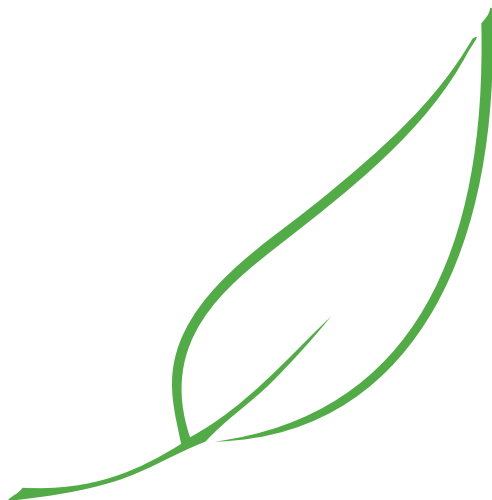


Moonstones And Magic

By TA Powell



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MOONSTONES AND MAGIC

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SYNOPSIS: Ginny's grandmother, Virginia, believed in fairies. She made a promise to Samhain, the king of the Sidhe (an ancient and noble race of fairies sworn to protect Ireland) that she would keep her meadow safe from the giant imprisoned there hundreds of years before. But Virginia's time on Earth came and went, and after her passing, Ginny has come back to her childhood home to keep that promise for her grandmother. The task is complicated, however, by Ginny's childhood friend, and enemy, Hudson Smalls. Thanks to a contract drunkenly written on a cocktail napkin by Ginny's grandfather, Gideon, just days before his own death in World War II, Hudson's family is claiming ownership of several acres of Ginny's land. Hudson's vineyard is failing, and he wants to make use of the land by turning it into a tourist spot. When Ginny finds out that the napkin contract is, in fact, binding, she is on the verge of giving up. But the Sidhe aren't giving up on her, and they have a few tricks up their sleeve that Ginny cannot possibly imagine!

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(7 male, 12 female, gender flexible)***FAIRIES:**

SAMHAIN (m).....Celtic king (47 lines)
 ERIU (f).....Celtic queen (42 lines)
 CHILDREN: Various Celtic children
 CORB (m).....(12 lines)
 DANU (f).....(12 lines)
 MORRIGAN (f)(81 lines)
 AIBELL (f).....(11 lines)
 BELENUS (m)(13 lines)
 MOG RUTH (m).....Celtic one-eyed warrior (26 lines)

VIRGINIA MCPHERSON (f)..... A grandmother (19 lines)
 GINGER MCPHERSON (f)..... A mother (101 lines)
 GINNY (f)..... Young GINGER (18 lines)
 MARIBRIGETT MCPHERSON (f).....GINGER's daughter (52 lines)
 PHEGAN MCPHERSON (m)..... GINGER's son (23 lines)

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HUDSON SMALLS (m) Neighbor (71 lines)
SMALLS (m) Young HUDSON (5 lines)
BENTLEY TAYLOR (m) Lawyer (12 lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Samhain's tale of woe.
SCENE 2: Ginny hears the telling.
SCENE 3: The linen napkin.
SCENE 4: Morrigan's birthday wish.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Here's the deal.
SCENE 2: Moonstones.
SCENE 3: Gold key.
SCENE 4: Morrigan's bundle.
SCENE 5: Moonstones and magic
SCENE 6: No more regrets.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1**AT RISE:**

Lights up on the base of the mulberry tree. The FAIRIES are there sharing a picnic. SAMHAIN, the king, is smoking his pipe as the queen, ERIU, sets out the meal on a blanket.

SAMHAIN: For the love of Saint Bridgett . . . me pipe's gone out again.

DANU: Shall I go find a firefly for you, Father?

CORB: No, I'll do it!

ERIU: Children . . . sit! Here, let me have it. *(Pounds out the pipe and then puts it in her apron. SAMHAIN gasps at her.)* You'll not be needing it for a wee bit, while you eat! Here, Aibell, hand your father a sandwich.

SAMHAIN: I'd rather be drinking it!

ERIU: Father! Children, come sit a spell and yer father - who seems not to be hungry enough to eat - will tell you a tale.

CORB: May I have his sandwich, then?

SAMHAIN: It's not that I'm not enticed by your charming spread, my darlin'. It's just that I'm a bit more thirsty than hungry right now. *(Reaches for his flask of Irish whiskey.)* Ahh! Oh, let's see now. What would you be having me tell? A tale of horror, Corb? A tale of woe, Morrigan? A tale about the soul-catching merrow, Coomara, my dear little Aibell?

ERIU: Father! They're eating their lunch!

SAMHAIN: Is it fish?

DANU: The merrow, Father?

ERIU: The sandwich, Danu! No, your highness. It's not fish!

SAMHAIN: Then why such a squeal? It's not as though you'd be chewing on the very fins of the Coomara himself!

AIBELL: Ohhh. Ish.

CORB: Ohhh, Father!

SAMHAIN: Listen to ye now . . . squallin' like a banshee! Agh! You've your mother's sensitivities about ya, Aibell! Frightened of yer own shadow, I'm bettin'!

DANU: We're not afraid! Tell us a story, Father! Tell us the one about the humans and how we got here to the mulberry tree.

MORRIGAN: I'm not afraid of anything, Father, for I am the fairy goddess of battle!

BELENUS: I have a great story! It's about eight fairies, five humans and one bathroom! Once upon a time . . .

MORRIGAN: Belenus! We want a real story, not a fairy tale! Humans and fairies together . . . Oh, for gosh sake's, Mother! How outrageous!

ERIU: Really, Morrigan! Being the goddess of battle doesn't mean you need to start one every time you speak!

CORB: Good one. Now, back to the humans!

SAMHAIN: The humans? I thought you didn't want to hear a tale of horror and woe.

ERIU: Mostly just woe . . .

BELENUS: Is this a girl fairy story? They're always boring!

AIBELL: Belenus!

SAMHAIN: Well, if you've a mind to hear it . . .

MORRIGAN: Yes. Start with the raven! For the raven travels far, like I, the Hooded . . .

CORB: You don't travel any further than the thicket, Morrigan. Quit with the mysterious Hooded Crow thing!

MORRIGAN: But it's true, is it not, Mother? Am I not sometimes known as the Hooded Crow?

DANU: On Halloween maybe, Morrigan! Or . . . when you're sneaking out of the house to meet Mog Ruith!

MORRIGAN: Danu! You take that back this instant! (*Stands up and looks defiantly at DANU.*)

ERIU: What's this about Mog Ruith?

MORRIGAN: Nothing! Shhh. (*Sits.*)

CORB: Aibell and I saw her out riding the other night in his bronze charrrr - i - ot.

AIBELL: He gives me the creeps, Morrigan. He's only got one eye!

ERIU: Couldn't you find someone a little more sophisticated to ride about with?

SAMHAIN: Or at the very least, somebody with two eyes? (*Looks at his wife, who is frowning with her hands on her hips.*) What? Was the sophistication thing the real issue here, Mother? I think not! His people are from the other side of the thicket. Did you know . . .

ERIU: Father! Tell your tale. Hush now, children, especially you Morrigan. I'll talk to you about Mr. Ruith later!

DANU looks at MORRIGAN and they stick out their tongues at one another.

BELENUS: Morrigan, you always want to be more important than anyone else. Yes, Father! Start at the beginning. How our world came to be here. Danu, aren't you in charge of the ground we sit upon?

DANU: Well, being the fairy devoted to the land, Mother comes before me. But I am in charge of the bottomland when Mother's too tired! Isn't that where you met the first Ginny?

ERIU: Yes. Remarkable human, Ginny of Moonstone Cottage. We owe a great debt to her and her daughter for preserving the meadow and the thicket. And . . . your father's lucky gold charm!

CORB: Start at the very beginning, with the first trip from the Isle. The young Hudson, the moonstone tears, the fair Ginny, and the gift of the vines.

MORRIGAN: I just want to hear about the raven. You can skip the rest.

SAMHAIN: Now, go on with ya. If you think only of yourself, you'll miss the moral and you'll be telling the ending at the beginning. Let the king begin at the beginning of the beginning!

MORRIGAN: Yes, Father.

SAMHAIN: Well now, Mother. Picnic or no, lunch or not, I'd do best to start the thing off right!

ERIU: And?

SAMHAIN: I'll be needin' me pipe back, your queenship! No decent story ever began without a once upon a time . . . and a pipe! I'll be having it back now. *(ERIU pulls it out of her pocket and hands it to the king.)*

ERIU: Alright. But mind you, I've your birthday feast to prepare for. It's the first of November and everyone will be there to celebrate!

SAMHAIN: Well then, let's be on about the telling! Cuddle close to your mother, you younger ones, for the story begins in the cold dark depths of the past. Farther back in time than the gleam in your mother's eye. Back before the great vines, before even the first thickets of blackberries first ripened to blanket the wooded floor, to the Battle of the Birds.

MORRIGAN: I knew it started with a crow!

ERIU: Morrigan, not every bird is a crow.

SAMHAIN: It was a raven, as you'll see. Be mindful of your mother's words. For if you would not pay heed, the difference could cost you your inheritance.

AIBELL: Oh, Father! You're frightening us. Morrigan, aren't you frightened?

MORRIGAN: I, who travel as the Hooded Crow? Frightened of a raven? Hah!

CORB: Yes, Aibell! Sometimes you ask the dumbest questions!

AIBELL: I can't help it, Mother. I'm still frightened.

SAMHAIN: Aye, and frightened ya should be! But not of the raven, Aibell. Be frightened of the prophecy he brought with him to these woods. One wrong glance backwards . . . and . . .

ERIU: You old fool. It was just such a glance backwards that saved this very family. Corb, stop fidgeting! Samhain, if you're going to tell the tale, then be telling it correctly, lest these children not take heed of the moral of the thing.

SAMHAIN: Very well, then. Get comfortable! (*Sighs heavily.*) Your mother and I come from a Celtic tale that began in the eighth century! It's telling began on the first of November.

ERIU: Like today! And it continued clear till the first day of May, right?

AIBELL: Yes, right! Right through the end of blackberry winter?

DANU: Straight through to that very day. Isn't that where our names come from?

ERIU: Aye. Your Celtic name, your father's, and Belenus'!

BELENUS: That was a long time ago! You and Mother are that old?

SAMHAIN: Yes. But look at your Mother's lovely face. Why, she doesn't look a day over 697! She's the very goddess of Ireland's namesake and the keeper of the land!

ERIU: Why, thank you, your highness!

SAMHAIN: Your highness! Well, in that case . . . you don't look a day over 629!

ERIU: Oh, Father. You're making me blush. Get on with your story. Such a devil of a man! *(She bends over to give him a kiss on the cheek.)* Still makes me blush.

SAMHAIN: Yes, well . . . Let's go back, then, to when Moonstone Glen was first formed from the mouth of Forgall, the bard who told the story of the Battle of the Birds to Mongan, son of Fiachna, King of East Ulster. The king's son had saved the black raven from certain death. In return, the raven gave a final token of his gratitude in the form of an enchanted bundle . . . with instructions that it not be opened until he had arrived at the place of his heart's desire.

Alas, curiosity got the better of the king's son and shortly after he began his journey home, he opened it. It grew into a beautiful stone castle with a garden and an orchard of magnificence, and the king's son became saddened that he had not waited to reach the place of his heart's desire.

DANU: *(Taking over the story as her father taps his pipe again and searches for a firefly with which to light it.)* Soon, a giant appeared and asked of the king's son's troubles. After the explanation, the giant proposed a bargain. He would return the bundle to its former state if the king's son would grant him his firstborn. After he agreed, the giant stole away into the forest and there raised the king's firstborn son as promised . . . That's my favorite part!

MORRIGAN: Well, here's mine! Years later, the firstborn son escaped with the giant's only daughter. She was beautiful and enchanted . . . just like me!

BELENUS: And the giant was furious . . . just like me!

SAMHAIN: *(Restoring control and giving BELENUS a stern look.)* Or just like me . . . Now, where was I?

CORB: You were about to say . . . Just beyond the giant's home, his daughter charmed a filly in a pasture and . . .

SAMHAIN: Ah, yes . . . and the two hopped on its back to escape further into the wood. With the giant in hot pursuit, the daughter told the prince to reach into the filly's ear and pull forth what he found.

DANU: The first thing he found was the twig of the sloe tree. She told him to throw it back over his shoulder and in an instant a thicket grew that was twenty miles in breadth!

BELENUS: The giant cut fiercely through the thicket.

DANU: Next, the young prince pulled forth a splinter of a stone and in an instant, a mountain range twenty miles in breadth sprang up to shield them.

BELENUS: The giant, further incensed, chiseled his way through!

MORRIGAN: My turn . . . The daughter whispered a final spell and this time, the young handsome prince who looked just like Mog Ruith . . .

ERIU: Morrigan!

MORRIGAN: Okay, the young prince pulled forth a small bladder of water. In an instant, a beautiful green lake twenty miles in breadth filled in behind them, and the giant, in pursuit, stumbled and . . .

BELENUS: Fell into the lake, sinking and drowning.

SAMHAIN: And then the young prince slid his love down from the back of the filly, and finding much beauty surrounding them, opened his bundle. There, in the wild blackberry thickets, a castle of stone and an orchard of magnificence unfolded and grew before his very eyes. That, my dear children, is where you now sit. Here at the bank of this lovely green lake, with the thicket and the mountains surrounding the stone castle and the only mulberry tree left from the orchards' days of yore trellised by the enchanted moonflowers that still glow in the magic of the moonlight.

Thus brings the remembrance of Samhain, the first of November, to Beltane, the first of May! (*Pounds out the grounds of his pipe and put it in his pocket. Checks his watch and continues.*) Good grief, that's quite a tale to be telling all alone! I'm exhausted! (*The CHILDREN laugh and SAMHAIN winks at them all.*)

ERIU: This tale, the stone cottage, and the mulberry tree are all that are left of the magic of the moonstones.

MORRIGAN: Why does the stone castle sit worn and empty?

ERIU: It waits for the magic to bring the prince to his senses and teach him to see with his heart.

SAMHAIN: She makes up that part every time I tell this tale! There has not been a soul who understood its worth since Gideon and his new bride.

Lights begin to dim as the fog rolls across the stage, setting the scene to follow.

ERIU: You just wait, Samhain. We must be clever and look for the sign, children. Look now, and see through the fog, the first Ginny sitting in her chair on a Samhain of her own, telling the tale to her grandchild and the son of the son of the king.

Remember what you see and hear, for they are all part of the tale.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

Lights up on the cottage, now cloudy with fog as in a dream. The elderly VIRGINIA is speaking to young GINNY and young HUDSON SMALLS. VIRGINIA is in a rocking chair by the fire.

VIRGINIA: Ginger, why don't you fetch a few cookies and sit down by the fire for a bit. It's what the Celts call Samhain and 'tis time for the telling of the tale!

SMALLS: Your grandmother's a little weird, but she bakes good cookies!

GINNY: Quiet, Smalls . . . A Celtic tale can last for eternity and I have no intention of sitting next to you that long! Are you Irish?

SMALLS: Not a smidge. I'm American. Normal.

GINNY: I'm normal.

SMALLS: No, you're Irish! Irish people believe in fairies, Grandma Roma says. That's not normal! She also says that someday I'll be in charge of the vineyard. Even though I don't like the taste of grapes.

VIRGINIA: Sure, and they would taste bitter to ya, for the error that was done to me Gideon! May the curse of the Irish be on yer Grandma Roma. She knows in her heart she's growin' grapes in the grave of me Gideon.

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SMALLS: I gotta go if she's gonna start cursing and stuff. Grandmother don't want me listening to all this. She says your grandma's holding a grudge, 'cause she lost Gideon's meadow to the vineyard. Her stupid blackberry thicket keeps spreading into our grapes and choking 'em out.

VIRGINIA: 'Tis the bony fingers of Gideon reaching out from the grave to claim what was his right. You'll see. One day . . . you'll see.

SMALLS: Your grandma's giving me the creeps. (*SMALLS exits with his cookie.*) Meet me at the mulberry tree at sundown, Ginny. I want to show you something I found there!

VIRGINIA: Come, child. Sit. You'll keep your date with young Hudson there . . . just not this sundown. 'Tis not the timing for the prophecy yet.

GINNY: Grandma, why do you always scare him like that? He's the only kid around here who's brave enough to play with me. They think we're all . . .

VIRGINIA: It's a good thing to be touched. It's from the kiss of the Blarney Stone. Mind you, Ginger McPherson! You must be watchful and look for the sign when the king and queen will return to claim their kingdom again!

GINNY: All right, Granny. Can I get you a blanket? You look cold.

VIRGINIA: Bless you. Now, gaze into the fire. Follow the flame as it weaves in and out of itself . . . like the lives of all those here in the Glen and the magic that weaves us all together. Like your grandfather, Gideon.

GINNY: Did he really look like that picture hanging on the wall?

VIRGINIA: Aye. It was the last photo taken of him alive. He was at an outdoor café in Italy with that no-good neighbor of ours, the Italian bride. It was her wedding. 'Twas then and there that she made some sort of family arrangement with the Smalls to start a vineyard over here in the States.

GINNY: I still don't understand why Grandpa Gideon would just let the Smalls use fifty McPherson acres to plant his vines on. What would he get out of it in return?

VIRGINIA: We never knew why. Roma came to me a few weeks after the funerals, lost and alone herself. Showed me the contract Randall and Gideon had written on a cloth napkin at that very café in the photo. See it there, near those wine glasses?

GINNY: Oh, the one on the table!

VIRGINIA: Yes, child!

GINNY: I thought you meant the one crumpled on Grandda's lap.

VIRGINIA: I never really noticed that before. (*Tugs at her glasses and squints.*) Guess me eyes are going quicker than I thought!

GINNY: Here . . . look. Why was Grandda there?

VIRGINIA: Randall Smalls and your grandfather had grown up here on the mountain together. Best of friends . . . before her. It wasn't often in those days that one had much to celebrate, what with the war. I'm afraid Gideon may have had a bit more of the drink than he should have, for the contract he made that day with Randall looked more like a wedding gift than a business deal. It was the last photo ever taken of them. Your Grandda lost his life that day in the air raids and Randall lost his own some weeks later.

GINNY: That's so sad. Was this all they sent back?

VIRGINIA: I was fortunate enough to receive some letters and his Bible. I often thought about the lore of the raven and his instructions as to the opening of bundles, so I opened Gideon's where I knew he would want to be forever.

GINNY: In the meadow by the mulberry tree . . . where you lost your grandmother's moonstones?

VIRGINIA: Aye. I lost me husband and a family treasure all in the same day. But I found a bit of peace, too, for I know his eyes were upon me when he died.

GINNY: How do you know that?

VIRGINIA: Because I had taped a photo of me in his Bible and it was stained with red wine upon its return.

GINNY: So?

VIRGINIA: You're Grandda was a whiskey man. Wine's not something he'd drink unless he was afraid he'd be offending the one who was offering. See the photo? Randall is pouring red wine out of another bottle into the glass of one of Roma's brothers. See?

GINNY: How did you figure all this out from one little picture?

VIRGINIA: I've lived a lifetime inside it.

GINNY: (*Gathers up the book. Returns to her place by the fire and reads the inscription in the back out loud as VIRGINIA closes her eyes to remember.*) “. . . In those troubled hours when you feel a need that cannot be put into words . . . There is no need for fine writing, for big words and labored sentences when hearts talk with one another.”

VIRGINIA: I knew he died, because his heart no longer answered back. Me own heart broke in two. Half for the babe I carried, and half for meself and the blackberry winters I would be forced to face alone.

GINNY: Here's his bookmark. “November 1 . . . In due season, you shall reap.” It's what the fairies promised in the prophecy.

VIRGINIA: When you find the sign, the tale begins anew.

GINNY: What sign, Grandma?

VIRGINIA: Listen to your heart and it will show you. Stir the coals in the fire a bit and put on a kettle to brew . . . I'm feeling a slight chill in the air. Samhain has come early this year.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3**AT RISE:**

Lights up on an office. The family lawyer and friend, BENTLEY TAYLOR, is having a discussion with HUDSON before GINGER arrives.

HUDSON: I really appreciate you handling this situation, Bentley.
There's been enough bad blood over this stupid napkin . . .

BENTLEY: Napkin or not, Hudson, it's a binding contract.

HUDSON: You don't suppose she'll put up a fight for it again?

BENTLEY: Oh, for pity's sake, Hud, she was eleven years old. I'd have given ya a black eye or two, myself, if you had told me my grandma was a fruitcake! Don't start that up again.

HUDSON: Cute, Bentley. I don't even remember how it started. I . . . I was showing Ginny that old chain and the stones I found in the dirt, and she said I must rebury them at once. Said they belonged to the king of the . . . Sandman or something like that. And if I didn't, the prophecy would never come true and the meadow would be forever at the risk of being taken over by some giant.

BENTLEY: Well, some giant is at risk of taking over the meadow.

HUDSON: Very funny! It's a corporation! Some giant I am . . . the only people 'round this place that would think I was a giant are Ginger's little woodland friends! *(Laughs.)*

BENTLEY: How do you plan to avoid another black eye?

HUDSON: For God's sake, we're not children anymore. It's just good business.

BENTLEY: For who?

HUDSON: The winery's only real value now is in the atmosphere it helps create for my development. We'll keep the section of the vineyard in the meadow, bottle most of it for the guests. Do tours, wine-tastings, and develop the rest for the resort. Nice idea, don't you think?

BENTLEY: Aren't you afraid that this will violate your contract?

HUDSON: No use keeping it just as a vineyard anymore. Roma's too old to keep the place up, and I have no intention of living there. With some minor renovations, I'd like to save the family house and convert it into a clubhouse or golf pro shop. I'll show her the schematics for the whole layout. She'll see the benefit in it.

BENTLEY: She won't like the fact that you want to take over the rest of the meadow. That's all she has left, and your new property line proposal cuts right through that old tree out there. That leaves only the stone cottage and the garden area . . . Do you think she'll bite at your offer?

HUDSON: She'll probably bite all right, just not at the offer! I tried not to bother her too soon with details, but they've got to be handled.

BENTLEY: I have no idea when she's planning to return to London.

HUDSON: You don't think she'll be sappy, do you? Clinging to the past and not moving on?

BENTLEY: I imagine she'll want to settle up and be on her way before the children miss any more school, especially with Thanksgiving holidays just around the corner. It's November already.

HUDSON: Samhain, not Sandman! It's Samhain . . . the first day of November! That's the little fella's name. Does she still believe in all that stuff?

BENTLEY: Couldn't say. Haven't seen her myself. Mr. Starling at the post office wanted to settle up on some fees Virginia forgot about. Said she came back quite a looker.

HUDSON: A looker with two children, Bentley, is not a looker! She's a she-wolf looking out for her cubs! You'd better protect my interests.

BENTLEY: Hudson, your interests are not for me to say. Besides, they might become more mutual than you're prepared for!

HUDSON: I thought this might help sweeten the deal. *(Holds out the chain with the moonstones in the middle.)* If negotiations get a little rough, I thought I would give it to her . . . makes us even, sort of. She gives me something of hers, I give her something of . . .

BENTLEY: Hers, as well? How is that making things even? You take the best piece of her grandmother's estate based on some old worn-out piece of cloth from World War II and you sweeten things with a tacky piece of costume jewelry?

HUDSON: Costume jewelry for you and I, Bentley. If she's still the same old Ginny, she'll see fairy treasures and her granny's silly Irish prophecy!

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE:

Lights up at the tree. There are several FAIRIES hanging about. Smaller FAIRIES are dancing to Irish music and the older ones are standing or sitting near the tree. It is a birthday party for MORRIGAN.

ERIU: So, Morrigan, it is your 116th birthday in a couple of days! Other than this party, what would you like for your birthday wish?

MORRIGAN: I can choose anything at all?

SAMHAIN: Within reason, my child.

BELLENUS: I'd wish for my own set of wheels, if I were you . . . so you wouldn't have to ride in Mog Ruith's chariot.

DANU: Don't be an idiot, Belenus! She wants to ride around with Mog!

MOG RUTH: Did somebody call my name? Hello, Morrigan! Happy birthday . . . almost. Did you ask them yet?

SAMHAIN: Ask whom what?

AIBELL: Morrigan's got a crush on Mog and . . .

MORRIGAN: Careful . . . I am the Hooded Crow and the fairy of strife . . . and BATTLE!

CORB: Mother, how many times do we gotta hear her say that?

BELENUS: Whatever she asks for, if it involves getting her out of the forest, do it! I can't take this anymore!

DANU: Me, neither!

ERIU: Come, let's to the fine point of it, Morrigan! What is so important that Mog must be here to support you in the asking?

MORRIGAN: Well, Mog and I . . .

MOG RUTH: I'm 120 now, and my folks are finally going to allow me to venture beyond the thicket. I was asking if Morrigan could go with me and Culley and his girl, Sherie, for a ride on the first full moon next week. Fechine is having a bit of a coming-out party.

SAMHAIN: Fechine, eh? You know, Morrigan, he's your cousin twice-removed. Fechine, of the Raven Fechines.

BELENUS: He's been removed all right! Just not far enough! Half this family tree has gone to the birds!

MORRIGAN: Shut up, Belenus, or you will never live long enough to see your birthday on the first of May! May I go?

SAMHAIN: Is Pooka involved in this little outing?

MOG RUTH: My dad forbade me to see him. He took a ride one morning and dumped an old leprechaun off in the bushes. His folks won't let him out to ride again till the sun shines in the middle of a rainstorm . . . and you know how often that happens around here!

CORB: Not very!

SAMHAIN: Is this your birthday wish, then, Morrigan?

MORRIGAN: Must I use my birthday wish?

SAMHAIN: Does it mean enough to you to use it on?

MORRIGAN: I . . . I don't know. (*Looks at MOG.*) A birthday wish is such a special thing . . . I don't want to waste it. One day, I shall run out of them and have nothing to show for it. I must learn to become a fairy princess and be wiser . . . I guess not, Father.

ERIU: Morrigan, I'm very proud. Father?

SAMHAIN: Yes. You are becoming a fine fairy . . . insprite of yourself! Oh, Mother! I have made a jolly! (*Laughs heartily.*) Morrigan! You may go with Mog in one month, if . . .

MORRIGAN: If what, Father?

SAMHAIN: If we can trust you to travel beyond the thicket and not get into trouble.

ERIU: Remember, there are humans out there.

SAMHAIN: To prove yourself; you must perform one act of true kindness before the next moon or you will be grounded. Literally. Agreed?

MORRIGAN: Agreed, then, Father. One truly kind act. Can it be an act of omission?

ERIU: Such as?

MORRIGAN: I will omit one insult from the five hundred I have planned for Belenus today!

BELENUS: Mother!

ERIU: Morrigan, you agreed not two seconds ago. Don't make your father and I regret our offer!

MORRIGAN: Yes, Mother. May Mog and I go down near the bank for a walk, then, before the sun sets?

SAMHAIN: Certainly. Be back before sundown, or Mog will need a patch for the other eye, as well!

MOG RUITH: Yes, sir . . . your kingship. I promise to have her back on time. *(MOG and MORRIGAN turn to leave.)*

MORRIGAN: I'm 116 day after tomorrow. I even feel older . . . Wiser . . . Prettier. Don't you think?

MOG RUITH: Morrigan, I have always thought you were pretty. Even when you gave me a black eye. And I only have one good one.

MORRIGAN: Sorry about that . . . Wait! Do you hear that?

MOG and MORRIGAN begin to wander off stage and then reenter from another side. While MOG and MORRIGAN are wandering, the wagon with the tree should relocate on the stage from a different angle in the rest of the scene. GINGER's children now appear on stage, exploring near the tree. The other two watch and listen to their conversation.

MARIBRIGETT: Shhh . . . Phegan? Do you feel anything?

PHEGAN: I don't feel anything. What is it I'm supposed to feel, anyway?

MARIBRIGETT: It's a funny ticklish feeling at the base of your neck. Mother says she used to feel it sometimes when she sensed she was being watched by the sidhe.

PHEGAN: The who? Oh, yeah . . . the little bug people.

MOG RUITH: The bug peo . . . Why, I'll fly through his ears and . . .

MORRIGAN: Mog, quiet. They'll hear you.

MOG RUITH: Not the idiot. He's a non-believer. You can tell!

PHEGAN: Look at this . . . it's an anthill! Let's smash it!

MORRIGAN: *(Starts to scream, but MOG quickly puts his hand over her mouth.)* Ahhh!

MARIBRIGETT: Phegan, don't be such a boy. You step on that, and there's no telling what could happen to us! The giant could return! Or worse . . .

PHEGAN: Yeah! We'd get ants all over us!

MORRIGAN breathes a huge sigh of relief. MOG stands in front to protect her.

MOG RUTH: Want me to use my sword? I could carve him a new dimple before he even knows what hit him!

MORRIGAN: His dimples are cute enough as they are.

MOG RUTH: Hey . . .

MORRIGAN: Humans are so fascinating . . . and tall.

PHEGAN: I don't understand why we haven't left yet. I want to go back to London.

MARIBRIGETT: Don't be so insensitive. How lonely Mother must have been here with just Grandma for company. No wonder she needed to believe so badly. Can you imagine spending so much time alone down here?

PHEGAN: I can't. This place gives me the creeps!

MARIBRIGETT: Yeah. Me too. Wait . . . What did you say?

PHEGAN: This place gives me the creeps! I'm getting chilled. Let's go back to the cottage. Maybe Mother will come to her senses and take us back to the hotel. Maribrigett, what are you doing?

MARIBRIGETT is down on all fours, looking around the ground for the little people.

MARIBRIGETT: Shhh . . . they must be here. You said it yourself, this place gives you the creeps. That's the feeling.

PHEGAN: What?

MARIBRIGETT: Help me look for them. They're here, I can feel them.

MARIBRIGETT gets down on her hands and knees to look closer for the sidhe. MOG leans over and looks into her face without MARIBRIGETT knowing it.

MOG RUTH: You're right, humans are interesting . . . and very pretty. Look how green her eyes are, Morrigan.

MORRIGAN is now tapping her foot at MOG, who is starring dreamily at MARIBRIGETT.

MARIBRIGETT: Do you hear that?

MORRIGAN stops tapping her foot. MOG is still staring.

PHEGAN: Yes, I hear it. It's the sound of your brain turning to mush! You are as loony about this as Mom! Let's go back to the cottage. Speaking of mush, maybe we can talk her into going into town to eat. I'm starved.

MARIBRIGETT: If there's a chance she'll run into Hudson Smalls, I think we'll probably end up starving to death. She doesn't like him much. It has something to do with Great-Granny's will. She almost broke that bottle of wine he sent as a welcome gift over his head. I miss London, too, but there's something about this place . . .

PHEGAN: Don't go getting all creepy on me, Maribrigett. I'm not staying here. This isn't home for me. Besides, Dad would never come here.

MARIBRIGETT: London's only where we live, Phegan. That doesn't make it home. Dad lives in Germany, and we never see him anyway. Whether we're in London or here, it doesn't matter anymore. We don't matter to him anymore. We've lost him.

PHEGAN: You're ruining my appetite! Let's go now, it's starting to get dark. Is that Mother calling?

GINGER: *(From off stage.)* Maribrigett? Phegan? Come on up to the cottage. I've got dinner on and I need you to gather some kindling for a fire.

PHEGAN: Good God! Have they not heard of a furnace in this place?

MARIBRIGETT: Quit complaining, Phegan. It's only for a couple of days!

MARIBRIGETT and PHEGAN exit.

MORRIGAN: Wasn't that sad? About her father, I mean? I don't know how I'd feel if I lost my father. I couldn't bear to lose either Mother or Father.

MOG RUITH: She didn't say he was lost, Morrigan. She said he was in . . .

MORRIGAN: Lost doesn't mean just misplaced, it means cannot be found! How awful for her. She looks to be close to my age . . .

MOG RUITH: 116! Are you insane, Morrigan? She looks a lot better than that!

MORRIGAN: Oh, really! Well then, her brother is somewhat closer in age to me. But older, I think. I like older men . . . Human men!

MOG RUITH: Morrigan, I think we better go. Your father will have embroidered another patch for my good eye by now! (*MOG reaches up and covers his good eye.*) Should we tell them about the humans coming back to the cottage?

MORRIGAN: No. Not yet . . . Let's wait and see what they do first. She looked a lot like the first Ginny, though. Didn't she remind you of . . . Mog, the prophecy! Maybe it's begun again. We must keep this a secret for now.

MOG RUITH: Nothing remains a secret in this wood for very long.

MORRIGAN: We must get back so that Father will let us walk again tomorrow. I need to keep an eye on those humans.

MOG RUITH: Both of them, Morrigan? Or just the boy human?

Both MOG and MORRIGAN creep back to the tree. BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1**AT RISE:**

Lights up on the kitchen of the cottage. GINGER is sitting at the table with MARIBRIGETT and PHEGAN. She is pouring some wine out of a bottle as the lights come up.

GINGER: Finish your meal, Maribrigett. I'm sorry it's not quite our regular fare, but things are different in a small place like this.

MARIBRIGETT: That's all right.

PHEGAN: Bet you can't get kippers here. No bloody kippers. How uncivilized.

GINGER: Don't be so bloody British about all this, Phegan! You know, you're still of Irish decent, too. Half! You might try a little harder to find something of your heritage here.

PHEGAN: If you're wanting me to find more of my heritage, why not send me to Ireland and you and Maribrigett can stay here and talk with all the anthills you want. Why did you drag us here anyway, Mother? Grandma was a fruitcake and now you're turning into one, too!

GINGER: Phegan McPherson! You go on up to your room. She loved this place for a reason and so did I. Maybe London is not the best place for us as a family.

MARIBRIGETT: What are you saying, Mother?

PHEGAN: I don't want to hear this . . . whatever it is. Especially if it involves your stupid Irish prophecy and staying here in Hicksville!

PHEGAN storms off to his room. MARIBRIGETT is confused.

MARIBRIGETT: It's not really Hicksville . . . but it's not exactly London either, Mother. *(She looks at her mother, who seems to be in deep thought, ignoring her as she fondles the bottle of wine on the table. GINGER gets a glass from the cupboard.)* Mother, is there something else you wanted to say?

GINGER: *(Opens up her housewarming present from the SMALLS to stall for time. Takes a sip of wine and sprays it out on the table. MARIBRIGETT is shocked and stands, then bursts into laughter at the sight of her mother's face.)* St. Bridgett! This is the foulest tasting wine . . . It tastes like vinegar! Cork that thing, it's toxic!

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MARIBRIGETT: Is that Hudson's bottle?

GINGER: (*Laughing and wiping up the table with her napkin.*) Some housewarming present this is. Perhaps he's trying to kill me off this way to get the rest of Granny's meadow! No wonder he can't make it as a winery. This is disgusting. Granny Ginny was right. Get another napkin and help me. You know, (*Holding the napkin up in the air.*) this is how this whole silly thing got started. Grape vines and a stupid napkin! If Grandda Gideon weren't already dead, I'd kill him for leaving things in such a mess.

MARIBRIGETT: Can I help?

GINGER: With the table, yes! The other? I wish you could. The problem is . . . I know Granny always complained about things, but I don't know if she ever tried to fight them legally! So I am. The fifty acres that Gideon signed over for the vineyard in that stupid napkin contract are currently in dispute due to Granny's death and Hudson's plans to develop it as a resort.

MARIBRIGETT: In dispute?

GINGER: The contract stipulates that the Smalls, specifically one Hudson Smalls, the cockroach that gave us this bottle of poison here, are allowed use of the bottomland acres only if the vineyard is still in operation. At least, that was the original intent of the contract.

MARIBRIGETT: I thought you said he wanted to develop a resort.

GINGER: Right.

MARIBRIGETT: In that case, if the vineyard is no longer in operation, we get the fifty acres back! Right?

GINGER: Hudson has cleverly tried to bend the contract's integrity a little. He is of a mind to develop the area, but keep the bottomland in vines for the ambience of it all! According to him, as long as the resort still produces wine for the small restaurant and guest population, it still constitutes a legal execution of the contract. I disagree.

MARIBRIGETT: So how much land does that leave us? Where does the property line run, anyway? All those blackberry bushes . . . Phegan and I couldn't even see the fence posts anymore.

GINGER: Seems the original property line runs down along the old mulberry tree and beyond.



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