

# 1: The Finding

~ *The oak tree is the Lord of the Wood* ~

A hazy mist drifted lazily across the wide Suffolk skyline and encircled the village of Woolpit with a ghostly embrace. It wrapped itself tightly around the small settlement and then drifted on upwards to the ancient woodlands, which stood behind the Wolf Pits, silent and secret.

From the last cottage at the south end of the village two figures silently appeared and made their way noiselessly up towards the woods. Morning dew darkened the toes of their leather boots as they strode through the long grasses of the meadow. At the edge of the trees they unslung hunting bows from their shoulders, peered into the undergrowth and disappeared into the shadows.



"Can you see anything yet?" A single eye searched out from the scarred face and stared carefully into the open glade.

"Nothing, this mist is too thick," a deep, throaty voice replied through the clamouring silence of the shady grove.

"Wait, what's that?" The two hunters both

stared at the foot of a vast oak tree.

“There’s something moving, make ready with your bow, Cob Fletcher.”

At the gnarled roots of the huge, old oak were two small piles of leaves and from underneath one of them, there was movement. Slowly, very slowly, a forest creature was awakening from its sleep and as it moved, the leaves fell to the floor of the wood. Fletcher gently raised his hand to take an arrow from the quiver on his back. He licked its goose feathers, positioned the shaft, drew back the drawstring and took aim.

Then, from underneath the leaves, the creature began to appear, but it was not the foreleg of a deer, or even the white tail of a rabbit that emerged, instead it seemed to be part of the tree itself that moved. “Do you see it?” Fletcher whispered and the other hunter nodded, as his jaw dropped in wonder. It was impossible, but the branch seemed to be alive!

The hunters stared in silence as the green limb pushed through the pile of leaves and then their eyes widened as the branch slowly became an arm. Green fingers sprouted from its tips, they stretched out slowly and then curled back, a shoulder appeared and a back arched upward and then, a green face peered out.

Terrified, Cob Fletcher loosened his fingers

and let fly his arrow and the shaft sped straight towards the beast, but a great branch of the oak tree that towered above them all, swung down suddenly like the brawny arm of a mighty warrior, and knocked the speeding arrow harmlessly to the ground.

The two huntsmen stood rooted to the floor, watching in amazement, as before their eyes a green girl appeared before them. Long, pale hair, the colour of the moon, shook down upon her shoulders and as she moved her emerald dress shimmered in the dappled sunlight.

Turning around, without noticing the men concealed in the trees, the green girl gently brushed the leaves off the remaining pile. Underneath, was a boy, a little younger than her but just as green, with the same pale, ashen hair. Tenderly, she bent down to wake him, wiped a lingering leaf from his face and helped him to his feet.

In the undergrowth, the huntsmen stared at each other with searching eyes. What were they to do now? But they had no time to think; the children already knew someone was watching them. Realising they might run away, Fletcher put aside his fear and moved out from his hiding place but his hunting companion, Tam One-Eye, turned away in terror, stumbled through the bushes and hurtled back to the safety of the village!



"Do not be afraid," the words tumbled awkwardly from Fletcher's mouth as the green children looked fearfully upon him, as he emerged from the trees. It was clear that they did not understand him, for in their eyes they saw only a large man with a hunting bow in his hands. They drew close together, the girl wrapping her arms about the boy like a human shield, and they backed slowly away from him.

"I mean you no harm," he assured them. He spoke quietly now, drawing the children in to him. "Who are you?" he whispered gently.

Moving forward sheepishly, the girl opened her mouth to answer him. As she did so, the huntsman stood in disbelief, as he listened intently to a voice, which was unlike anything he had ever heard before. No real words came from the girl's lips, instead, her voice sang out with wild birdsong. It was a sweet, beautiful, joyous sound but Fletcher didn't understand any of it.

So he tried to make her comprehend again, this time he used his hands to help him. "My name is Cob Fletcher," he pointed to himself in a clumsy manner trying to emphasise what he was saying and then something flickered across the girl's face, some sign of comprehension, a moment of understanding perhaps and she opened her mouth again.

This time the birdsong had fluttered away

and in its place a delicate, human voice timidly whispered the words "Clyssa," and pointing at the boy, "Hyllasses". To Cob's ears it was a strange tongue, but he assumed that the girl was giving him their names in return.

All of a sudden, without any warning, the green boy swooned and fell to the floor of the glade in a crumpled heap. The girl turned to see her brother collapse and gave out an instinctive cry of despair as Fletcher ran to their aid. As he bent down to help, the girl gripped his wrist and looked him in the eye searchingly. Cob was transfixed; her gaze drew him in, peered into his soul with its intensity. Then, she looked back to the boy and the spell was broken. She released her grip and let Cob pick him up in his arms.

As he rose to leave the woods, however, the green girl seemed to be wary of abandoning the safety of the trees and they in turn were reluctant to let the children leave their care. All around him the oaks and sycamores thrust out their huge, twisting branches to prevent the hunter from passing through.

The girl's anguished look stopped Cob in his tracks but then she gave way to her tiredness and leant despairingly against his firm shoulder. With a face of reassurance he held her close to him and at that sign the trees seemed to relinquish their hold upon the children. Cob

pushed his way through the retreating branches,  
led the green children out from the mists of the  
woods, past the dark hollows of the Wolf Pits and  
down into the village.

