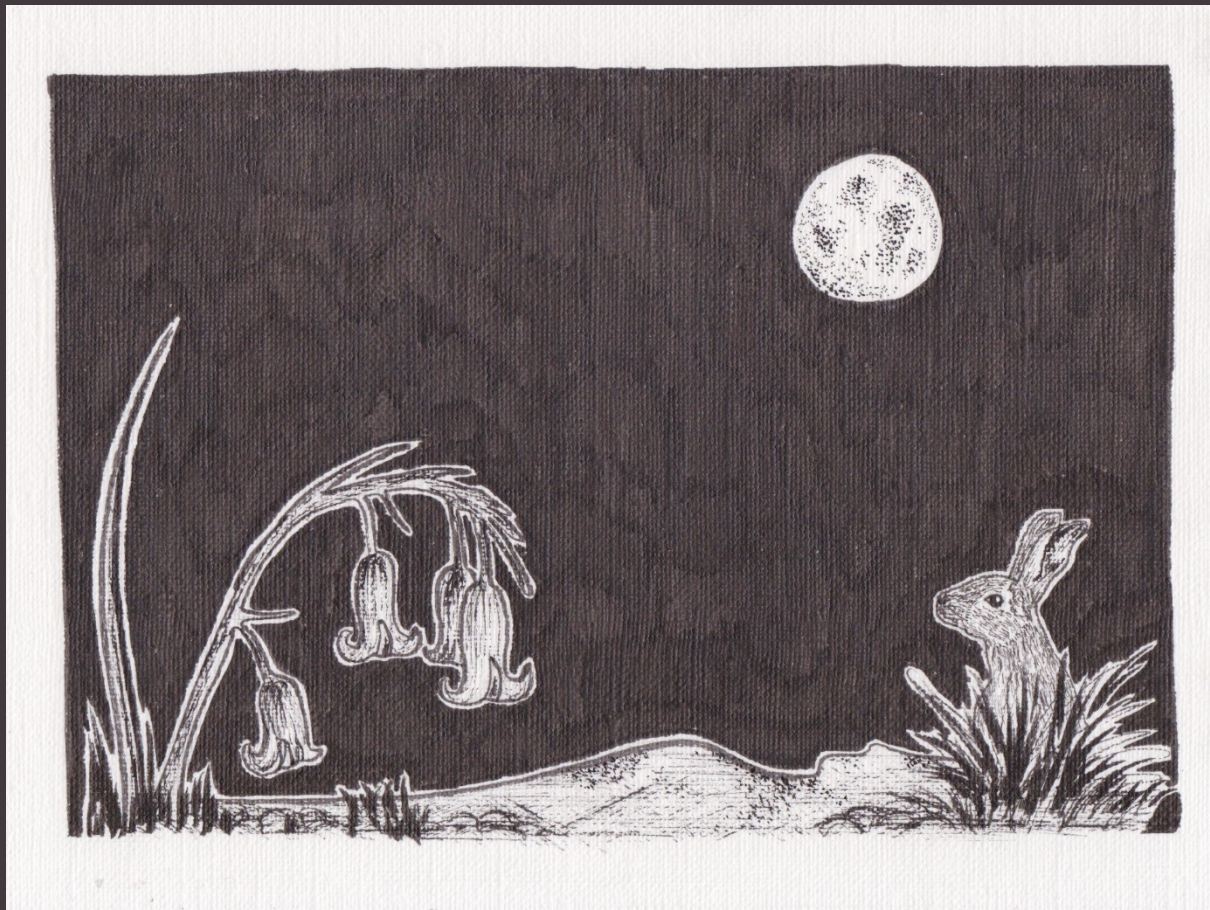
And, inside, I smile:

My steps are *perfect*.



I want to let you find me

I want to let you find me,
In the woods — where I am only moss and leaves
Tangled roots — and many names.
River pebble eyes, bluebells for fingers,
Rabbits graze my hair — keep it fresh.
I am Gaia, Mother, Witch, Lady —
A temptress to some, a saint to others.
And yet, my bones are bare to so few —
It is tiring, hiding my heart amongst slate
And uneven foot holds.
Perhaps, one day,
Someone will ask me how I am.



About the Author

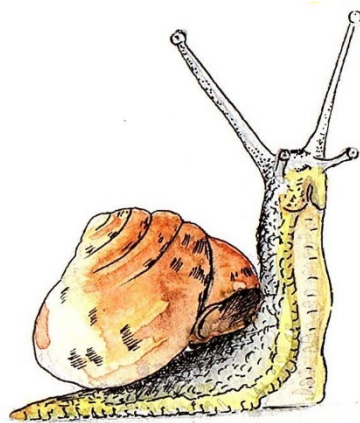
Alicia Hayden is an award-winning wildlife photographer, artist, writer, and filmmaker, from North Yorkshire. She won the 'Human Impact' category in David Shepherd Wildlife Artist of the Year 2021 for her piece 'When the Whale Sang', and was awarded the inaugural Ingrid Beazley Award. Alicia hopes that by showcasing the beauty of the natural world, she will encourage more people to protect it.

'Tales from the Forgotten Wood' is the first in a series of free mini-collections exploring the beauty and mystery of our local spaces.

Her first poetry book ['Rain before Rainbows'](#) came out in 2020, and she is currently working on her second.

If you enjoyed 'Tales from the Forgotten Wood', please consider supporting Alicia through [Ko-Fi!](#)





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