

THE GREEN CHILDREN

A Play in Two Acts

by

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Cast of Characters

Mary Kate: Sean's mother and Granda's daughter

Sean: Mary Kate's son/daughter, typical tech-preoccupied adolescent

Granda: Mary Kate's father, Sean's grandfather, the grown-up Bud; he doesn't appear ancient, but something about him says he's older than his years; soft-spoken. He must not be presented as a crotchoty old man; sings *The Land of Tir na nÓg*

Otherfolk: Gnomes, brownies, hobgoblins, faeries; number at director's discretion. When onstage, Otherfolk must exude exuberance and energy of youthful joy. Each group should have a distinctive costume color scheme: gnomes, blue/red; brownies, browns/orange; faeries, ivory/white; hobgoblins, purple/black. Only the green children should wear green.

Faun: Leader of the brownies; teenager, precocious, more imp than brownie; charismatic, lovable, quick-witted; sings *The Otherfolk*, *Call to Battle*, and *Welcome Home*.

Barney: a brownie or gnome; fiddler or piper who can be a member of the music ensemble

Flora: a female brownie

Tailkenn: elder of the gnomes; wise, fussy, fastidious; butt of brownies' pranks

Keitha: a female gnome, a bit haughty, but with a sense of humor

Squire Scrum: epitomizes every bully who has ever terrified a child; sings *I'm Not a Star No More*, *Green Is Gold*, *In a Pickle*

Ennis: villager who works for Scrum; lanky; sings *The Rising of the Sun* and *The Barkers*.

Orin: villager who works for Squire Scrum; short; plump; sings *The Rising of the Sun* and *The Barkers*.

Villagers: number and assignment of lines at director's discretion.

Bud: a green child; sings *Bud and Blossom's Theme*, *The Telling of the Bell*, *Captured*.

Blossom: a green child; sings *Bud and Blossom's Theme*, *Captured*.

Historical introduction at conclusion of overture, prior to curtain

Nor does it seem right to pass over an unheard-of-prodigy, which, as is well known, took place during the reign of King Stephen. There is a village, distant, as it is said, and near this place are seen some very ancient cavities. During harvest, two children, a boy and a girl, completely green in their persons, emerged from these excavations. When they were brought as curiosities to the house of a certain knight, they wept bitterly. Bread and other victuals were set before them, but they would touch none of them, though they were tormented by great hunger. At length, when some beans just cut, with their stalks, were brought into the house, they made signs that they should be given them. And these they fed on with delight.

So wrote William of Newburgh and Ralph of Coggeshall in the 12th century.

STAGE: CS, large tree. SR, fixed set for forest scenes; SL, a set that doubles as Granda's living room and Scrum's kitchen; a shed/jail that can be rolled onstage; a barrel/vat or facade that can be brought on stage.

ACT I, Scene 1

Scene: SR, forest. Stage darkened; sounds of the forest; extreme SR has a small bush; spot light gradually comes up on it as forest sounds diminish. Bush starts shaking; FAUN peeps over top of bush, then around both sides. Two gnomes walk from upstage or offstage jabbering to each other; walk behind bush, accidentally bump FAUN, knocking him out from behind bush into view; gnomes grumble over what a nuisance brownies are; exit SR.

FAUN

(apprehensively) Oh, uh, hi. I'm Faun, leader of the brownies . . . and to be honest, I'm plenty nervous about you seeing me. Why? Well, look at me—I'm different from you, and it's not always safe to be different, now is it? When you're different, people can be afraid of you or feel threatened by you and try to hurt you. Sounds crazy, I know, but it's true. And while it's on my mind, let me tell you something: if anyone ever mistreats you because you're different, the problem's with their insides, not your outsides.

So, to avoid trouble, we Otherfolk avoid outsiders. When someone wanders into the forest, we hide. I'm not braggin', but we're experts at hiding! If we don't want you to see us, you won't see us! *(sudden self-realization)* . . . Uh . . . I know you see me now, but that's . . . that's only because I want you to see me. *(sly grin to himself)* Yeah, that's it; I want you to see me!

I've been looking you over from behind that bush, and you seem to be a fairly tame bunch . . . except, maybe, you! Yeah, you. Stand up!

(points to an inoffensive member of the audience seated near the front)

I can tell just by looking at you that you're trouble! You're not a hobgoblin are you? No,

you look too mean to be a hobgoblin. Go ahead and sit back down, but I'm warning you: I've got my eyes on you, so no shenanigans, ya hear?

Now that I've put the troublemaker on notice, I want you to sit back and get ready for a romping good time. I've got a story to tell (*starts to walk off stage, stops*)—a story good enough to be a faerie tale!

(FAUN bows to audience, exits SR; lights dim SR, rise SL)

Scene: *GRANDA's house; MARY KATE and SEAN enter from back of theater; they're coming to visit GRANDA. SEAN absorbed with cell phone. MARY KATE, worried and flustered, is trying to hurry her along.*

MARY KATE

Sean, would you please put your phone away and hurry up? Granda's expecting us, and we don't want to be late.

SEAN

(mumbles) Huh? Oh, yeah. *(continues to text)*

MARY KATE

We're here for something important, and I don't want you distracted.

(She sighs, a little sad, Sean still on her phone)

SEAN

Important? What's so important? We come to Granda's all the time; why's this time so important?

MARY KATE

It just is! *(takes out handkerchief and dabs her eyes)*

SEAN

Sorry, Mom; I didn't mean to make you cry?

MARY KATE

You didn't, but I need you to put that phone away while we're here so that Granda has your undivided attention.

(they arrive at front door. MARY KATE turns, puts hand on SEAN's hand holding the cellphone,

with her other hand, raises SEAN'S chin until they are looking each other in the eye)

Please, for me?

(SEAN shoves phone in her pocket; MARY KATE lifts SEAN's chin, looks in her eyes)
Thank you.

SEAN

Oh, Mom, your hair looks green again. Didn't I tell you that you should switch shampoos?

*(MARY KATE ignores comment and knocks on door;
SEAN turns back to her, pulls out phone, resumes texting)*

GRANDA

(from inside)

Is that you, Mary Kate?

MARY KATE

It's me, Dad, and Sean.

GRANDA

(opens door)

Why, looka here!—my two favorite lassies in this world! *(he hugs MARY KATE, then SEAN)*
Sean, what a bonnie sight you are! *(laughs)* Come in, the both of you.

*(SEAN plops down on chair and continues texting;
GRANDA and MARY KATE move out of earshot of SEAN)*

MARY KATE

(head down)

Dad, I don't know if I can do this; my heart's breaking. I've lost mom, and now I'm losing you, and I don't know how to tell Sean what's happening. *(struggling to hold back tears)* Even if I did, she wouldn't believe me . . . I'm hoping she'll believe you.

GRANDA

Ach, Katie, you've got a load of sadness on you. I wish it wasn't like this.

MARY KATE

(trying to be brave)

I know, Dad.

GRANDA

(he and MARY KATE embrace)

It cuts my soul to leave. But you know what the city is planning. And even if they weren't, I've been away from your mother much too long. You know, it's funny . . . the old folktales warn about staying too long in faerieland because you might never return; but having come from faerieland, all I want is to go back.

(big sigh) You and Sean will be fine; it'll take some time, but you'll be fine. And as I promised, I'll tell her everything before I go.

MARY KATE

It's right that you and mom be together again. And Sean and I will adjust. I don't mean to be such a baby; it just takes time for a broken heart to heal.

*(MARY KATE and GRANDA walk back to SEAN,
MARY KATE dabbing her eyes)*

SEAN

(looks up) Have you been crying again?

GRANDA

Indeed she has Sean, and you need to know why.

SEAN

What are you talking about? Know what?

(MARY KATE moves over behind SEAN's chair and puts hand on SEAN's shoulder)

(nervously) What's going on?

GRANDA

What's going on? Well . . . you know the stories I've told you since you were a little one? That's what's going on?

SEAN

You mean, the faerie tales you told me?

GRANDA

Aye; the stories about the Otherfolk.

SEAN

(laughing) I used to believe those stories, Granda, but I'm not a kid anymore. I learned they're just the kind of made-up stories adults tell children.

GRANDA

(chuckles)

If growing up caused you to stop believing those stories, Sean, I hope to bring you back to faith.

SEAN

You're not trying to tell me those stories are true are you? Granda, did you forget to take your medicine again?

MARY KATE

Sean!

SEAN

I'm just joking. Mom, what's going on? Why's Granda acting like this?

(MARY KATE says nothing; looks sadly at Granda)

(nervous laugh) And why are you acting so strange?

GRANDA

Sean, its time you to know some things.

SEAN

Things?

GRANDA

Aye, about your family . . . from my long ago; about an enchanted place that's far away, but just a step away, where you can lower a pail into a well to draw water and pull up a bucket of faeries. Things about a place called Tir na nÓg.

SEAN

Eggnog? You're and Gramma came from a place called Eggnog?

MARY KATE

Sean, please!

GRANDA

(laughing) Not eggnog, Tir na nÓg, *where the wind blows oer the lonely of heart / While faeries dance in a place apart / And the sound of laughter is heard in the air / In a land where the old are young and fair.*

SEAN

Hey, that's Yeats, right?

GRANDA

(surprised) Indeed, it is; it takes a poet to see magic in the mist. I'm impressed! How do you know about Yeats?

(SEAN picks up phone and googles it.)

SEAN

Oh, our English teacher made us read that poem in class. Here it is, *The Land of Heart's Desire*. She said Tir na nÓg was an imaginary place where everyone is young and happy.

GRANDA

She's right, except for one thing . . . Tir na nÓg isn't imaginary, it's real—so real that people who don't even know its name dream dreams of it.

(With a faraway look, GRANDA sings.)

The Land of Tir na nÓg
(THE MOORLOUGH SHORE)

There once was a time in a green, green clime,
 When I kissed 'neath a shady tree.
 And to there I'll go, to a lass I know,
 for she waits by that tree for me.

Refrain

Tis a land of which dreamers long have sung,
 Tir na nÓg, aye, the land of the young.
 In a moment's wink, and a faerie's blink,
 my green land once again I'll see.

(Short instrumental interlude, repeat refrain, MARY KATE harmonizes)

Tis a land of which dreamers long have sung,
 Tir na nÓg, aye, the land of the young.
 In a moment's wink, and a faerie's blink,
 my green land once again I'll see.

(Music continues, softly)

SEAN

So, you're saying the stories you told me are true and that you and Gramma came from a faerie land? *(laughs)* Okay, what's the joke?

(GRANDA and MARY KATE stand side by side, looking serious)

GRANDA

It's no joke Sean. You're at that age where you know everything, but there are things beyond your ken, and if you're to know them, you must hear what I've to say. *(apologetically)* I don't mean to sound abrupt, my sweet one, but my time is short.

SEAN

What do you mean, your "time is short"?

(a long pause as GRANDA looks off into space)

GRANDA

(smiling)

You know the oak tree in the front yard?

SEAN

Of course; it's the biggest tree around here.

GRANDA

There used to be dozens of 'em, a whole forest of oaks, along with some ash and even a whitethorn or two, the faeries' tree.

SEAN

There you go with the faeries again.

GRANDA

Over the years, (*said with irritation*) they've all been cut down in the name of "progress." Why people think it "progress" to cut down a tree is something I'll never understand! But cut them down is what they did.

SEAN

Well, at least they left our oak.

GRANDA

Yes, and of all the trees, ours was the most important.

But the other day, I received a notice that the city is going to cut down our tree to make way for a sidewalk. (*indignantly*) By oak and by ash! Cutting down a patriarch of the forest for a concrete footpath! What are they thinking?! Any day now, they'll show up with their trucks and chain saws and our tree will be gone. . . . And because of that, I must leave.

SEAN

Leave? You mean, move? Just because they're cutting down our tree? That makes no sense!

GRANDA

It does if you understand that the tree is an enchanted tree, and Tir na nÓg is on the other side of it. If I'm to return there, I must do so while it stands.

SEAN

Granda, the only thing on the other side of the tree is the backyard. This is getting waaaaay too weird. If you and Gramma came from a faerie land, why haven't I ever seen any faerie stuff in our family?

GRANDA

Oh, but you have.

SEAN

(*looks up surprised*)

I have?

GRANDA

Aye! Tell me, have you ever noticed your mother's hair looking green?

SEAN

(surprised)

Why, yes. In fact, I said something to her about it just before we got here. But it's green because she used some bad hair dye. My friend Marion told me the last time her mom dyed her hair, it turned orange.

GRANDA

(chuckling)

Well, I'm sorry for Marion's mother, but bad hair dye isn't why your mother's hair looks green; if it weren't for hair dye, it'd be much greener.

SEAN

(Answering slowly)

So why does it look green?

GRANDA

Because your mother is the daughter of the green children—your Gramma and me.

(SEAN looks back and forth between GRANDA and MARY KATE in disbelief)

That gadget of yours . . . what do you call it?

SEAN

My smart phone?

GRANDA

What makes it so smart?

SEAN

Well, I can text with it, make phone calls, listen to music, play games, even watch a movie if I want.

GRANDA

(smiling) It sounds to me like you and not the phone are the smart one. But tell me, did you know that Otherfolk always carry a bit of the green of the forest with them?

(Illusion: GRANDA appears to reach into the screen and pull out a green orb of light using a magician's magic thumb)

SEAN

(SEAN's mouth drops open, eyes wide)

How . . . but how?

GRANDA

(chuckles)

Ah, so now you're ready to hear me. In that case, sit here by me, and let me tell you about what lies on the other side of our tree.

(Lights dim)

ACT I, Scene 2

Scene: Forest, SR.

*(Cue sounds of forest. Lights come up SR
brownies run from back of theater down aisles, onto stage;
one brownie rides in piggyback on another
gnomes walk onstage and look at flowers,
hobgoblins saunter through, show irritation at goings on)*

FAUN

(Enters SL, shaking hands, high fives, notices the audience.)

Oh, you're still here? Well, I don't want to seem unpolished, so seein' as how you're still here, as well as a number of Otherfolk, allow me to introduce you to my family.

As I told you, I'm Faun, leader of the brownies—the most important fellow in the forest!

*(Behind him, brownies laugh, snicker, point at FAUN,
mock his self-importance, make faces at audience)*

There's nothin' we brownies enjoy more than playing games and having a good time; smashiing-good games like smuggle bools.

*(FAUN looks at crowd with a big grin that slowly dissolves
when there's no reaction to mention of smuggle bools)*

You've . . . never . . . played smuggle bools?

Well, you've played shuffles, right?

You haven't? (*aside to self*) (How'd these wild things ever get in here?)

Marbles? Anyone heard of marbles? (*perks up when crowd reacts*) Ah, there's no better way to spend an afternoon than shootin marbles made of acorns.

FLORA

It's true that we are rascals, but we're never naughtier than necessary. I mean, a small prank now and then never hurt anybody, did it!

CHORUS OF BROWNIES

No! Never. Never ever! Perish the thought!

(The BROWNIES resume their giggling and general rowdiness, skipping around the gnomes; TAILKENN steps forward)

TAILKENN

(Harrumphing) Never naughtier than necessary? Is that how you describe the mayhem that breaks out whenever brownies show up?

(Brownies: "Boo"; "You ole catfish," "Don't listen to him," giggle, stick out tongue)

(Turning to audience, with air of self-importance) I am Tailkenn, elder of the gnomes. We're a gentle people who spend a great deal of time gardening . . . *(turns back to brownies)* and cleaning up messes left by these silly brownies.

KEITHA

When it comes to gardening, we have a magic touch. Should you want your garden to be a showplace, DON'T CALL PRAIRIE GARDENS [insert popular local garden center], call us. We are the flower experts! Nothing puts a smile on a petunia's face any faster than seeing us show up with some potash!

FAUN

(slips up behind Tailkenn)

Gnomes aren't the only ones with a special touch. See how the touch of my hand turns Tailkenn's face a bright red!

(FAUN gets TAILKENN in a headlock, and gives him a noogie; TAILKENN sputters and stammers)

TAILKENN

You, you juvenile delinquent!!

FAUN

(Laughing) Now, now you old fusspot, you're awfully chirpy today.

(FLORA walks up behind FAUN with pie; TAILKENN begins to shake his finger in FAUN'S face, FAUN ducks and FLORA hits TAILKENN with pie; TAILKENN faces audience with an "I give up" shrug, stumbles off SR)

(if theater is rigged for flying, two or three winged faeries fly in and land, or, hover about, then fly off; otherwise, faeries run down aisles and onto stage)

FLORA

And there are the faeries! When they speak, it sounds like they're buzzing, or chirping, and because of that, they're often mistaken for birds or bees.

(Two HOBGOBLINS lumber by, stop, glare at audience, grunt, stomp upstage)

FAUN

And there's the hobgoblins; a more short-tempered bunch you won't find.

(To the HOBGOBLINS)

What's a matter with ya, ya big babies; can't you at least smile! These people mean ya no harm!

(To the audience)

Listen, should you ever chance upon a hobgoblin, hurry off as fast as your feet'll carry you. Hobgoblins can be bad tempered, very bad tempered indeed. They're grumps, they are; but don't tell 'em I said that until I'm at least a mile away!

Last, but not least, are the green children. *(puts hands over his eyes and looks around)* I don't see 'em, but they're here somewhere. They're ancient—as ancient as the forest. So long as they stay in the forest they're beyond the touch of time and don't grow old. They'll turn up soon, so you be watchin' for somethin' green.

Now that you've met everybody, it's time for some music and dancing! *(Otherfolk cheer)* As long as fish swim and birds fly, the Otherfolk will sing, and dance.

Cue The Otherfolk.

(Turning to brownie with a fiddle or pipe)

Barney, rip us a tune!

(BARNEY steps onto a rock or log)

The Otherfolk
(WESTHOME)

Faun

Hearken my friends and lend ear to my tale
 Set in these woods among shamrock and dale,
 It is a story that's hearty and hale
 That tells you about our children.

Refrain

Come to the circle and join in the dance,
 Joy you will find, maybe even romance.
 Come and fall under a wonderful trance,
 And you, too, will love the children.

Flora

Small be the gnomes who tend garden all day
 Brownies are pranksters who frolic and play
 Goblins are grumps so stay out of their way,
 And green are the forest children.

Refrain

Come to the circle and join in the dance,
 Joy you will find, maybe even romance.
 Come and fall under a wonderful trance,
 And you, too, will love the children.

Interlude

Otherfolk Riverdance (~ 2 ½ mins.)

3rd verse

Faun

Here you'll find faeries who light up the sky,
 Dazzling and sparkling as they float by,
 They're quite a mys'try like algebra's pi,
 And so are the forest children.

Refrain

Come to the circle and join in the dance,
 Joy you will find, maybe even romance.
 Come and fall under a wonderful trance,
 And you, too, will love the children.

(During chorus, Otherfolk form a circle and dance; from this circle emerge Otherfolk doing a Riverdance-style dance. A brownie tries to coax a hobgoblin into dancing; hobgoblin resists; brownie shows him a jig-step; hobgoblin waves him off; brownie persists, urging him to join in; hobgoblin finally does an expert jig to amazement of all, assumes the lead dance role)

(Dance stops suddenly at sound of approaching outsiders; OTHERFOLK put hands to ears,

peer into distance; thump of heavy walking stick heard SL)

FLORA

(loud whisper) Hide!

(Otherfolk scatter SR)

