

SO MANY DEATHS

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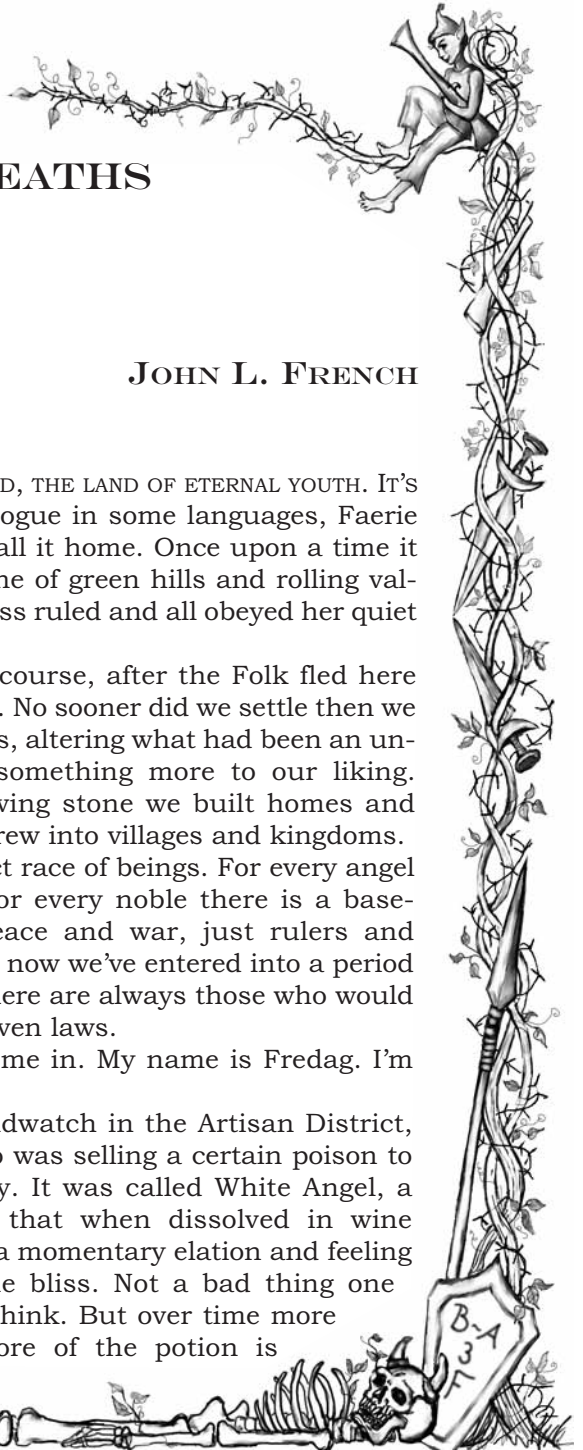
THIS IS MY WORLD, THE LAND OF ETERNAL YOUTH. It's called Tirnanogue in some languages, Faerie in others. I call it home. Once upon a time it was a gentle place, one of green hills and rolling valleys, where the Goddess ruled and all obeyed her quiet commands.

That changed of course, after the Folk fled here from the mortal world. No sooner did we settle than we began changing things, altering what had been an untouched world into something more to our liking. Felling trees and hewing stone we built homes and castles that quickly grew into villages and kingdoms.

There is no perfect race of beings. For every angel there is a daemon, for every noble there is a base-borne. We've had peace and war, just rulers and tyrants. And while for now we've entered into a period of peace and order, there are always those who would break our Goddess-given laws.

That's where I come in. My name is Fredag. I'm part of the Guard.

I was working Midwatch in the Artisan District, trying to find out who was selling a certain poison to the youths of the city. It was called White Angel, a powder that when dissolved in wine causes a momentary elation and feeling of divine bliss. Not a bad thing one would think. But over time more and more of the potion is



needed to achieve the same effect. Soon the body craves it to the point that one will do anything to acquire it. When its use was limited to the lower quarters the City Wardens didn't care. But now Folk were being beaten and robbed so that the weak could afford to purchase what they needed.

The past night, guards of the Last Watch had brought in two purveyors of the foul mix and thrown them into a garrison cell. So far, they had refused to tell from whom they had obtained the drug. No matter; it was my case. I'd question them my way.

A mailed glove and a rod tipped with cold iron would loosen their tongues. And if that failed they'd be offered a choice between a clean death or one by torture. One way or the other they'd talk.



There was a new drug on the streets of Baltimore. That was the word at any rate. Faerie Dust, Super Juice, Red Angel, Tinkerbelle—those were the names it went by. No one in the department had seen it or had anything solid as to where and by whom it was sold. It was still just a story and a rumor.

The usual dealers were no help.

"That rich-boy shit," said one.

"Ain't none of my peoples can pay two for a hit of that stuff," said another.

"Wish I had some," said a third. "Supposed be a bad-ass high."

The Feds didn't know or care about the drug and nobody was getting killed over it. At two hundred a hit it likely was some designer drug that wasn't illegal yet. So that was as far as it went. With all the real dope out on the street, nobody worried about something that may not even exist.



My trip to the cells was interrupted when I was called into the Watch Commander's chamber.

"The scum talk yet?" Captain Rollo was not one for small talk.

"Not yet, sir, but they will."

"That goes without saying, Fredag. How were they found?"

"You know that Guard Conrad had trained a barghest to scent the powder." The captain nodded. "He let it loose in an area where he knew it had been sold."

"And it led him to those two?"

"It led him to three. Before he could pull it off the barghest had done for the third."