

Birth of a Green Man

Laurie R. King

A god is born where need and torment meet. A god is born when dark and light are one and the same. A god is born, and the earth is given voice to sing its joy and its terror. And where a god is born—have no doubt about this—there is blood.

He died when the great god War ripped open his skull and thundered confusion inside. He died, until one spring day he left the hospital, to creep off to a place of childhood quiet and innocence among the Cumbrian lakes. A place where all deaths were meant to be and the only thunder lay in pregnant clouds.

Green air washed him, wood and soil touched him, fur and feather healed him. He shunned a mansion; he built a cave in a meadow. He went days, weeks without speech.

The greens-man heard the child first, a gulp and choke pressing through the summer-thick trees and troubling the birds. He thought it a creature caught in a poacher's cruel trap. He was not altogether wrong.

A boy, thin and brown and years from requiring a razor. He'd seen the roving lad before, seen the way the woodland creatures did not mind the boy's presence. This was not a lad who turned restlessness into cruelty.

The boy was hunched beneath a tree, cradling his left arm with exquisite tenderness. His tears were those of a child, rage-filled and impotent.

Pain: this was a thing the greens-man could deal with.

He stepped from the trees, permitting a branch to whisper against his sleeve. The startled boy gaped at this man born of the woods: a man with too-long hair and untidy beard, whose clothes might have been woven from the

leaves behind him, who waited at a distance, palms outstretched, saying nothing. The boy dashed the moisture from his cheeks, and his sharp fear subsided into wariness. The man came forward. He dropped to his heels, holding

his hands, and stretched out his hands in invitation. Several minutes

passed, the boy shifted just a fraction, and the man reached

out his fingers confirmed what his eyes had told him,

and to talk the boy calm.

He said, "I can fix it for you, but it'll hurt

you. Afterwards it will be just sore.

The boy was a brave lad, and he

nodded. A German shell landed

near the wagon. The horses panicked

and they bolted. Yanked his

arm, and he

was brooding a thread of

he tried to wrap his mind

around what was a brave lad,

and he gave permission by

nodding. The man kept his

hands on what had to be done.

They were finding their way into

the woods. They wore the same look that

was indistinguishable

from the time as a woodland

man trudged manfully

as the farmer

to the ground, and

the farmer's

the muck-

The

its top.

man.

"Birth of a Green Man"

is an original and complete short

story illuminating the

history of a central

character in the 2010

Mary Russell/Sherlock

Holmes novel *The God*

of the Hive. This broadside is

printed in color on heavy 14x20

inch stock, ready for framing, a

companion piece to last year's short

story/broadside "A Venomous Death."

Only 250 of them have been printed,

and the copies are numbered and signed

by both the author and the artist. "Birth of a

Green Man" is available through chosen book

stores for \$25 plus shipping.

The author's profits go to Heifer International.

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