



Green Woman

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Retold Fairy Tales

The townspeople first noticed something was different with Annalise the moment she was born. The small village had been in trouble for some time now; a freeze had stunted the growth of all the plants and crops for miles around, and the townspeople had become as bitter as the cold that seeped into every cracked window and wooden door. However, when baby Annalise's shrill cry broke the tense silence inside the house, the cold seemed to break with it. Warm sunshine streamed through the clouds for the first time after months of frost and weeks later the relief and cheer was palpable in the air throughout the winding village. Annalise was a green witch, something she would learn to control, love, and despise over her life. Her natural gifts allowed her to grow anything she desired, and Annalise became widely known as the "green woman" as word of her gift spread throughout the mountain passes.

However, Annalise spent her days alone, as her gift was not the only thing she noticed from an early age. She never understood the childish boys who pulled her dress and teased her until she used her gift for their entertainment. Annalise was much more fond of the kindness and softness of girls, especially her best friend Lucille. They were inseparable since Annalise grew Lucille an orange tree when she was five years old and hungry. There was something different about her to Annalise, a feeling that only grew stronger as they grew older and evolved from picking mountain flowers by the creek to sneaking hand rolled cigarettes behind the schoolhouse. Lucille genuinely appreciated Annalise's gift, and was not afraid of it like the other townspeople pretended not to be. But was clear in the way they kept their distance from Annalise and her isolated cabin surrounded by vines and herbs, her magic was not to be trusted.

✕Lucille married a man with respectable job and a temper as hot as the sun. Annalise stayed in her cabin and strengthened her gift, spending her nights thinking of Lucille's golden hair and the way she snorted when she laughed. Lucille made the journey to Annalise as often as she could, frequently asking for herb salve to put on

the myriad of bruises that she always had excuses for. Annalise helped her, stayed quiet as she spread salve over the dark blues and purples Lucille hid well under her dresses, but her heart broke more with every visit and she longed to lock the door behind Lucille and never let her leave. Then the day came where Lucille confided in Annalise that she had been aching, getting sick in the morning, and craving unusual herbs. Annalise felt her throat close and she grabbed Lucille's hand.

"That home is no place for a child."

Lucille tugged her long sleeves over the dark marks on her wrist.

"Please, Annalise, don't do this. I just need some rapunzel plant for my cravings."

"I can't give you what you need unless you agree to stay here. I can protect you."

Lucille stood up angrily and drew her hand back. Annalise remained at the table, trying to slow down her racing mind and shallow breathing.

"You know I can't do that Anna."

"Please Lucille, I'm begging you. I can take care of this baby with you."

Lucille grabbed a bundle of rapunzel that was hanging from the wall and walked out the door without a word. Annalise stood up, her anxiety and heartbreak causing all the flowers in the cabin to wither. She waited day after day hoping to see Lucille's tall, slender figure walking up the overgrown path to the cabin, but Lucille never came.

Months later, the town priest visited Annalise and told her that Lucille had died in childbirth. Her body could not handle the birth, she lost a lot of blood, she was too weak. Annalise kept still until the priest had left. When he finally disappeared from her sight, she crumpled to the floor and wailed while all the windows in the village below shattered in unison with her heart. Her wailing echoed through the mountains and her grief manifested as dark snow clouds that blocked out all light. Annalise had protected the village from a dangerous freeze every year since her birth, but the pain of losing her love caused heavy snow to fall and blanket the village in a deep winter sleep.

Annalise was a lone figure as she walked through the silent streets. The sudden bitter cold had driven all the villagers inside. When she reached the house where Lucille had spent the last few years of her short life, Annalise stood in quiet rage and watched as the long vines under her control snaked into the shattered window. The leaves cradled the child, Lucille's child, and placed the sleeping little girl into Annalise's cloaked arms. She had startling green eyes, just like Lucille, and she opened her mouth to cry but Annalise laid a gentle finger over her mouth and swaddled her in the cloak.

"I loved you mother for a very long time, and I couldn't protect her. But I promise to protect you. We're going

far away from this village. I'll build you a tall, safe tower and give you everything you'll ever need. I'll keep you away from men like your father. It will just be you and me, sweet baby.”

Annalise pulled the child against her tightly and walked, flowers blooming in the snow next to her footsteps, out of the frozen village toward the green mountains.

“And I think I will name you Rapunzel”

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