

When Butterflies
Laugh

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SAMUELL'S QUEST

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To my husband, Steve,
for your loving support (and cooking and cleaning)
so I could complete this work.
You are the greatest.

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When butterflies laugh
Lost stars shall twinkle
With herbs from prairie
To grind and sprinkle

Recipe laced
To take and taste
Shall erase the pain
From loved one's face

With shimmer of sun
Golden dance of grains
Cocoon of doubts
Now rinsed by rains

No presage here
No dance of death
Only prismatic wings
On updrafts swept

— a poem inspired by your story.

Love, Bry

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The cloud of dust alerted Samuell, assistant horse trainer for the king of Robin's Wood, of the approaching carriage. He raised his right arm over his head, and the group of colts and fillies filed past him to the rich pasture land. He laughed as they cleared the arena and began to run and kick out in fun. *A fine bunch of yearlings they are!* He waved to his cousin Brendell, third son of the king, and strode toward the entrance to his father's home.

"Samuell!" called his older sister from the carriage.

Samuell greeted Shale warmly and took baby Ian from her arms. The baby reached up and grasped Samuell's nose. He smiled at the cooing infant and gently loosened the tiny fingers.

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“Unca Samooelle!” Simeon’s cherub voice sang out as he jumped from the carriage and gripped Samuell’s legs in a fierce hug.

“You have grown strong, young lad,” Samuell groaned.

Simeon squeezed harder, and then he released his uncle’s legs. “I will help my Papa,” he announced proudly, looking past Samuell to his father, Avian, approaching on horseback. When Avian reached them and dismounted, he swung Simeon up into the saddle.

“Take my horse to the water trough, my son. I must greet your Uncle Samuell.” Avian handed Simeon the reins, knowing the horse would give its life before letting anything harm the lad. He grasped Samuell’s forearm strongly. “I am ready for a match in archery. You have been practicing, have you not?”

Samuell shuddered as a brilliant light flashed through his mind. ***“Flee! Flee!” A child running. “He will never find you. Never!”*** He shook his head and tried to focus on Avian, who had taken the baby from his arms. “Archery? Yes, we will have a match.” He rubbed his forehead and turned toward the cottage in time to see the door fly open and his younger sister, Piper, rush into Shale’s arms. Samuell smiled. It was good to have all his family together.

Piper released Shale and promptly reached for the baby. “May I hold him, please?” Avian settled Ian in her arms. “My, little one, how you have grown since your

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birthing. Come. Let us have refreshments while you tell us of your journey. I have made apple cake.” She winked playfully at Simeon.

“You may go, my son.” Avian took the reins and tousled Simeon’s blonde hair. Simeon ran and snatched a hand of his mother and a hand of his aunt, swinging them as they walked the garden path to the cottage built by their father, Connor, when he had settled in the elven settlement with Piper and Samuell years ago.

Avian caught hold of Samuell’s arm. “What happened a moment ago?”

“The dreams are more frequent now. They come to me even when I am awake.”

“What did you see?”

“Darkness. An ancient oak tree waving in a strong wind. Rain. Distant voices, incoherent.” Samuell straightened. *Fear. Danger.*

“What does this tell you?”

“Nothing. It gives me no direction. Perhaps it is nothing but a coming storm. ’Tis springtime.”

“Yet, it troubles you.”

Samuell returned Avian’s steady gaze. “At times it does. Let us not speak of it now, for all are eager to see you. Tell me of your journey.”

“Uneventful, although the beauty of the woods is always amazing. There are many new berry bushes and an abundance of deer and quail. Father God has

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created much for us to enjoy.” Avian studied Samuell as they followed the others. “The two-headed goats are particularly fat this season.”

Samuell stopped and stared at Avian. “Two-headed goats? I am not that distracted.”

Avian smiled at his frustration. “Ah, then who is the maiden who holds your thoughts?”

“There are so many,” Samuell replied in mock dismay.

“Be it dreams or maidens, Father God will show you clearly when the time comes. Of that I am certain, Samuell.”

“Aye.” Samuell opened the door to the kitchen, which was bustling with activity as the cake was being cut. Simeon sat at the table with his spoon ready.

“I hope to see Raina while we are here,” Shale said. “I have missed her gentle heart and merry laughter.”

“There is no doubt that you shall see her,” Piper answered, while busily cutting the cake. She cast Samuell a sly glance. “She often visits us for evening meals.”

“When will Grandpapa be home?” Simeon asked through a mouthful of cake.

“Speak when your mouth is empty, please,” his mother corrected.

“Grandpapa is leaving directions for the stable hands and trainers, then he will hasten here to see you,” Samuell assured the lad.

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“Good. May I have more cake, Auntie Piper? Please.”



At the supper table that night, Connor bounced his grandsons on his knees. He stopped as Shale said, “Careful, Father. They have just eaten.”

Connor glanced for the tenth time toward the window looking over the neat garden. “It is wonderful to have you all here around my table again.” He cleared his throat and continued. “I cherish our time together, especially since your mother was taken from us. You know that I loved her with my whole heart.”

“Our hearts miss her as well,” Shale said.

“I am grateful that we share our memories of Mama often,” Piper said. “Without that, I fear I would not remember many things about her. When Samuell and I lived with Raina, she would sing Mama’s nighttime song for me and hold me through my tears. She told me, ‘Even though we must pretend that I am your mama, you must remember your real mama, for she loved you so.’”

Simeon touched Connor’s cheek. “You have tears, my Grandpapa. Are you sad?”

“Be at peace, young Simeon. My tears tonight are happy.” Looking around the table, he announced, “I have asked Raina to be my wife.” He looked at each face for a reaction.

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Samuell spoke first. "I had nearly given up on you!"

Piper jumped to her feet and kissed her father's cheek. "I am so happy, Papa. You know I love Raina."

"As do I, my father," Shale said. She snuggled contently against Avian.

A soft knock on the door caused Connor to rise to his feet, a grandson in each arm. "Come in, my love, for my arms are full, and I cannot open the door."

Raina stepped inside, carrying a large basket. "Indeed, your arms are full and of such joy." Her gentle laughter carried across the room. "Greetings to you all. I have longed to see you again." She looked at the radiant faces around the table, and then turned her face hopefully to Connor.

"They have given us their blessing."

"Thank you." Tears formed in her eyes and trickled down her cheeks as she smiled at each one.

Simeon sighed and wiped her tears with his hand. He slid down from Connor's embrace and went to his parents. "Why is there crying?"

"Because Grandpapa has made us very happy, for he and Raina will be married."

Simeon's eyes grew large, and he ran to Raina. "Will you be my Grandmama?"

Raina knelt before him. "I would love to be your Grandmama."

"When?"

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“You must ask your Grandpapa,” she whispered.

Simeon looked up at Connor. “When, Grandpapa?”

Connor put his arm around Raina and tucked her close to him. “When do you think would be a good time, Simeon?”

“Now, so she may tuck me in my bed this night.”

“An important thing for a grandmama to do,” Connor said. Simeon took Raina’s hand and nodded. He squeezed his eyes shut tightly.

“Are you praying, my son?” Shale quietly asked.

He nodded and held his finger to his lips. When Simeon’s eyes opened Connor said, “In one week’s time, when the moon is full and gives its light to bless us, we will wed.”

“But tonight, my son, Raina may tuck you in,” Shale said.

Samuell watched his family. Since they had settled in Robin’s Wood, third forest of the elves, he had watched his father’s grieving heart mend as he fell in love with gentle Raina. Father God was faithful, this he knew.



The week had flown by in a flurry of activity as Connor’s family prepared for the wedding. Samuell stood proudly beside his father, thankful for this day. Abruptly,

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flashes of images and words flooded his mind. *Tiny fingers struggling to lift a latch. Angry voices. Strong hands lifting a child through a window. "Flee! Flee!" Shadows. A dish shattering. "Hide." Child running, black hair flying wild. The slam of a door. Curses. An ancient oak and darkness. Lavender. Peace. "He can never find you. Never."*

Connor gripped his arm. "What is it, my son? Samuell?"

Samuell shuddered and shook his head. "Nothing, Papa." He steadied himself against the pillar. "You have Raina's necklace, have you not? It is crafted beautifully, Papa. She will cherish it."

Connor smiled and patted his pocket. His brother, King Corsac, joined them, clasping arms in greeting. "You should dress in your finery more often, Connor. I hardly recognize you."

"Alas, neither would your horses should I wear this."

Corsac laughed. "Peace, my brother. You have the look of a skittish colt."

"I do not wish to frighten my bride." Connor glanced to the doorway again.

Samuell stepped back, thankful for the distraction. *Please let not a dream come to me during the ceremony, Father God. Long have I awaited this day when Papa will wed Raina, for she is as a mother to us all.* He smiled as Shale hurried through the doorway to the room where

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Raina prepared for her wedding. The ceremony would begin soon now.

“I am sorry to be late. Ian needed feeding.” Shale picked up the marriage ribbons and joined Piper in weaving them into Raina’s hair.

“Do not fret. A baby’s needs must be met,” Raina assured her.

Shale and Piper appraised their handiwork. Silver and lavender ribbons glowed beautifully against Raina’s dark hair. Her lavender gown draped softly over her. “Piper, why are you tearful?” Raina asked.

“Tis only remembrance of the comfort and love you have brought to my life.” She tenderly kissed Raina’s cheek. “You are truly more beautiful than the morning flowers,” she said. *Thank you, Father God, for giving Papa and Raina love for each other.*

Shale clasped Raina’s hands and gently squeezed them. “Come. My father awaits his beautiful bride.” She picked up the bouquets of violets laced with silver ribbons, giving the larger one to Raina and the one matching her own to Piper. With a final smile for Raina, Connor’s daughters took their places before the entrance to the Great Hall. A hush fell over the gathering, and Samuel nudged his father. Raina entered with quiet dignity as Shale and Piper stepped apart for her to pass. Connor drew her to his side, and together they turned to face Henicles, the wizard. Joy radiated from them through the entire hall. Little Simeon giggled and waved.

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Henicles tilted his head toward Simeon. “We share your joy this day. As love has brought you to this time, love will guide your lives. Cherish each other and live in that love, remembering the gifts Father God has given you. We ask now His blessing on your union.” He raised his arm above them. “Great Father, we rejoice with you in the love you have given Connor and Raina. We pray that it will blossom and grow, flowing out to all who come into their lives. Bind them closely in that love and pour your blessings upon them. Strengthen them when troubles come and draw their hearts always to you and to each other. Connor, you may kiss your bride.”

A warm glow ensued and flowed throughout the Great Hall, holding all of them in its embrace. The kiss ended, and joyful music began the celebration. Samuell embraced his father and then kissed Raina’s cheek. For once, he had no words to convey his feelings.

After the feast, the dance began. Samuell and his older cousins were never shy in seeking partners. Shale noticed one maiden who seemed to take most of Samuell’s attention. “They are growing up so fast,” she mourned to Avian.

“Indeed, Samuell is not lacking for dance partners this night.” He gently touched her cheek, drawing her attention to him. “They are filling the tables with flowers, my love. May I share this dance with you?”

Shale rose gracefully, with baby Ian in her arms. Avian, holding Simeon, selected four blue roses and

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presented them to his wife. “Blue roses for love, one for each of my loves.” Shale leaned her head against his chest, thinking of their firstborn son who dwelt in the land of the dead. Simeon thrust his flower into the face of his baby brother, who promptly let the entire Great Hall know he did not approve. Shale snuggled the baby against her shoulder and selected a blue rose for her husband. They entered the dance, and Simeon clapped for joy. Toward the end of the dance, Avian whispered, “Look at Samuell.” Shale turned to find her brother exchanging yellow flowers, representing the desire for courtship, with a blushing maiden.

“He chooses well to pursue a courtship with Elana, but I have chosen better,” Avian said, kissing Shale softly as he dodged the fist of their youngest son.

Connor held Raina close and smiled into her loving eyes. “Many changes come to us, and Father God is faithful through them all.” He gently brushed back a wayward strand of her hair. “I am so thankful for you.”