The Tale of Turana

From: The Midsummer Mouse © Copyright 2013 – Reg Down

All rights reserved. No part of this publication, in part or in whole may be reproduced, transmitted or utilized in any form, without the permission of the author, except for brief quotations in critical articles and reviews.

The unedited chapter and tale told by the Summer Queen at the Midsummer's Eve festival.

The mention of Little Sword is part of another, related, set of tales.

he Summer Queen stood before the gathering. A murmur went through the crowd. People were wondering who she was. Some said she must be a new parent and asked who her child was and in which grade—but nobody knew. To others she looked familiar and they were trying to remember where they had seen her; they were certain they had met her before. A few pointed, and said, "Look, there's the one we saw in the forest. She's the one who put a garland on my head, I'm sure of it."

The Summer Queen looked so regal, so filled with life and warmth, and in her eyes there burned an inner fire. She raised her hand for quiet.

"Dear Parents, the world of nature turns itself inside-out and outside-in every year. In winter, when the earth is cold and icy and the trees leafless and bare, we stay inside our houses and feel the light and warmth within us. That is the time of the Inner Sun when the Christmas Child is born. But in summer the earth is warm, the sun rises into the heights and nature blossoms. The world's bright loveliness is all around us now, it speaks to us and urges us to free our narrow selves, to wing our way into the universe, to trust that we will find ourselves anew in the light and warmth that surrounds us."

The Summer Queen paused for a moment and bowed her head. The cow with the beautiful horns reached out and gave her a little push with her nuzzle and everyone laughed. She stroked the cow's head and neck before she turned to the children and spoke again.

"Dear Children," she said, "there was once a maiden born when the world was young. Her name was Turana. Her mother was a beautiful cow, and the cow was the whole wide world, and the maiden was born as a drop of milk.

"That's our story," whispered Tom. "The one in the book."

"Who is this lady?" said Farmer John, astonished.

"Shhh," said June Berry. "Listen."

Turana grew up in a beautiful garden, a paradise upon the earth, and she was as happy as any child could be. She grew and she grew until she was twelve years old. After that she grew no older. She stayed the same age and lived in the world as a young maiden in the lovely garden.

Now there was at that time a witch who lived in a nasty hole in the ground just outside the garden. Her name was Aga-Aga. She wore black clothes and a dirty yellow hat. She had a bent and bony nose, and crooked teeth stuck out of her mouth.



She despised the young maiden, Turana. She despised her innocence. She hated that she could live so freely in the paradise garden.

But there was also another witch. Her name was Sifferlu. She lived in a flowering tree. The flowers were huge and luscious and multicolored. Whoever dipped their nose into one of these flowers and smelled its perfume fell asleep and dreamed

in lovely colors that were not of this world. Sifferlu was as strangely beautiful as the flowers, and she dressed in the same sensuous colors. She had wings of lovely peacock-blue, and her golden hair spread out behind her head in a fan. Sifferlu was jealous of the beautiful maiden, Turana. She was jealous of her innocent beauty, for Turana's beauty came from goodness and not from looks.

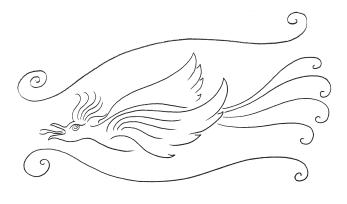
These two witches, Aga-Aga and Sifferlu, hated one another. They hated each other fiercely, for one was ugly and hated beauty, and the other was beautiful and hated ugliness. But

there was one thing they hated more than each other, and that was the innocent and lovely Turana.

One day the witches got together and made a plan. Aga-Aga covered her hole in the ground with thin branches and leaves and waited inside. Then the beautiful witch Sifferlu changed herself into a colorful bird who flew to Turana, singing:

'Turana, Turana, Girl who is blessed, Turana, Turana, Come to my nest!'

and Tur'ana followed. She followed the colorful bird who was calling and singing,



'Turana, Turana, Girl who is blessed, Turana, Turana, Come to my nest.'

O, the bird looked so lovely, she looked so pretty with her turquoise wings and colorful crest. Turana ran lightly out of the garden. She ran after the singing bird and fell into the witches hole.

'Crack!' went the branches covering the hole. Turana screamed—but as she fell into Aga-Aga's dark clutches Sifferlu the Beautiful reached down and grabbed her by the hair. The witches pulled against each other fiercely, struggling to win Turana.

'Let her go,' cackled the dark witch. 'She is mine!'

'No, she is mine,' hissed the beautiful witch. 'You let her go!' and they pulled so hard that Turana was about to be torn in two.

Just then a strange thing happened. A pesky mosquito called Little Sword was sleeping inside the ear of the World Cow. When Turana screamed the Cow's ear twitched and woke Little Sword.

"Oh, I am so hungry," said Little Sword, yawning. "I must find something to eat," and off he flew—zzzzzzzzzzzing, zzzzzzzzzzing, zzzzzzzzzzzing—deeper and deeper into the World Cow's ear, and there it was, deep inside her ear, that he stuck in his little sword.

O how the World Cow jumped! She heaved and bawled and the whole earth tilted to one side. From then on the world wobbled, and it leaned like a sailing ship on the sea as it went spinning around the sun.

Instantly the witches were thrown about. They let Turana go and the Witch-Of-Darkness was thrown into the deepest dungeons of the earth, and the Witch-Of-Brightness was cast into the sky far above the clouds.

Turana walked free. She looked about and saw that the world was changed. The earth had tilted and wobbled and it was spring. Dear Children, I know it sounds strange, but for the first time it was spring. Before, it had always been the same, year in and year out, year after year after year. Now a million seeds were sprouting, now a million buds were bursting, and daffodils nodded their heads. Turana was delighted. She danced about like the young girl that she was and put bluebells in her hair.

But after a few weeks she noticed that the earth kept changing. The plants grew taller, the buds opened all their leaves and the orchards lost their flowers and set green fruit. The sun rose higher and higher in the sky too—this was new and had never happened before. Day by day Turana noticed that she too was changing. She grew tall and womanly, and by midsummer, when the sun stood high in the sky, she had become a woman completely. She looked up to the sun and saw how the life of the earth was dancing above the clouds and living in the light.

A month passed, then two. The corn cobs grew yellow and sweet, the fruit on the trees swelled and ripened, and the wheat and barley grew golden in the warmth of late summer. Turana also grew riper and fuller, and the first strands of silver appeared in her hair.

When the fruit was ripe, when the grapes could get no sweeter, when the leaves turned from green to golden red, all Turana's hair was turning gray and her skin was no longer smooth.

At last all the leaves were gone and the trees stood stark and bare. Frost killed the flowers and the ground was covered with ice and snow. Turana turned into an old crone. She walked bent and crooked and wise with age, and her skin was wrinkled and dry. In the depths of winter she found a stairway leading into the ground, and taking all that she remembered into her heart she hobbled down the stairs deep into the earth.

What did the old Turana do? What did she do under the earth?

She took the light and warmth from her summer memories, the memories stored in her heart, and made from them liquid gold. All winter she stayed under the ground and made liquid gold. When all her memories had turned to living gold Turana bathed in it. She cast off her ragged clothes and bathed in the gold. Her old skin fell away and she stood, hardly twelve years old again, in a dress of freshest green. Then up the stairs she skipped and out into a new springtime, ready to live another year.

And so it is, dear Children, so it is to this day that Turana lives and walks in the world as a girl, as a woman, and as an old, old crone. Today is Midsummer's Eve and by now Turana has grown into the Summer Queen. She visits folk who burn the bright bonfire to give thanks to the sun—and if they have forgotten the Holy World Cow, she brings along her mother and leads her round the fire."

Then the Summer Queen led the cow of many colors around the bonfire. She led her round until they were out of sight on the other side of the flames. Everyone waited for her to reappear—but she didn't. At first they thought she had stopped, but when she didn't appear the children jumped up and ran around the flames to the other side.

"There's no one here! There's no one here!" they cried. "Where has the Summer Queen gone?" Farmer John leaped up from his blanket. He rushed around the bonfire, but she was gone—the Summer Queen had vanished.