

Now not too far away from the very place we are today - I'm not going to tell you exactly where, mind, - for your own good you understand - there's a hill. On moonlit nights three green ladies would dance together there. No one dared go near that hill - all except for one person. That person was a farmer who had a farm nearby - and even he would only go up the hill on one day a year and that was midsummer's eve when he would walk to the top of that hill. He would lay a bunch of late primroses at the roots of each of the three trees that grew there. The sun would shine and the leaves would rustle - but he didn't linger long. He always made sure he was safely in bed before the sunset.

His farm was a very rich farm; prosperous. Often, he would gather his three sons around him and he would tell them why this was so. He would say:

Our luck lies up there on the hill - and after I am dead and gone, you must always do what I have done - as did my father before me and his father before him. Every midsummer's eve, you must always walk up that hill and lay a bunch of late primroses at the roots of each tree - but be warned. Do not linger longer. Make sure you are always safely in bed before the sun sets.

And the three sons listened but none of them paid much attention - all except the youngest. The years went by and eventually the old man died. Throughout all the years of his life, on moonlit nights, three green ladies would dance on that hill.

The old man's farm was divided up between his three sons. The two eldest got nice big farms with luxury farmhouses - but all that was left for the younger son was a poor, rough strip of ground at the foot of the hill and an old tumbledown cottage. But he didn't moan. He set about his work - and as he worked, he sang. Every midsummer's eve he always walked to the top of that hill where he would lay a bunch of late primroses at the roots of each of the three trees. The sun would shine out and the leaves would rustle - but he didn't linger long - he always made sure that he was safe in his bed before the sun set - just as his father had told him.

Now the two big farms weren't doing so well. Weeds grew through the crops and animals wasted away. One day the two elder brothers came down to see their younger brother. When they saw how well his crops were growing, how much fruit hung from his fruit trees and how much milk his cows were giving, they were angry and jealous.

The middle brother said:

So who helps you with your work here?

But the youngest brother wouldn't answer. And the eldest brother said:

They say in the village that there's singing and dancing here in the middle of the night - when a hardworking farmer like yourself should be tucked safely in his bed.

But still the youngest brother didn't answer. So the eldest brother said:

Now what were you doing up the hill just now? As we came down to see you, we saw you up there.

And the younger brother, all he said was: *Just doing what father asked us to do all those years ago for today is midsummer's eve.*

Well that's as maybe. Said the eldest brother. **But that hill now belongs to me - and I wont have you going up there - midsummer's eve or no midsummer's eve. And anyway, I need to build myself a big barn - and, what's more, I'm going to chop down one of those three trees to build it with. You two can help me do it.**

The middle brother made an excuse - he had to go to market the next day. The youngest didn't say a word. The next day - Midsummer's Day - the eldest brother got together some horses and men. They took their biggest axes and they went off up that hill. As they reached the top of the hill, the three trees shuddered in fear. The wind began to blow and howl. The eldest brother took his axe. As he lay the first blow into the tree, it screamed like a woman and the horses ran away and the men ran after. Still, the eldest brother stayed there, chopping away with his axe. The wind howled more loudly and the other trees lashed out their branches in anger - but finally, the murdered tree fell down. If you had been down in the lane where the youngest brother was watching, you would have seen, as he did, that as the tree fell down, it fell down right on top of the eldest brother, killing him outright. By and by the men came and took away the dead bodies of man and tree. From that day on - on moonlit nights - there were only two Green Ladies to dance on the hill.

The middle brother inherited the eldest's farm and the younger still had just his little cottage down at the foot of the hill. Still, every mid summer's eve, he walked to the top of the hill and laid a bunch of late primroses at the roots of the remaining two trees. The sun would shine out and the leaves

would rustle - but he didn't linger long - he always made sure he was safe in his bed before the sun set - just as his father had told him. And still the two big farms, now combined, weren't doing too well. And still, the younger brother, with his tumble down cottage, prospered. His crops were growing well, fruit hung from the trees and his cow was giving lots of creamy milk. One day, the middle brother was looking out of the window of his farmhouse and he saw his younger brother up that hill. He ran out. He was too afraid to go up that hill himself, but he called to him - he shouted:

Hey, come down here!

And the youngest brother came down to him. The middle brother said:

What do you think you're doing up that hill now?

And the youngest brother, all he said was: *Just doing what father asked us to do all those years ago for today is midsummer's eve.*

That's as maybe. But that hill belongs to me now, and I won't have you going up there - midsummer's eve or no midsummer's eve. I can see I'm going to have to build a big fence around that hill to keep you out. What's more, I'm going to chop down one of those trees for the wood to build it with.

That night, there was no dancing and singing - just the weeping of many leaves. The next day, Midsummer's Day too mind, the middle brother got together some horses and men and they set off up the hill with their big axes. As they approached, the two trees shuddered with fear. The wind howled. The middle brother lay the first stroke of his axe to the tree and it screamed like a woman. The horses ran away and the men ran after them - but the middle brother chopped on. He was

careful to move out of the way as the murdered tree fell down. But if you had been down in the lane watching, as the youngest brother was, you would have seen as he did how the last remaining tree lifted up one of its biggest branches and brought it down on the middle brother's head - killing him outright. By and by, the men came and took away the dead tree and the dead man.

From that day on, there was only one Green Lady who sometimes would dance in the moonlight to a sad and lonely tune. The youngest brother inherited all three of the farms - but he still lived in his tumbledown cottage at the foot of the hill where he was happy. Every midsummer's eve, he would walk to the top of that hill where he would lay a bunch of late primroses at the roots of the last tree. The sun would shine out and the leaves would rustle - but he didn't linger long. He still made sure he was safe in his bed before the sun set. Just as his father and his father and his father before that had always done. The farms all prospered and the youngest son lived out all his natural days there and he would sing as he worked.

Now there are some people today who still wont go near One Tree Hill - especially on a Midsummer's eve. And there are some very old people still around who can remember being told when they were children that One Tree Hill must never be fenced in because it belonged to a Green Lady. The hill and the tree are standing there today - but it's a sad and dangerous place.