

The Tale of Turana

From: The Midsummer Mouse
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*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.*

The 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.”

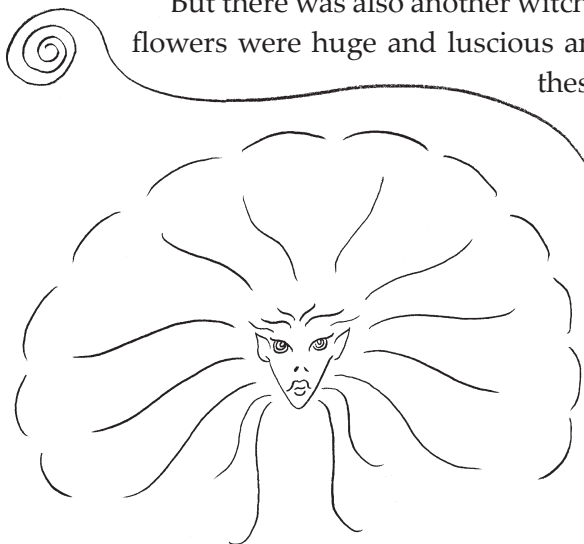
Turana grew up in a beautiful garden, a paradise upon the earth, and she was as happy as any child could be. She grew and she grew until she was twelve years old. After that she grew no older. She stayed the same age and lived in the world as a young maiden in the lovely garden.

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.'*

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.

