

Stepping into her new home, Jasper had no idea it would change her life forever. Adventures are always abundant but she would soon experience one like none before. High flying excitement, dangerous caves, magical weapons, and beautiful realms all await her the moment she touches the Great Willow tree.

The Secret Realms of the Hidden Elves: The Beginning

by Jonathan J Bowerman

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The
Secret Realms
— of —
The
Hidden Elves

The Beginning

Jonathan J Bowerman

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First Edition

1

The Move/Mansion of a Home

“Mom? Mom? MOMMMM?!?!?” Jasper screamed from the back of the station wagon. Jasper’s mom, without even needing to ask what she needed, answered her with an exhausted undertone, “JASPER! For the last time...it’s already in your seat!” “Oh, of course, I remember now,” stated Jasper. With her excited, energetic, never-slowing-down attitude she leapt over the back seat and practically landed on her cat but instead landed on her journal.

The journal was ok and the cat barely even noticed her. You see, ever since sloth was a kitten Jasper would pin it down, kiss it, snuggle it, even pick the gooey stuff out of its eyes and there wasn’t anything he could do about it. Eventually it accepted its fate and slowly seemed to look forward to the daily ritual. That is how it came by the name ‘sloth’: it rarely does much of anything anymore. On top of that, it is only 3 years old but you would think it were 33 because it eats slow...walks slow...blinks slow...and even goes to the bathroom slow...or, at least Jasper assumes it does.

She began to open her journal when her dad approached the car. He plumped himself into the driver's seat and began his ritualistic, pre-driving-check.

"Everyone ready?" Jasper's dad said into the rearview mirror. "Seatbelts?" –check; "Sloth?" –check; "Snacks? Drinks? Entertainment?" –check, check, check; "Belly Buttons?" –check?

Jasper never really understood 'belly button' checks but she assumed it was his poor attempt at being funny. She rolled her eyes and secretly laughed under her harrumph of a sigh; he always gets an A for effort in his attempt at being silly. The roar of the old station wagon signaled the beginning of the big move that has been in the works for almost a year and Jasper couldn't be more excited!

Everett (Jasper's dad) works for the government which unfortunately causes the family to move more than they like. In 12 years, Jasper has moved 6 times. Fortunately, she barely remembers half of them but they are still tiresome and boring.

"This time will be different," Jasper's dad said while looking at her in the rear-view mirror as if reading her mind. "My next assignment should keep me in place for at least five or six years."

Jasper managed an encouraging yet doubtful smile then proceeded to vividly day dream while watching the cars and trees zoom by. Every car that passed was a giant fish on its way to work. The clouds were smiling and bumping into one another excitedly. And to top it off, all the trees were laughing as if at a family reunion: hugging, waving, and shaking

hands. This eventually lulled Jasper into a gentle nap which, go figure, was filled with more exciting, vivid, and imaginative episodes of fun.

Jasper was in a half-awake, half-asleep state when somewhere between roller skating on the moon and breathing under water she heard the old station wagon come to a rumbling halt. As she slowly opened her eyes she heard her dad's door shut and her mom mumble something underneath her breath. Her mother was looking forward to moving about as much as she was but still attempted to stay positive. Once Jasper was almost fully awake and started to view her new home her spirits began to lift.

"Whoa...MOM! Do you see this place?!" cried Jasper. She looked over at her mom who looked as though she were crying. After looking harder, her mother was laughing into her hands, not crying.

After calming a little and slowing her breathing down Jasper's mom replied, "Sweetie, how can I miss it? This house is literally straight out of a scary movie...an *old*...scary movie."

To give you a better idea of what Jasper was seeing, and what she was so excited about, imagine a home built in the early 1800's, is three stories, and has more windows than a hospital. But never mind all of that, Jasper absolutely loved it. Because of her large imagination, she has come to love anything with character and this house has it. Before she even left the car, Jasper began to plan all her adventures for the next 6 months (just to get her feet wet).

Without taking her eyes off the mansion of a home, Jasper quickly opened her car door, slammed it shut (almost squishing sloth at the same

time). She ran up to her dad who was standing next to the real estate agent halfway up the path to the front door.

“Nice to finally meet you, Everett. We have taken care of everything. The house has been cleaned up and ready for you to move in: electrical has been updated, plumbing replaced, and we even installed central heat and air which was not an easy task,” she said.

Smiling at the real estate agent Jasper’s dad inquired, “So, what is the deal with this place anyways?”

Half eaves dropping, half surveying her new home, Jasper got an idea of what they were talking about. The house was built over 200 years ago; the builder and first owner mysteriously disappeared; the house sat empty for a long time; nobody ever saw the builder again. About 50 years ago, the bank paid a company to bring everything up to date and put electricity and modern technology inside of it. ‘Do not mess with the character!’ the bank told them.

Jasper never looked at them, she kept her eyes on the house as if examining an ancient artifact. Sloth was already chasing critters in the front yard...more like lazily following them around. The real estate agent shook Everett’s hand and as she passed she patted Jasper on her shoulder.

“Well.... where do we start, Jasper-wasper?” her dad said without taking his eyes from the house.

Jasper studied her new home as if trying to figure out all its secrets, “Let us start with the front door” she replied.

2

Getting Settled/The First Encounters

What an odd sound...I mean, if you were to combine a screaming cat, nails on a chalk board, and breaking glass...the sound of the front door opening was even more ear piercing than that! Obviously, if the front door was lacking love (and oiled hinges) than we can assume the rest of the house was in the same condition.

"First order of business," Jasper's dad said in a matter-of-factly tone, "...oil these hinges!" Jasper saluted her dad and bolted through the front door and down the hallway to find the back door. Her dad said there is supposed to be a shed outside with all matters of gadgets and gizmos that will help fix the house to include hammers, nails, extra floor boards and OIL!

After what seemed like miles of running down hallways and twists and turns, Jasper finally located the back door. As she charged her way through it she experienced the same ear piercing, gut wrenching, teeth chattering sound she experienced with the front door. *Mental note: Oil every door and window in the house*, she thought to herself.

“That should keep me busy for most of the day. Now, where is that...WHOA!” Jasper exclaimed. The door slowly closed behind her and as she surveyed the limitless back yard she noticed a few key features: A grand fountain almost exactly in the middle of the yard, a giant 6-foot bush-maze, a raging river complete with rope swing and alligators, and lastly, a perfect troll’s house with tools and even a helper!

Ok, what she actually saw was a broken-down fountain, a dead row of bushes, an overgrown natural pond which actually did have a rope swing (but no alligators) and the infamous shed her dad told her about. Luckily for Jasper, each one of these were grand in her eyes.

The double doors to the shed were a little quieter than the house’s. Her dad wasn’t kidding, though. Inside was a large area completely filled with tools of all sorts and sizes, enough wood to make another house, and shelves upon shelves of materials and supplies that any carpenter would love. After about 15 minutes of imagining what she would do with all the...well...stuff, Jasper found the oil can and started to head back towards the house.

Turning around, something caught her attention. She wasn’t quite sure what it was at first but then she realized it was a very small shadow. The fact that it was a shadow wasn’t what was weird; what was weird was that there wasn’t anything to MAKE the shadow. As she moved closer it suddenly disappeared. Even though it couldn’t have been any bigger than a housefly, Jasper was certain of what she saw and she vowed to come back later. *Investigations must be done*, she stated to herself.

Leaving the shed, she shut the double doors and latched it from the outside. It was at that moment she KNEW she wasn't alone because after she latched the doors from the outside.... she heard a smaller latch.... from the inside...

You must understand that this sort of thing would probably scare or at least concern any mere human being. To Jasper it was typical and not odd at all, though. Hearing things and even seeing things has been normal for her since she was a little girl.

If you were wondering what was in the journal that she landed on before she left for her new home, here it is: notes. 'Big deal...notes' you may be saying. Understand, these aren't just simple notes. This journal is filled with all of Jasper's encounters since she began hearing and seeing things...small things. Very similar to what she experienced in the shed.

Most of the pages are filled with dates and times that she heard the chatter, saw the footprints, found the miniature tools, and a list of the possibilities of what she may be seeing, hearing, and experiencing. 'The probabilities are endless,' she used to tell herself: aliens, radiological cockroaches, miniature humans, ghosts, and the list goes on.

So, when Jasper heard the latch she peeked through the small gap in the doors and whispered through the opening, "I know you're in there and you better be ready because I'll be back soon." As always, she hoped this didn't scare whatever these things were away, but Jasper loved a challenge and up until this point, she has never made "contact" per say, but a shadow is close enough for her.

As the skipping, excited 12-year-old neared the back door with oil can in hand she saw her mother coming around the corner of the house.

“Decided to join the living *outside* of the car, did you mom?” she teased her mother. Her mom noticeably rolled her eyes and waved her off like a buzzing bee. Jasper saw a small smile playing on her mother’s lips as she ran up and wrapped her arms around her.

“Ok, ok,” her mom said as she tickled Jasper loose of her kung-fu grip. “So, what do you make of this run down ‘mansion-of-a-home’, Jasp?” Her mom was looking around the back yard and patting Jasper on the head like a puppy while she spoke.

“As far as I know there are alligators in the pond, a troll in the shed, and more ‘sightings’ to boot,” she answered as she avoided her mother’s hand.

“Oh no...don’t tell me they are here too!” her mother responded.

Jasper nodded confidently and pointed at the shed, “this time I actually saw a shadow!”

Jasper’s parents have always been encouraging about her sightings even if they never truly believed her: “It’s just a phase” ... “she will grow out of it” ... “she eats too much sugar,” they would say. Well, it’s been 6 years now and Jasper continues to see, hear, and experience things so she figures it must be true and not just her imagination.

“Jasper? Jassssperrrrr?” her mom whispered as she gently tapped her on the shoulder. “You’re doing that thing again where you stare off into space....”

“Huh,” Jasper said with a jolt. “Oh, sorry mom, just thinking of the last time.” “Mom? Do you think I’m crazy?” Jasper asked with crossed eyes.

Once Jasper’s mom could stop giggling she responded with a simple, yet meaningful, “No way Jose.” After another quick glance at the back-yard-of-never-ending-possibilities, both Jasper and her mom began to make their way inside the old home.

Stopping to oil the hinges, Jasper watched her mom continue into the old home for the first time, “Should have entered through the front door, mom, it has...a.... better...view.” She trailed off a bit because she noticed something different in mid-sentence.

It’s sort of hard to explain really; you know how the road looks in the distance on a hot day? All wavy and steam-like? That is what she saw but it wasn’t particularly hot and she wasn’t looking at a road...she was looking right at the bottom of the door frame. Upon closer inspection, what Jasper saw, or at least what she *thought* she saw was a vision really...kind of what she would think a ‘mirage’ would look like if you were stranded in the desert.

She bent over, rubbed her eyes, shook her head, and took a closer look. To her amazement, what was seen was not the bottom of the door frame but an intricate, very detailed smaller wooden door. This wasn’t so crazy. What was crazy was that someone, or something, rather, was walking through the door.

As she got closer IT noticed HER too! And just like that, with a wave of what looked like a tiny arm and hand, the image disappeared.

“Oh, c’mon! I’m not gonna hurt you” Jasper exclaimed quite disappointedly. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t see the door anymore so she gave up. With a grunt and a growl Jasper straightened up and slowly closed the freshly-oiled back door.

“That’s comforting,” Jasper said as the back door closed.

“What is?” Everett asked. She looked from the back door to her dad as she opened and closed the door repeatedly with a victorious smirk on her face. “Well, aren’t you special? Now...get on with the rest of the doors, would ya?”

3

One Kitchen/Two Mysterious Doors

With all the doors and windows oiled, Jasper made her way into the giant kitchen. An old layout of the mansion-of-a-home was found in the study and her dad was looming over it like it were a treasure map or something.

Confused and bored by the blueprints, Jasper began to look around the room. She saw now what she had missed on her way through the kitchen when headed to the back yard earlier: a very old, very dusty, yet very detailed kitchen of massive size.

The ceiling had beams the size of telephone poles and each were as dark as night. The floor was a little dusty but underneath could be seen a beautiful collage of bricks, slate, and marble. The builder must have thought this was a good combination. Now it just looked like a hodge-podge of flooring with no real pattern but beautiful still. All the cabinets were original and made from old, solid oak.

"They polish up quite nicely," Everett stated as he followed Jasper's gaze. She nodded and continued her investigation. There was a

gas stove large enough to cook at least 20 pots of mac n' cheese all at once and it had a brick oven big enough to roast a woolly mammoth!

On one side of the kitchen was the washing station complete with a farm style sink, a smaller stove (presumably to heat up the dish water in the old days), and a dishwasher that must have been installed recently. Above the sink was a giant window that overlooked a beautiful butterfly garden and had a view of the mountains. On the opposite side of the kitchen was a solid wall with no windows but two separate doors.

"What's behind those doors, dad?" As Jasper pointed, Everett walked up to the one on the left. Surprisingly, it did not make the teeth chattering racket all the other doors made.

Everett slowly opened the door and cool air washed over him. Jasper's mouth almost fell completely off because of how wide she was gawking. "H-o-l-y M-o-l-y" ... "It's a refrigerator!" Everett opened it to its max and they both surveyed the inside of the closet-sized refrigerator. Seriously, this thing was massive! They both could walk in and still fit their station wagon inside. They weren't watching their backs, though.

Jasper's mom snuck up behind them and shut the door before they even noticed. As they attempted to escape they heard her chuckling from outside.

"MOM!!!" Jasper shouted.

"JUNE!!!" (June is Jasper's mom's name) Everett huffed. They both shouted at her in a playful way. June obviously was enjoying herself too much because they could barely hear themselves shout over her hysterical, gut busting laughter. Finally, she composed herself and opened the door.

“I wish..... I wish I could...I wish I could have seen your faces!” She said between gulps of breath.

“Not cool mom” Jasper sneered.

“Yah, not cool mom,” Everett copied Jasper. She nudged her dad in the ribs and glared at him out of the corner of her eye.

Eventually, everything was calm again in the kitchen and they stood smiling at one another.

“Well, that answers that question, but what’s behind the other door?” Jasper asked as she nodded towards the second, just-as-mysterious heavy oak door.

Everett strolled towards it, “Let’s check it out.” He stopped just short and grabbed June’s arm and dragged her towards it, “you first this time crazy lady.” The door opened and a damp, musky smell traveled up from a dark stairway leading down.

Everett tried to pull June towards the steps, “Ummm, no way mister... you’re crazy if you think I’m going first.”

As he rolled his eyes he glanced at Jasper, “How about you my lady?”

“Nope...you’re the man of this family...you first,” Jasper said standing at her mother’s side.

He flipped an old switch that was just inside the door and a light reluctantly flickered on. As he began to descend the steps Jasper was close behind him anxious for the adventure but still a little afraid of the smell and look of the place. Nearing the bottom of the stairs Jasper swore she

heard rustling and clanking...or was it jingling? Either way, it was odd, but not odd enough for her to turn back.

They dropped from the bottom step and onto what seemed like an old cobblestone basement. Big, round, smooth rocks lined the floor and around the walls were shelves upon shelves of bottles.

“A wine cellar!” her dad gasped.

Startled by his sudden outburst, Jasper exclaimed, “You don’t even drink, dad.”

“Of course, I don’t silly but do you have any idea how old some of these must be?!”

Jasper turned up her nose, “I can’t imagine how bad wine tastes, especially old, stale, expired wine.”

He strolled up to one of the shelves, “That’s not it at all, Jasper. The older the wine is, typically the more expensive it is. We could be sitting on a gold mine!” He gently slid one of the bottles off its snug holding place, wiped off the dust, and read the label:

Château Breauder Priux

Priux Manor, 1810

“Ummmm, ok. Well, I can’t read that,” he said. “I’m willing to bet if I can get these appraised they are worth thousands of dollars...each!” Jasper, tried to count how many bottles she saw just from where she was standing. She gave up around 67.

“Soooo, yah...does this mean I’m going to college now?” Jasper asked jokingly.

“You’ll be doing a lot more than that, sweetie,” Jasper’s dad replied with a ‘we’ve-struck-gold’ look on his face. His excitement didn’t seem to last, though. He gently slid the bottle back into place, “No, these shall remain in this home. They seem to be just as a part of it as the beams and cobwebs. I wouldn’t sell them for anything.”

4

Continued Exploration/The Second Floor

The two decided to make their way back upstairs. One last glance behind her on the way up confirmed to Jasper that they weren't alone in the cellar. As she slowly climbed the stairs she looked around the room and a shimmer, no, more like a reflection caught her eye.

"One sec, dad. I'll be right there, don't wait for me," she stated. As Jasper slowly approached the location of the reflection she saw it move from behind one shelf to another, then to another, and then to another before it stopped. Just as she bent down to get a closer look whatever it was seemed to drop in place. Jasper reached down and picked up what looked like a miniature sword.

She smiled as she investigated the miniature weapon. When done, she placed it back in the same spot she found it, making a mental note to record it in her journal later. "You don't need this against me, whomever you are. I won't hurt you," Jasper said just loud enough so that whoever it belonged to could hear her. She rose to her feet and strolled back towards the stairs but not before taking one last glance over her shoulder.

She saw the reflection again as the sword was, seemingly, retrieved by its owner. Jasper waved, hoping whoever or whatever it belonged to would see her.

Closing the cellar door behind her she took in a breath of fresh, not-so-musky air. As her eyes adjusted to the bright kitchen she saw her mom and dad sitting at the giant oak wood island in the middle of the room hanging over the “treasure map”.

She could barely hear them mumbling to themselves, “...yah, that could be our room.... well, it depends on....my office could be there.... what about this room here?... Jasper would love this room...” The two of them didn’t realize they were in for the scare of their lives. “BLAAHHHH!!!” Jasper screamed, poking them both in their backs.

Have you ever snuck up on a cat while it was sleeping and scared it? You would think they lost one of their 9 lives, right? Well...Jasper’s parents lost one of their 9 lives (if they had 9 lives), at least that’s what you would have thought. They both almost fell to the floor, grasping their chests!

“Jasper!!” They both said at the same time...

“You know you shouldn’t scare an old man...I could have had a heart attack!” Everett said while overdramatically falling to the floor. Jasper’s mom pretended to pass out and landed face first, HARD, on the counter. She couldn’t play it off very well though, because she actually hurt herself when she slammed her head onto the counter. Sloth simply sat and watched the whole thing play out unfazed by the ruckus.

Laughing hysterically, Jasper did feel a little bad for her mom's new red mark on her forehead. She regained control of herself, almost wetting her pants in laughter, and waved over her shoulder as she walked away, "see y'all...I'm gonna go do some more exploring. Come on, Sloth," and she trotted off before they could scold her. A swaying cat followed her meanderingly.

It was easy to admire the massive hallway and craftsmanship along the walls, ceiling, and floor. All the wood was dark and where it wasn't covered in dust it was shining and beautiful. Even the dusty parts were gorgeous. Surprisingly, very little parts of the floor creaked and groaned even though they were 200 years old. Jasper made her way towards the massive staircase she passed on her way to the backyard earlier in the day.

As she approached it she stood with her back to the front door facing the winding staircase. She imagined herself a princess in a gorgeous ball gown, flowing down the steps to meet her prince charming for a night of dancing and laughter. She imagined FLYING down the railing with a cape on her back and shooting out the front door. She imagined riding a giant pillow down the multitude of steps as her brain and insides jostled around on the way and being dumped into the main entryway.

As Jasper stared off into LaLa land a memory popped into her head. It was a memory that was not so far off from her last imagined adventure. She remembered that when she was a kid in a previous house she lived in she actually would ride a pillow down the stairs. She remembered grabbing a handful of pillowcase and grasping on for dear

life. She also remembers coming to a sudden halt at the bottom when she collided with the railing.

One part of the memory that wasn't clear, though, was a feeling that she wasn't alone. As Jasper slowly came to, she shook her head but tried not to let the memory go. She squeezed her eyes shut and tried hard to remember, pushing her fingers against her temples (as if that ever helps). Nonetheless, the memory slipped ever so far away until she barely remembered any of it.

"Ugh...shux," Jasper exclaimed with a disappointing huff. "No point in trying to remember now, it will come back when it wants to," she said to herself as she began to ascend the steps.

Climbing the mountain of a staircase, Jasper counted the steps in her head. There were 25 before the first landing and 25 afterward. *50 steps!!* She tried to do the math in her head to determine how high up she was but she never was very good at math.

Giving up on the numbers floating around her brain, she made a mental note of which steps creaked. She would remember to skip them during her nightly outings so as to not wake up her parents. Very few made any noise, surprisingly. Jasper felt it was some amazing design and construction to be so big and creak so little.

At the top of the stairs she peaked over the railing that looked out into the entryway and she noticed for the first time that the floor had a design on it. A large, ornate letter "P" was sculpted into the floor.

"That's odd, how come I didn't notice it before," speaking to herself. "I've got to be more aware of things or I'm going to miss

something important!" She scratched her head as she tried to remember where she'd seen this design before. "That sure is one big letter 'P'... I wonder what it stands for." Before turning to continue her adventures, she noticed something orange, furry, fat, and lazy laying on the bottom step. "C'mon, lazy cat!" Sloth looked up at her and let out a sluggish 'meow'.

The investigation of the second floor started with a long stroll down a long hallway. There were 5 rooms on the left and right side of it. She opened every door and every room was different. One was lavender with white trim. Another was white with lavender trim. One was completely pink with frilly curtains and a big vanity. Another was completely blue...like...SKY blue.

Every room had its own bathroom connected to it. 'How convenient' Jasper thought to herself. The end of the hallway had a common area complete with a bookcase full of old books that reached the ceiling and a rolling ladder, old leather sitting chairs, and a simple fire place. The carpet was red and gold that seemed brand new even so many years later. The other end of the hallway was the same exact way just different color rooms.

"Not necessarily my style if you ask me," she said to herself. After a quick 5-minute break, Jasper made up her mind that there was nothing else to explore on this floor and hoped that the third floor would be a little more exciting. She was in for a pleasant surprise...

5

Continued Exploration/The Third Floor

Jasper returned to the staircase to ascend to the third floor. There were only about 30 steps this time going up but still impressive. As she neared the top she could already tell something was different. She could tell this floor was going to be special...not like the boring second floor.

It felt like a lot of time and effort went into the design and building of this floor. The moment Jasper stepped into the hallway she could see that the design of the walls was more intricate, the lighting was brighter, and there were fewer rooms. Each door had hand carved designs on them as well.

The first door to her right showcased beautiful carvings of vines, leaves, and detailed flowers bordering a scene of majestic beauty. It was a meadow with a flowing creek and a giant weeping willow tree. She wondered how long it must have taken to carve out each little detail; even the butterflies and fairies fluttered around the tree. As she found herself drawn into the scene on the door she could have sworn she was looking into a world of its own...not just a carving.

Jasper was pulled back into reality when she heard her dad calling her, "Jasper? Jasper are you up there?"

As she slowly regained her awareness she shouted back to her dad, "Yah, dad, I'm on the third floor...you should see what's up here...it's amazing!"

"Ok, Hun, maybe later" he responded.

Enough daydreaming, she said to herself making a mental note to come back to this room later.

She reluctantly pulled her attention away from the door that entranced her. As she continued down the hallway she noticed that each door had a different design on it: one was a beautiful land with rolling hills; another had plains that stretched for miles with a solitary castle; and one of the most interesting ones was large and extremely detailed. On it were numerous dragons of all shapes and sizes. Upon a giant throne stood a dragon of massive size. Although it truly was beautiful, it still intimidated her. *I don't think I want to go into that room quite yet*, she said inside her head.

There was a total of 3 rooms on each side of the hallway on both ends. The setup was like the second floor but at the end of one hallway was a grand library. The other end had large oak double doors that Jasper had not ventured towards yet.

"How could anyone even read this many books" Jasper said aloud as she stood just inside the grand library. The whole room smelled like leather and old paper. As she walked deeper into the library she gazed

back and forth, up, and around at the height and depth of this giant room. A library this size must hold at LEAST 2 million books...if not 3 million.

It was two-stories with matching staircases on the right and left sides of the room and the carpet was deep red in color. The stairs and railings were made from the same wood as the rest of the home. Unlike much of the rest of the mansion, this room was kept in perfect condition. It was as if dust could not exist here. The railings seemed washed and polished; the carpet seemed brand new; and even though they looked very old, all the books she could see were in PERFECT condition.

As Jasper approached the set of stairs on the right she noticed there were sitting areas built into the shelves throughout the library. Each had a small table, a lamp, and a hammock. She imagined herself gently gliding back and forth in it reading an exciting book about fairies and magic.

Continuing up the staircase to the second floor she saw that it was almost identical to the first. An area against the back wall with a big fire place and leather chairs facing it was the only difference.

It was easy to imagine this being an area used for discussions or relaxing. There were candles placed on the walls and a great wooden mantle above the fire place that had old pictures and even more books on top of it.

She gently picked up one of the pictures and examined the photo. It was of a beautiful woman dressed in yellow. She could barely make out a name, hand-written on the picture, "Isabella". Placing it back where it was, she simply looked at the other two. One was of a young boy,

seemingly about her age and the other was of a middle-aged man. "I wonder what happened to them," she asked herself.

Already exhausted from her exploration, Jasper left the library and headed down the hall towards the large, oak, double doors. Stopping in front of them, she admired the intricate carving. This scene was not one of nature though, it was of a luxurious dance. Women were in ball gowns, men were in tuxedos, and they were all smiling and dancing and seemed to be having an amazing time. "Well, gee, I wonder what's behind these doors," Jasper said sarcastically.

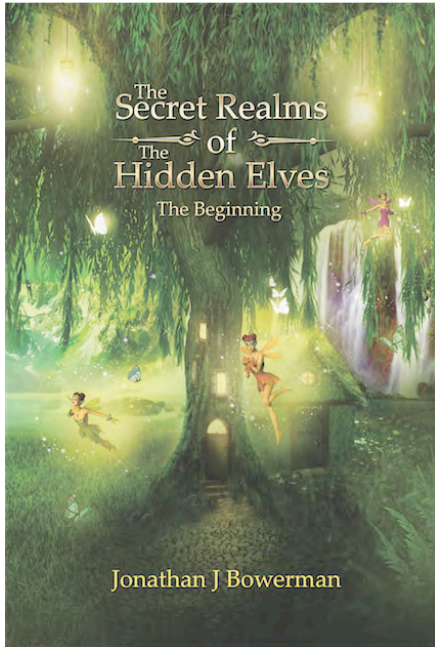
Swinging inward on noiseless hinges, the doors glided smoothly and flawlessly. She was right: it was a ball room. The floor was black and white tiled in the center and surrounded by the same dark red carpet that was in the library. On the carpet were tables with gold table cloths and ornate wood chairs. The room was dome-shaped and there were no walls; where walls should have been, there were floor to ceiling windows: beautiful, large windows. Even the ceiling was made of glass and Jasper could see the sun setting.

She could not have imagined a better view with the snow-capped mountains in the background and setting sun behind them. Her heart gave a little leap as she watched the sun slowly sink for about 30 minutes.

"I have to be careful...I could waste away in this room simply watching the sun set and rise," Jasper said as she backed out of the ballroom. The doors shut behind her just as smoothly as they opened and she made her way back towards the first door she saw on the third floor.

She stood staring at it...again...entranced by its beauty and lifelike carving of the magical meadow.

Pulling herself out of its powerful grasp was no easy task. She reached towards the handle of the door which was a large carved leaf. As it quietly swung inward Jasper got her first glance of the room behind the magical door and took a deep breath, then had her breath taken away...



Stepping into her new home, Jasper had no idea it would change her life forever. Adventures are always abundant but she would soon experience one like none before. High flying excitement, dangerous caves, magical weapons, and beautiful realms all await her the moment she touches the Great Willow tree.

The Secret Realms of the Hidden Elves: The Beginning

by Jonathan J Bowerman

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