

## Hetty

You've been wandering the streets of this city since long before they were paved. It gets kinda fuzzy in your memory back then. You were already old by the time the cars came and the horses went. Some folks say that cities smell better now. You're not sure about that. It just smells different. Different stinks for different times. You've seen a lot, heard a lot, done a lot. It all kinda blends together though after awhile. Hard to tell things apart when you've seen the same sort of things and the same sort of people so many times. You don't know why you just keep getting older and never die. You don't have a clue why folks repeat themselves so much. Doesn't much matter. You puzzled over it for a few decades already and gave it up for a lost cause. Food's good. Very good. Always important, no matter what era you're in. Food is one thing that's gotten better over the years. Well, some of it anyway. Some of the things they call food nowadays wouldn't have been eaten by rats back when you were young. You're pretty sure they wouldn't anyway. Fast food definitely falls under that category. All the rats you talk to nowadays are different though. Wish you could talk to one of the old ones from back when to find out for sure. Doesn't much matter, but it would be good to have that settled. The young rats are all squeaky and chirpy and... civilized. What's it mean if even a rat is civilized? Means the days you grew up in are long gone. They still taste okay though if you season 'em right. More meat on them than in the old days. Gotta watch what they've been eating though, some of that isn't food. Hard to find good seasoning too these days. Everything comes in boxes and packages and containers. Hard to find much growing on its own anymore. That's the good stuff though that has all the power and makes food taste good. Or makes someone love you for awhile. It's been a few decades at least since you played that game though. Nowadays you're just feeling too old for a roll in the hay. Not that there's any hay around or any horses. You do miss the horses sometimes. Folks around here don't know anything about horses or plants or food for that matter. They sure don't know anything about the city. They're all so young though that what does it matter? Not much. Not much. Not much at all. They come and go and come and go and you're always here, always on the streets, always doing your thing while the world repeats its big cycles over and over again all around you.

You're here at Mel's fire tonight because it's cold out and you found some vegetables to throw into the pot. Food is important and warmth is important. Living is important. Stories are important. Telling these young people about what's important is important.

## Who You Know

Misty: Oh, she's such a pretty young thing. You remember being pretty once. You vaguely remember being young once.

Rich: Kinda boring guy. Not much really to say to boring people. There is a lot of them. They talk. They eat. They live. They die. You see them again when they come around again.

Chris: The little baby thinks he knows everything. That's a sure sign of knowing nothing. You wish sometimes you knew as little as Chris did. That would be fun again. Maybe not though. You think you may have tried that a few times before. Maybe it's why you don't remember so much and it all starts blurring together. Maybe that's just indigestion.

Rose: Or was the name Sarah? A dime a dozen. Was the name Sarah this time or was it Rose... maybe it was Abigail. Whatever. You had a dream about her last night. You don't really remember it.

Alfred: He's kind of neat. Hard to tell what an alien is considering the variety of folks you've met. So many folks. You've probably met some aliens. You don't remember any space ship though. That

sounds memorable enough that even you'd remember it.

Manny: As long as there have been people, there has been fighting.

Alex: There are things to be said for when children were working all the time. They weren't underfoot and yapping all day. To a mine with this child!

Flash: Your child Leslie. Known as Flash nowadays.

Jack: Jack's stuff is pretty lame. These newfangled alchemists don't know a thing. You could whip something up that would make Jack's head really spin.

Toni: Some singer. Or was it harpsichord? Hard to tell. Hard to remember.

Mel: You're pretty sure that you and Mel go back a long ways. That's saying something.