

Ardu and the New Star

Once upon a time (as you well know, every story must start this way) three elf-children named Uljia, Ardu, and Gacerie lived with their parents, Enjifer and Obert, in the Middle Realm kingdom of Hoio. Enjifer and Obert were forest-keepers for all the land between the inland sea of Aerye to the north and the Great River to the south, reaching east to Pensewood and west to the land of Endian.

You may already know, but I will tell you anyway, that Uljia was the oldest of these children, being 27 years (a mere child as the Elves reckon years) and that Ardu and Gacerie were somewhat younger, and were also twin-born, that rarest of birthings among the elves. In fact, all three might be mistaken at first glance for human children, but you would have to be very sharp-eyed because elves do not enjoy attention and keep themselves out of view most of the time. But if you were lucky enough to get a good look at them you would first notice their strange apparel, for these elf-children wore beautiful hand-crafted garments of some ancient style. Next you might realize that their behavior was ever so much more responsible and sensible than human children, and that they seemed so very *alive* and aware of their world. And then you would notice their slightly pointed ears, very big eyes, long fingers and toes, their wild and happy faces, and you would say to yourself, ‘These are unusual children’ – and you would be quite correct, for of course, they were not really children at all in the usual sense, but elf-maids and lads.

Among the elves it is taken for granted that each of them comes into this life with talents and gifts from the One-Who-Is, to be used in His service and for His purposes. Uljia, it may be remembered, had keen eyesight (made even better by a pair of far-eyes given to her by Galandrathral), a gift for singing and music, and wisdom and understanding. Gacerie had the gift of gladness and beauty, of quick-footedness, and the gift of voices. And Ardu – his gifts were deep and rich, being able to hear the voices of the very trees, the rocks of the earth, and the music of the stars and the sun and the moons. So it should not be surprising that Ardu spent many evenings lying on the short grassy sward behind the home he shared with his parents and elf-sisters watching the stars and their courses until sleep overcame him, whereupon Obert would carry his little elf-son into his soft bed for the night’s rest. Over the years, Ardu learned the seasons of all the brightest stars, the paths of the planets, and the travels of the wanderers (or comets as the humans call them). He would search the great library at Sochi for books on the heavens and learned the patterns that fill the night sky. Ardu knew that the stars are just cousins of our own sun that warms the earth each day, so far away they look like the fire-flies that grace a summer evening, but in reality huge suns to their own families of planets. He knew that the planets are other worlds, all very unlike ours, that follow their own paths around the sun. And while he learned, he thought about the One-Who-Is, and the wonder of all He has made.

One night as Ardu lay in his special watching place, he was amazed to see a bright new star suddenly appear right above him. It was so bright that Ardu thought it must be either particularly big or particularly close. Sometimes there were very bright stars that seemed to shoot like a burning arrow across the sky, but this new star just stayed in one place and shone more brightly than anything in the skies.

Now it just so happened that the night Ardu saw the new star, Grandpa and Grandma Elf were visiting Hoio and their grand-elves. Ardu was particularly glad when Grandpa Elf came to visit because Grandpa Elf loved the skies too and had spent much longer watching them and thinking about them than anyone Ardu knew. When Ardu saw the new star he ran to tell Grandpa Elf.

“Grandpa!” he exclaimed. “There is a new star in the sky! I was watching tonight and it just appeared! Do you think The One has decided to create some new stars?”

Grandpa Elf was very excited. “Let’s go look at it, Ardu!” he said.

Ardu and Grandpa Elf ran outside to look at the new star. There it was, blazing away in the sky-picture Grandpa called *The Leopard*. It seemed to get even brighter as they watched.

“Ardu”, Grandpa Elf said, “You must remember this night the rest of your life. You are seeing something few elves, and far fewer men, have ever seen. We call this the *Celbrillestel*, a Glory-Star. This is the first I have ever seen. There are elves older than I who saw one in their youth, but only Galandrathral among living elves has seen two others”.

Ardu looked at the star for a long time as it burned in the heavens.

“I am glad this star is so bright, Grandpa”, he said. “When I am an old elf I will be able to show it to my grand-elves, and tell them about the night when I first saw this star.”

Grandpa elf didn’t answer for a minute. “Ardu, I wish that were possible, but all the stories say that *Celbrillestel* shine for only a few months. You see, while it looks like we are seeing a new star, what we are really seeing is a star that is dying. Only the One-Who-Is knows when this star was born, but it was shining long, long before He put elves in the world. Before tonight, it was too far away for us to see its light. Perhaps Uljia with her far-sight could, but most of us could not. We get to see its full glory just in these last days before its death.”

This made Ardu very sad. “Grandpa,” he said, “why does the star have to die? Why can’t it stay shining forever?”

Grandpa Elf smiled. “Only The One is forever”, he said gently. “Everything else dies sooner or later – even stars. But their glory is that through their death they make life possible for other stars, other worlds, and most importantly, even you Ardu. You are made of stardust from stars that lived and died long, long ago. In a very real way, you are their gift, and their glory.”

Ardu looked up at Grandpa Elf to see if he was fooling. “How can I be made out of stardust, Grandpa,” he said. “I’m not all hot and shiny!”

“No,” Grandpa said, “you aren’t. But the dust from which we are formed was first forged in the hearts of stars, then made into this earth where we live, and then into us. Only The One-Who-Is could have done this, which is just another reason for wonder at His greatness.”

Ardu watched the new star for a long time with Grandpa. “You know,” he said slowly, “the stars are a little like trees. I don’t like to see the old trees die, but when they do, they make room for new trees. Their leaves and wood go back into the earth and make it more fertile so that the new trees will be healthy. So, maybe it is not so sad after all.”

Grandpa Elf was very happy that Ardu had seen this great truth. “You are right, Ardu. The One-Who-Is did not intend that death should be a bad thing. Only the bad Elves and men have made it that, by living their lives outside His plan. Whether we are stars, trees, elves, or people, if we live as He intends, our lives will end in Glory, bringing life to others.”

Ardu watched the new star for a long time with Grandpa, until he finally fell asleep and, like so many other nights, was carried to his bed by his daddy.