

The Birch

There is a story,
And it is found in many parts of the world,
That there was a wise man to whom God spoke,
But to none could he give his wisdom,
For they were unworthy.
So he whispered it into the ground,
Where a spring appeared and the weeds grew around it.
Years went by, until a young man passed that way,
A young man of purified heart. He made a flute,
And as he played, the music conveyed the divine secret,
And God's blessings were restored to the world.

Aeons ago when the world was young,
The snow maidens frolicked.
They knew no fears and suffered no enemies,
But dwelt in endless youth
Until they returned to the fairy-world,
To renew their enemy and reappear,
Or else return to earth no more.

Then the glaciers retarded,
The world grew warmer,
And man appeared, as the Sumon-Suomi,
The people—we rudely call them Finns.
They were led by demigods and heroes.
First the snow-maidens welcomed them,
But when lust triumphed over love,
The snow-maidens prayed to their Creator,
Who in His Beneficence transformed them into trees,
Trees endowed with a spirit,
The dwellings of the snow-maidens still.
Now, fearing the lusts of man,
They hide their shame at his coming in the warmer days,
But when the snow returns,
They came out unclad to play and dance as of yore.

Even in ancient times they manifested to the heroes,

Taught them all manners of arts:
How to use the bark and trunk and branches,
The values of every part of the tree and of the forest,
But when the heroes were persecuted
And the people became ungrateful, they manifested less and less.
Yet now and again they come,
To offer themselves to a mortal,
Even bring a wonder child to the world.
So it has been that a babe was born,

Offered as a changeling to a mother,
Who reared him none the wiser.
The child grew and was blessed with the gift of music
And the fame of Jan Sibelius has travelled around the world.
Aware or not, he has revealed the secrets of the birches,
Aware or not, he has told of the snow-maidens and the ancient heroes,
Aware or not, when you listen to his symphonies you will see the
trees and feel their indwelling spirits;
Or, walk in the silent forest and you will hear his music.
The secret of the ancients has remanifested, and I will say no more.