

## Spirits

*The animals are all in peril, believing that they will be killed after witnessing an attack by Magatron and seeing their hedgehog saviour taken away by the Kraken. The animals are in despair and Rosie and her parents feel ostracised because of their son's differences. It was taken out to focus more on the narrative of Mag reclaiming his crown as top magpie.*

The animals congregated in the depths of the Eastern Forest, at Baldwin's hideout. The crowd remained restless, spooked by the evening's events; every twig snap or leaf rustle caused alarm. Hares and rodents shuffled close to one another, far away from the hedgehogs.

Baldwin had moved Hercules to safety in one of his most secretive underground dens, where he was being nurtured by Mira, Arim and Joy. Deacon arrived, accompanied by Eliza and some songbirds so that the meeting could get underway.

"My Friends, I fear that we are now fighting a new enemy," Baldwin began.

"I'm not fighting anymore," whimpered one of the young rabbits. "Enough is enough. We only just managed to defeat them last time. Look at us!" His eyes, like so many others amongst the crowd, were bloodshot. "We need to leave Greenacres before Big Mag kills us all."

"Oh, I don't think he wants to kill us," assured Baldwin, trying to prevent mass panic. "He would rather lead us all in a life of misery than destroy the very fabric of his ideal society - he wants us to work for him. If we run, he will follow and bring destruction to other communities. We must try new methods and seek new allies if we are to defeat our feared enemy."

The animals all shook their heads. "By looking for new allies, I suppose you're suggesting that we all take a trip down to the man-base to become transformed into demons!" snapped a normally quiet and timid shrew.

"Whatever are you saying?"

"You saw it! We all did - what they've done to that young hedgehog. They mutilated him, sucked out his guts and turned him into something wicked, as bad as Mag."

Eliza interjected. "No one ever said he was wicked. Without him we would all still be prisoners in that barn. The young hog was oblivious to his physical differences, sadly we were not. Baldwin is right, he is still out there - as is Mag - and unless we can find another way to defend ourselves then we may have no choice but to find the young hedgehog and ask for help."

A blanket of silence met her comments. "You can't suggest that we put our faith in a freak!" the shrew replied.

Deacon flew into the centre of the clearing, next to Baldwin. "We're not asking you to put your faith in anyone but yourselves. If we've any spirit left, then we must work together whilst we are still free. Without faith, there is no resistance - we must make plans to prepare ourselves for a long battle."

"This is madness," scoffed one of the Kestrels, flustered by Mag's display of power. "We must pray that whatever captured the hedgehog will capture Big Mag and send it back to the spirit world where he belongs."

Whilst the creatures bickered, Mr and Mrs Hog said nothing. Rosie listened eagerly to the council, seeking answers from their dialogue about where her brother might be, but the pain was too much for her parents. As plans were formulated, the couple silently slipped away to grieve privately back at their nest.