

The Gift of Evil

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TALES OF RAMION

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"You are about to have two daughters. Both will be descendants of the Wise Woman and the Grunches of Grunch Castle. Both will have good and evil genes. In the end each will have the choice whether to follow good or evil: it is not predetermined. But much is at stake, not just for you and your descendants. We must increase the chances of at least one child embracing the path of good. We cannot allow both to be taken by Sir Tancred."



"How can we avoid that?" demanded David. "My father has great powers. He cannot easily be defeated."

"Let me speak and you will find out," observed the woman hurrying on. "You are about to have identical twins. The younger child will be called Susan: she will share the first name of the Wise Woman. You will put her up for adoption. I have the papers here." She took some legal papers out of her bag and held them out with a pen.

At this David exploded. "You're insane! You come here a complete stranger telling us we are about to have twins, that we are to sign adoption papers for the younger child, that we are to deliver her up into your hands. You are completely mad."

At this Melanie took David by the arm and said firmly, "She is not. What she whispered in my ear was not just the secret name given to me at birth, but the name of the person from whom the Wise Woman derived her powers. It is ours to listen, to trust and do what she says."

"Trust! But this is madness!"



"I know it is hard for a Grunch to trust, but we must do whatever this woman tells us." Melanie signed the adoption papers. "Now you." David fell silent and without protest signed: he had never known his wife so firm, so determined. "Good woman please continue. You will take away little Susan for adoption. You will save her. But what of our elder daughter? I am frightened for her. I am frightened for her future."



"Your elder daughter has a harder fate than that of Susan, a fate from which we cannot save her. Sir Tancred knows you are with child. He is determined to get that child. He wants an heir. We do not have the power to stop him. Your elder daughter will be called Griselda. A name used by the Grunches of Grunch Castle."

"A traditional name for a witch!"

"But not just for witches. She will be taken by Sir Tancred. Her path will be hard, far harder than that of her twin Susan, but she will have a choice, a choice between the path of good and the path of evil. Beyond that I cannot see."

"Poor little Griselda," moaned Melanie as with a gasp she grasped her belly. "My waters have broken. I am about to give birth."

Melanie gave birth to twin girls. The elder was placed in a cot beside her mother. The younger was concealed in a leather briefcase which the woman carried off.

