

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Sleeping Beauty

by Charles Way

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Character List:

Branwen, the Bright Witch

Modron, the Dark Witch

Gryff

King Peredur

Queen Guinevere

The Bishop

Princess Briar Rose

Prince Owain

Tylwyth Teg 1

Tylwyth Teg 2

The Spider King

Note: The witches have their own spaces/areas in view throughout the entire play

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

Act One: Scene 1

The lights rise on the bright witch, Branwen, and the dark witch, Modron. Modron, who is dressed in dark green, sits spinning at a dark spinning wheel. Branwen, who is also dressed in green but a light gentle tone, sits at a harp. The sound of the harp represents her presence. Modron also has an identifying sound, which is dark and foreboding. Both witches (who are not traditional witches, in regards to broomsticks etc., but supernatural women of the forest) sit at opposite sides of the stage in their own space from where, using their own magic, they can watch events elsewhere in the forest or castle. At the feet of Branwen sits Gryff, a strange looking creature who is half-human, half-dragon.

BOTH Once upon a time a long, long time ago

MODRON In a land

BRANWEN In a land

BOTH So very far away. BRANWEN Once upon a time MODRON Twice
upon a time

BRANWEN and all the times together as ever I heard of but be sure it was a
long time ago when the ploughs were pulled across the earth by
strong horses, and water was drawn from the well.

MODRON When the woods were full

BRANWEN of Fairy Folk

MODRON and Spider Kings

BRANWEN and Witches bright

MODRON and Witches dark who could fly in and out of moments

BRANWEN and round the world in less time than it takes to say, good
morning.

MODRON In this time there was a castle with three towers

BRANWEN Inside the castle lived a King...

The King enters.

MODRON and Queen.

The Queen enters. They form a sad tableau.

MODRON They were sad because they had no children.

BRANWEN Every day they would go for a walk into the great forest.

MODRON The great forest.

The lights change and the King and Queen move into the forest. As they do so, Modron's sound fills the stage.

KING PEREDUR Did you hear that noise? Sounded like thunder. Shall we go home Gwyn, dear?

QUEEN GUINEVERE Don't call me "Gwyn dear". My name is Guinevere. Besides I'm not talking to you.

PEREDUR You are.

GUINEVERE I'm not.

PEREDUR You just did.

GUINEVERE This isn't talking, it's bickering. PEREDUR What's the matter now?

GUINEVERE Nothing. I'm fine. I'm really very, very, very, very happy. Don't touch me. You are no happier than I, so don't pretend.

PEREDUR Guinevere, the time has come for us to accept that we are not going to have children. It's our fate. We have to accept it.

GUINEVERE Well I won't. I can't. (Exits)

PEREDUR Guinevere, don't walk ahead – please. The forest is no place to get lost, Guinevere? (Silence) Gwyn...? My Dear...? (Exits)

MODRON ...deeper and deeper they walked into the great forest

BRANWEN Where a baby lay sleeping. The most beautiful baby ever seen,
waiting to be found by a King and Queen

A light shines down on the baby. We hear Branwen's harp sound. Guinevere enters.

MODRON It was the last day of Winter

BRANWEN The first day of Spring.

GUINEVERE Peredur?

PEREDUR (Off) Gwyn dear.

GUINEVERE I'm over here.

PEREDUR (Off) Where's here?

GUINEVERE By the oak tree.

PEREDUR (Off) Which oak tree?

GUINEVERE The wooden one – oh heavens above. PEREDUR (Enters)
Guinevere?

GUINEVERE (Off) Perry – Peredur.

PEREDUR I'm over here.

GUINEVERE (Off) Where's here?

PEREDUR By the oak tree.

GUINEVERE (Off) Which oak tree?

PEREDUR Oh Lord. (Exits)

Gryff has been watching all this in a magic mirror, which he now puts down.

GRYFF That's odd. I thought they were meant to find the baby.

BRANWEN (Opens her eyes) You mean they haven't? (grabs the mirror) What's the matter with them? Couldn't they see the light? I purposely put a light on the child. (She sits back exhausted)

GRYFF You've overdone it again. Tired yourself out getting spells wrong.
BRANWEN I'll just close my eyes. Gather my powers.

GRYFF Aye, have a sleep why don't you. I sometimes wonder what it would be like working for someone who can actually get a spell right. (She opens her eyes and stares at him) But who am I – a servant – nothing more.

BRANWEN Just keep an eye on the magic mirror. I'll try to steer the King and Queen in the right direction.

We hear her music again and the light on the baby becomes stronger.

BRANWEN What's happening?

GRYFF Nothing, the baby is sleeping beneath the rose bush, as before. The Royal couple... (Enter King and Queen) Have found each other... (Exit King and Queen) No they haven't.

BRANWEN The child! The child?

GRYFF I told you. Asleep. And your magic light is - (The light goes off) ... is off!

BRANWEN Off?

GRYFF Branwen, there's a shadow in the forest moving towards the baby.

Branwen grabs the mirror and glares at it for a moment, as she does so we see Modron enter the forest.

MODRON Well, well, what have we here? BRANWEN My sister. Come there's no time to lose. GRYFF I'm gone. I'm gone.

Exit Gryff and Branwen, Modron approaches the baby.

MODRON Little child, so innocent, so helpless. I was once just like you, but something happened. Never mind eh? (She tickles the child under the chin) Oh little child - an idea occurs to me. A bright, bouncing bold idea. You can come with me. Aye - I'll bring you up as if you were my own. I will teach you everything I know and I know so much, so much. My little sleeping ...

Branwen approaches.

BRANWEN Don't touch her.

MODRON Sister. What kept you?

BRANWEN The child is in my care.

MODRON Then you're careless indeed to leave her alone in the forest where I found her.

BRANWEN I found her first. She was abandoned by a poor forest girl who was sick and couldn't feed her. Now she is my gift to the King and Queen. You cannot interfere.

MODRON Cannot?

BRANWEN My light was upon her.

MODRON Not when I found her, therefore I claim her as my own.

BRANWEN You? What use would you have for a child?

This enrages Modron.

MODRON I? I will bring up the child as if she were my own.

BRANWEN Oh Modron, whatever goodness there is left in you I call upon it now. Let the baby be seen by the King and Queen. They've waited so long for a child and suffered so much. Let them be happy. Let the child be happy. (Pause)

MODRON If I were to give up my claim, what would you give me in return?

BRANWEN In return? (Sees Gryff) You may have my servant.

GRYFF What?

BRANWEN She gets her spells right, isn't that what you wanted?

GRYFF But-

BRANWEN Sssh!

MODRON What kind of creature is it?

BRANWEN Half dragon, half man. It was a spell which ... went a little wrong.

MODRON Can he fly?

BRANWEN Um - not yet.

MODRON Can he spit fire?

BRANWEN No actually, he can't.

MODRON Can he do anything?

BRANWEN He's got a very thick skin.

GRYFF Just as well.

BRANWEN And he's excellent fun and very loyal.

MODRON I don't want him. He's hideous. I want the child.

BRANWEN You can't have her.

GRYFF The King and Queen approach!

MODRON If/ can't have the child, they shall not have the child.

BRANWEN But why Modron? Why?

MODRON Because you provoke me. The child is invisible.

She makes her spell and the women retreat. Enter the King and Queen.

PEREDUR I told you not to walk ahead. We're lost, totally lost.

GUINEVERE Sssh. What sound was that?

PEREDUR What?

GUINEVERE I heard something from the trees.

PEREDUR It's just the wind in the leaves.

GUINEVERE No.

PEREDUR Come - we should return to the castle. The forest is full of strange creatures.

GUINEVERE I thought I heard a cry. It sounded like - like a baby crying.

PEREDUR This is not funny Guinevere.

GUINEVERE But I heard it.

PEREDUR It's the forest. It knows our deep desire and plays tricks upon us.
Come let's go.

GUINEVERE It came from over there I think.

PEREDUR Guinevere. Come back.

The Queen searches.

BRANWEN Now with all the powers at my command I overturn my sister's hand. Come light, come shine. See the child, see the child.

Suddenly a ray of light shines down.

GUINEVERE Look, look.

PEREDUR Stay back. Stay back.

GUINEVERE No. It's a baby- a little baby.

PEREDUR It can't be. It can't be.

GUINEVERE But it is. See.

MODRON You shall not see! You shall not see!

Modron raises her hand and the light goes off.

PEREDUR It's gone. We must leave this place Guinevere.

GUINEVERE Gone?

PEREDUR There's dark magic here - let us go.

GUINEVERE But the baby...?

PEREDUR It's an illusion.

Branwen brings on the light again.

GUINEVERE No. *(She runs to the child and picks it up)* No. It's real.

MODRON SSS - Sister. *(She retreats into the shadows)*

GUINEVERE You see husband.

PEREDUR Put it down Guinevere. It's obviously a fairy child.

GUINEVERE This is no fairy child Peredur. This is a human child. Look at her hair, all dark and curly.

PEREDUR But who? Who would-?

GUINEVERE Sssh.

PEREDUR But we can't just ...

GUINEVERE Yes! Don't you see. She's a gift, a gift. (*She has said "she" without thinking*)

PEREDUR She?

GUINEVERE Yes, yes, a baby girl. Our baby girl.

The Queen hands the baby to the King.

PEREDUR Ours? Oh Guinevere- she's so - so perfect. Little girl, you have been entrusted to our care, somehow, and we shall love you and never let you go. And we shall call you –

BRANWEN Briar Rose.

GUINEVERE (*As if it is her own idea*) Briar Rose. Promise me, you'll never cut down one tree of this forest. It has given us a child.

PEREDUR I promise. We must hurry home and tell everyone the good news, Gwyn my dear!

GUINEVERE Perry!

They exit. Modron and Branwen approach and stand face to face.

MODRON You changed my spell. You changed my spell.

BRANWEN Of course, I changed your spell.

MODRON We're not permitted to change each other's spells. You broke the law.

BRANWEN You gave me no choice. Leave the child alone. Modron I beg you.

MODRON So you should. (Pause) All our long lives you have considered yourself better than I. Age after Age - King after King, you have looked down on me, but now the time has come. We shall see whose magic is the strongest.

BRANWEN Please, leave the girl alone.

MODRON Or else?

BRANWEN Or else one of us will perish in the fight for her life.

MODRON Then let it be so, to the death, to the death.

Modron goes to her cell. Branwen collapses exhausted. Gryff rushes forward.

GRYFF Mistress.

BRANWEN We must hurry.

GRYFF You're in no fit state to hurry.

They return to Branwen's cell.

BRANWEN We have to keep watch over Briar Rose.

GRYFF You need to rest.

BRANWEN We cannot rest. If we shut our eyes, Modron may harm her. Keep watch. *(She gives Gryff the magic mirror and sits exhausted.)*

SCENE 2

Inside The Castle .Lights rise on the King and Queen, this time a happy tableau. The queen holds the baby. Music begins and the King and Queen dance.

BRANWEN What's happening?

GRYFF The King and Queen are in the castle gardens.

Dancing. Rather badly.

BRANWEN Watch them. *(They continue to dance)*

PEREDUR We should have her christened as soon as possible.

GUINEVERE Yes.

PEREDUR Everyone will have to be invited.

GUINEVERE Everyone?

PEREDUR Of course. It's a royal occasion.

GUINEVERE Even Branwen and Modron?

PEREDUR The people would find it very strange if they weren't invited. It's tradition.

GUINEVERE I will not invite Modron to the Christening.

Modron who is listening to every word, spins her spindle and a low dark sound emanates from her corner and fills the stage.

GRYFF Branwen, something's happening!

Branwen opens her eyes and takes the mirror.

PEREDUR Branwen and Modron are as old as this Kingdom. They've been to every Christening, every marriage and every funeral since, since, the beginning.

GUINEVERE And at every function, I have seen Modron grow darker and meaner. All these years she has gloated over our unhappiness and I will not invite her.

PEREDUR She has the power of magic Guinevere. It is dangerous to ignore her.

GUINEVERE No!

PEREDUR Very well, but Branwen will come. She can give our daughter many magic blessings which she will need. My Queen, perhaps –

GUINEVERE Modron is not invited.

BRANWEN Modron is not invited.

GRYFF Not invited?

MODRON Not invited. Not invited.

BRANWEN Gryff. We must get ready for the Christening. I'll need all of my powers.

GRYFF But you don't have to worry about Modron. She's not invited.

MODRON Not invited, not invited.

BRANWEN Do you think that will stop her?

MODRON NOT INVITED!

Modron's anger is released through a build up of her sound, which crashes into thunder and lightning. The King and Queen look up at the skies and run for cover. Modron exits.

PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT