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A Mickey's Nightmare

Ursalina Aguiler
Nova Southeastern University

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The harvest festival had begun. The weeklong celebration culminated in a night of feasting around the towering bonfire, fueled by dancing and laughter. As the fiddles sang, Heather twirled around the flames with the other villagers. She wanted tonight to last forever. The harvest festival was the one time each year that the villagers all gathered together—their large plots of farmland forced the villagers to live relatively far from each other. This was the last night of the single week in the year that Heather felt she was part of a family. Heather had lost her parents in a house fire three years earlier. Since she was an only child, the villagers had come together to help her rebuild her log cabin and begin her first crop, but after that, she had been on her own.

Tonight Heather wasn’t on her own, and she relished the company. She danced and twirled with all her might and sang along with the violins at the top of her lungs. She knew that an empty cabin awaited her that night, on a plot of land that seemed so big that it would swallow her. But now it was time to make merry and enjoy the festival. Drops of sweat fell into her eyes as she wiped her forehead. She detached herself from the dancers, making her way over to the refreshment table to retrieve another mug of hard cider to cool off.

She put the cold drink to her lips and looked around the clearing. She observed the silhouette of a young man leaning against a nearby tree. As she looked more closely, she noticed his face was obscured by the shadows. She stared at him, trying to discern his features. He beckoned to her. She walked over to him and brought an extra mug of cider. Before she could engage him with a polite greeting, he simply asked, “Can I have the next dance?” She was taken aback by the informality, but her curiosity overcame her caution, and she readily agreed.

She led him to the bonfire and her heart beat loudly as he placed his hands on her waist. Her breathing quickened as they danced around the fire, their bodies moving closer together in sync with the howling fiddles. She still was unable to study his face; the shadows from the bonfire only added to her difficulty. The violin players began to play faster and faster. The faster they played, the closer the two dancers were drawn together. The music became so fast, and the dancing so intense that, to Heather, everything became a blur of heat and flame.

She awoke the next morning in her empty cabin—her last memories were of the frenzied dance around the fire. She was not aware of how she got to her cabin. She stared out the window at the empty cornfield, cold fingers of loneliness piercing the recesses of her heart.