



Siobhan

(bonus story from the Black Rock biology)

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The red-haired girl was running barefoot through the valley. She was sixteen now, and instead of being cooped up at home, helping her mother with her little sister or doing housework, she was running, as if at some point she might escape from that beautiful valley.

The one in which she felt imprisoned, a prisoner of her destiny. She longed to live, to visit places she'd never been, to meet new people, to be someone else. Because she, Siobhan Kinnear, was doomed to stay there.

He stopped running and lay down on the flat rock by the lake. Even in August, the heat was not too hot and it felt good to lie on the warm rock. Several birds took flight and she raised her hands, as if she wanted to catch them or fly away with them.

She closed her eyes as the sun caressed her freckled skin and sighed. Her mother had reprimanded her again for not picking the herbs in the garden properly and drying them. Her little sister Helen was only ten years old and already more industrious than she was.

She sat up when she heard a noise. She hadn't noticed, but it was beginning to get dark. She would get another scolding for disappearing. She followed the familiar sound with her eyes. A wolf, a McDonald. Although it was rare to see them in that area, he wasn't surprised either. The wolf, golden in colour, perked its ears at the sight and sniffed.

"Come on, McDonald, I don't bite," she laughed. The wolf, hearing her, stuck out his tongue and sat down, "I don't think I know you. Have you come to visit?"

The wolf gave a short little bark and kept looking at her.

“Well, if you want, you can introduce yourself in human form. I know not now, because you're naked, but if you see me in town, say hello. I'm Siobhan Kinnear, though I guess you'll know that by now since you haven't run away”.

Another faint bark confirmed his theory.

“Well, I have to go, unknown wolf. Or my mother will throw me out of the house. But I often walk here.”

She approached the wolf and stroked its soft fur, which made the wolf close its eyes in pleasure.

“Goodbye, little wolf”.

He ran into the house and found his mother holding Helen's hand. He looked at her with an angry face, but said nothing.

She washed up and went to the kitchen. The scotch stew, something her mother made every other night, was almost ready.

“Shall I throw out the mushrooms?”, said Siobhan, watching her mother sit wearily.

“Daughter, you should take this life seriously. One day you will have to replace me and I need you to learn”.

“I have learned many things, mother,” she replied grumpily. She looked at Helen, who sat motionless, and winked at her. Papa is on the road all day, why can't I?

“Your father is a truck driver and we are witches and we defend the place. To each his own”.

Siobhan sighed and tossed the mushrooms into the stew. It wasn't typical, but her family liked it. She cut up the cooked vegetables to go with it and prepared it on three plates. It was true that her father hardly ever set foot in the house, and that made the three inhabitants sad.

“I thought I might rent some of the rooms. With a little renovation, Black Rock could be one of those hikers' hotels,” said Katherine doubtfully.

“It's fine with me, mum. Then we'll have some more money. You should get paid for defending the people”.

“Then, too, the McDonald's would have to be paid”.

“Of course, of course”.

“Besides, we have been calm for a long time and I hope to keep it that way. The three of us have enough energy to contain them”.

Siobhan sighed. Again the energy of three witches, the power of three. That trapped her more than the fact that she didn't have much money.

They dined in silence as Helen watched her. You could tell she adored her older sister. Just as she had red hair, her little sister was delicate and blonde like her father. They all had grey eyes, the heritage of the Kinnear witches.

She went to bed after doing the dishes and listened to her mother tell Helen a story. She longed for those intimate moments, "but I'm older now," she said to herself.

The moon was full and the mountain looked menacing, imposing and very beautiful. There wasn't too much mist that night and he felt the desire to go up, as if it were calling to him. What would be wrong with going to inspect, as the wolves did? But not that night. Maybe the next day he would sneak out and have a look.

She spent the night restless, as usual. Her nightmares about darkness and danger sometimes kept her awake. Her mother said she had visions, like Grandma Shaun.

He woke up and looked out of the window at the pink sunrise. The mist had already enveloped Black Rock Mountain and he decided that he would go up that day. He washed himself and, after dressing, went to his little sister's room, who was still asleep. His mother was already in the kitchen, and he went downstairs to have some porridge for breakfast. After being inexplicably obedient and hardworking, she felt scrutinised by his stern gaze. She shrugged her shoulders.

“If I finish my chores first, I can go for a run in the valley”.

Katherine sighed and nodded. Siobhan was indomitable, she couldn't handle it anymore. A free spirit, who could not be confined anywhere. She knew it and feared it.

When the village was just starting to get busy, she was already running towards the valley. She was curious to see if the wolf she had seen yesterday would show up. She sat on the stone, looking at the water. The truth is that the relationship with the wolves was not very friendly, but they greeted each other politely and worked together, which was the most important thing.

He heard a noise and turned around. A young man approached timidly, dressed in old jeans and a T-shirt. He was strong, but not like James McDonald who stood nearly six feet tall.

He smiled and stood where the wolf had stood. She smiled back.

“Come,” he said.

He came closer and was able to observe him with curiosity. He had brown hair, green eyes and a nice smile. He sat down next to her and looked at her.

“Hello, Siobhan Kinnear. I'm Finnean McDonald, James' second cousin”.

“Nice to meet you. Are you going to be here for a while?”

“Yes, I came here for a while to learn from my uncle. I live in New York”.

Siobhan's eyes lit up and he spent all morning and many more explaining to her what life was like there and what they did.

Gradually, living in the valley began to make sense to Siobhan, even though she feared that one day he would leave. And she fell in love.

After several days, he kissed her on the same stone where they had met. The kiss was as tender as it was inexperienced on both their parts. But with practice, they learned well how to caress each other, and also how to love each other.

That day, her mother had gone out to Fort William with Helen. The house was all to themselves. Siobhan invited Finnean to her room. He went in, shy. Being in a witch's house was not something the McDonalds were used to doing. In fact, his Uncle James had warned him that the two were not compatible, to stop seeing the Kinnear. But as young as he was stubborn, he didn't listen.

Siobhan undressed, leaving her small breasts and generous hips within reach of the wolf, who caressed her with his gaze. She removed his shirt and trousers and let his erect member out. She shyly touched the softness of the skin, marvelling at the contrast with the hardness.

They kissed eagerly, knowing that for both of them it was going to be the first time, but not the last. Finnean didn't know much in practice, but he knew a lot in theory, which one of his older brothers had told him, saying that he should caress the woman until she was moist for both of them to enjoy. And that's what he did. He kissed his beloved's breasts and

belly, because he loved her with all his being, and caressed her centre with his fingers. She seemed to feel uncomfortable, until pleasure began to run through her whole body.

When she felt she would burst into a thousand pieces, he thrust inside her. Slowly, so as not to hurt her, for they had both confessed they were virgins. It was a small prick, but it made up for it when he entered and exited the damp tunnel. The speed increased and Finnean's eyes changed. He went to hide his gaze, but she kissed him, showing him she didn't care what he was. They both let go and embraced, swearing eternal love to each other.

Lies have short legs and after two months they discovered that the incompatibility between the McDonalds and the Kinnear was not true, because she became pregnant.

He wanted to take responsibility for the child, but the agreement between Siobhan's mother and Jason McDonald led to Finnean's return to the United States.

Siobhan never spoke to her mother again. She was growing sadder by the day as her belly grew bigger and bigger.

Her mother began to dress wider. They would say she was the pregnant one to avoid rumours. Not that it was so terrible in the nineties for a young girl to get pregnant, but it was in that town. Siobhan agreed, she didn't care. She no longer went out running in the valley and hardly walked around the village.

The last few months, he travelled to Fort William and stayed there until Louise was born. Then he returned to the village with her.

She was a beautiful girl with brown hair and brown eyes, not grey like the Kinnear's, but she loved her. She tried to warn Finnean. They didn't have a computer, and she couldn't phone without her mother knowing, as it would be on the bill, but she needed to tell him that he had become a father and how much she missed him.

One day, walking through the village, she walked into the hotel where her cousin worked. She asked him for the favour of a telephone and perhaps the stars aligned, so she could talk to him. Crying, he promised to come and see them and she finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Louise was only a few months old when they celebrated the witches' christening, although Katherine knew she was not one. At first she despised her, but then the little girl's friendliness and sweetness won her over. For Helen, she was a new little sister to look after and feel grown up.

That day, they were all happy, they prepared to take a photo in front of the house. Siobhan's cousin set up the camera and the four of them, with the redhead holding the baby, smiled happily. A boy passed behind them, but she didn't think anything of it, took several pictures, and then they gathered in the house. Katherine took Louise and Helen, and Siobhan stayed outside, looking at the mountain.

"She's a beautiful girl," Finnean said, appearing from behind. Siobhan was startled, but turned to him and hugged him.

"Her name is Louise and she looks like you," she smiled and her legs trembled.

"I was sorry to have to leave, but my uncle..."

"I know, but you're back".

The boy turned towards the mountains and tensed his jaw.

"I've come back to see you, but not to stay. My father has put me into college, and is determined that I shall study law, like him," he said, looking guiltily at her, "and I want to, too.

"I could travel there, work at whatever and raise the child".

"No, Siobhan, it can't be. No, Siobhan, it can't be. I've got some sort of... wolfish engagement there with a girl. I can't take you. You wouldn't be happy. Besides, my uncle told me there must be three of you in Glencoe".

Siobhan was as cold as ice. She had imagined that he would come back, that the three of them would go away together and leave the valley behind. She took a picture of Louise out of her pocket and handed it to him.

"At least remember your daughter".

He turned and ran into the interior of Black Rock. He did not cry, because the pain he felt was such that he could explode. She locked herself in her room and then the pent-up energy came out, in waves. She cursed the mountain, the town that held her, wished she had never met Finnean and all hopeful thoughts disappeared.

Exhausted, she fell asleep until a terrible howl woke her up.

"Take care of your sisters!", said her mother, dressed to go out. She looked at her watch. It was not even four o'clock in the morning.

Her mother ran off into the mountains, laden with the ritual bag, and she stopped by to see if her sisters were all right. Helen was sleeping, as usual, but Louise looked at her with those intelligent eyes.

He took her in his arms and hugged her lovingly.

“Don't worry, my love, even if your father doesn't want anything to do with us, we'll manage. Someday we'll both be able to leave here”.

She sang a soft lullaby and the little girl fell asleep. After two hours, her mother returned.

She came in exhausted and dishevelled and sat down in the kitchen. Her hands were shaking. Siobhan, who was waiting for her, ran to prepare the restorative infusion. She was grateful.

“What was it?”

“Two Baohban Sith. They escaped from the rift. Luckily, James and the others took them out, with no casualties. I closed the rift. I don't know how they got through. McDonald was very upset”.

There were no more sightings, Finnean left and she remained, more or less resigned, to spend her whole life in Glencoe.

James McDonald and his wife Alanna had a baby boy, Jason, and relatives came to celebrate the baby's christening, but he didn't come.

She had seen him only once and thought he was a beautiful baby, dark-haired, dark-eyed and big. It was lucky his mother was a big wolf, because the birth must have been hard.

When Alanna, who was aware of what had happened, saw her, she told her that he was not coming back. She didn't cry, she had suffered enough. She would go on with her life, buried in that small town, with no hope of finding love.

After three years looking after her little girl, Siobhan seemed to have got used to life in the small town. There were no more sightings and she got on well with Jason McDonald's mother Alanna. Sometimes they walked together, though not in sight of her mother. Friendship between wolves and witches was not something that should happen.

Louise was a little older than Jason and they used to play together. The two hit it off very well, and Helen, who attended these encounters in silence, had a predilection for the dark-haired, handsome boy, who sometimes turned into a puppy without being able to help it. They used to go near the lake, where there was room to run and no one would disturb them.

"I don't know about witches," said Alanna, "but wolves are so unpredictable when they're small..."

They both kept an eye on Louise, who amused herself by throwing her ball to the puppy, who picked it up and carried it away as if it were a puppy.

"We receive our gifts little by little, it gives us time to get used to them. Besides, it would be quite traumatic for a witch to receive them all at once. Sometimes we see spirits, sometimes we can control the air or water... recently, Helen caused a downpour on mum, because she got angry with her. She was upset all afternoon".

They both laughed as they imagined Katherine wet. They were young and didn't like the rigidity of the relationship either.

"James wants to have another baby," Alanna sighed, "I don't know if I'm ready to deal with two puppies. Besides, what if something were to happen to him?"

"Being a single mother isn't easy either, you know that. But I keep going".

Alanna knew who Louise's father was.

"You are a very brave woman. And, besides, with the lodging-house, you will have plenty of work to do".

"My father is hardly ever at home and many people come here. The truth is that the valley is a marvellous place".

He moved his head to look out over the valley and his gaze came to Black Rock. He sighed.

"I feel so tied down here. If it wasn't for Louise, I would have left."

"What about the power of three? Wasn't that necessary?"

"There are other witches besides me, my aunt lives nearby and some cousins in the village. They may not be direct descendants, but they have their energy too".

"Cheer up, you'll have new guests today. The summer holidays are approaching".

“I don't know. More guests, more work. You know I don't dislike work, but sometimes they're horrible”.

They laughed again.

“Let's go home or James will get nervous and sniff around until he finds me. He'll be nearly back from the distillery by now”.

“Sure, see you tomorrow or the day after?”

“Of course. Take care of yourself.”

Siobhan watched her only friend leave for home, followed by a little black puppy. Sometimes her little one would suddenly change and sometimes it would be the dark-haired, intelligent-looking boy with her little girl.

Louise took her hands and lifted her onto her back.

“Helen, we're going home!2

The almost teenage girl got up from the rock where she sat, reading one of the books on rituals that Katherine kept in the attic. She was excited to read about it all. Siobhan was sure she would have looked through them all by now.

Katherine waited for them, angry.

“Siobhan, I need your help, there are new guests, please report to reception”.

“Hasn't the cousin come?”

“She's in labour, don't you remember?”

He left Louise with Helen and went to the reception, to give out room keys, directions and so on.

The first couple were older and very friendly. They came from London. He gave them the double room. He was writing down their details when someone cleared his throat.

“Good afternoon, I had a room booked”.

“Just a moment, sir," she said without looking up.

The couple went into the room and she then looked at him.

And the world stopped.

They both stared at each other as if nothing else existed on earth, as if their eyes were caught by an invisible thread. A young woman behind them coughed and pulled them out of their reverie.

“Your name, please?”

“Oliver Stanton. I booked a room, for sightseeing and stuff”.

“I’m Siobhan, I can guide you anywhere”.

“I would follow her wherever she told me,” he said without thinking.

“Room 3, third on the left,” she replied, blushing. What had happened? What was that? Who was he?

He continued to accommodate all the visitors who had come on the bus, without getting this Oliver guy out of his head. He was tall and thin, with glasses, honey-coloured eyes and brown hair. He wasn't spectacular, but she had felt their souls connect. Her heart was still beating fast for him and she still didn't understand anything.

She finished her chores and went to the kitchen, to help her mother with the dinners. Most of the guests booked full board, so there was a lot of work. They cooked international food, but also traditional Scottish dishes.

At dinnertime, serving the cold soup, he kept his eyes on her. She felt nervous and excited, and she didn't know why.

Their first kiss took place in the moonlight, two days later. She was showing him the lake and he got too close. Siobhan was drawn like a magnet to his lips and they kissed. Oliver was cautious, but she craved his kisses. He grabbed her waist and knew she was the one.

Within three days, they were talking about plans and leaving, but she had to confess her truth to him first. Two weeks after they had been with Oliver and made love as often as they could, they went for a walk in the woods. She knew James would be at the distillery, so they wouldn't go too far. Only there, it was easier for him to explain. He didn't know why.

“I have something very important to tell you,” she began.

“You know I won't mind you bringing your daughter. I am sure that my work as a lawyer, though it is just beginning, will support the three of us”.

“I appreciate that, but it's not that. It's something... different”.

“I'm listening”.

Siobhan made him sit next to a log, and she sat opposite him. He sighed, how could she tell him she was a witch? Oliver seemed so reasonable, and when she told him about the legends of Black Rock, about dangerous beings, he raised his eyebrow. She didn't say anything, but that was enough to know that he was sceptical about such things.

“You see, I know you don't believe in esoteric... matters, so to speak. But those legends I told you are true. Dark beings live in the mountain. And there are... people... who are in charge of guarding and protecting them”.

“The police”.

“Not exactly. In Glencoe there are witches, and ... wolves. I mean, people who turn into wolves to fight them,” he said, blurting it all out at once.

“I think you're very influenced by local legends, my love,” he said, “I've read things about monsters too, like the Loch Ness monster, and it all stays there”.

“If you had a real demonstration, would you believe it?”

“Are you going to become a wolf?”

She let out a laugh, and then, when she had finished laughing, she whistled softly, as Alanna did. She knew the puppy would be in the woods, he used to go exploring, even though he was very young.

Soon, a small black wolf came up to her and jumped onto her lap. She stroked it tenderly and the wolf lay down, resting on her belly.

“This is Jason”.

“Yes, a very cute little dog”.

“His dad would be offended if you called him a puppy. He's a wolf. And a boy”.

“Come on, love. Really, this...”

“Wait. Jason, sweetheart, can you change so this gentleman can see how well you're doing?”

The little dog stuck out its tongue and got off Siobhan's lap. It stood on two legs and suddenly, it wasn't a little black dog, but a little brown-haired boy, naked and grinning from ear to ear.

When Siobhan clapped her hands, Oliver, who had been frozen, reacted.

“Go on, Jason, go to Mummy, she'll be looking for you”.

The boy gave the woman a kiss and with a laugh, turned back into a little black wolf and ran away.

“But, but... how can this be?”

“MacDonalds are wolves, Kinnear's are witches. That's the way it is. I'll understand if you don't want anything to do with me," she finished as she saw Oliver pull away.

“Are you a witch? Really?”

“Yes.

He moved his hands and lifted a branch effortlessly. Oliver ran his hand over and under it. But he was still sitting. That gave Siobhan hope.

“I suppose you'll have to chew on it a bit, Oliver. You may need a few days," she said sadly. She stood up and he followed her.

They walked in silence to the pub and she left him there for a pint. With tears in her eyes, she returned to Black Rock.

At breakfast the next day, Oliver had dark circles under his eyes from not having slept all night. He looked at Siobhan, who gave him a faint smile.

“Shall we talk later?”, he said as she passed him. She nodded.

In the middle of the morning he was able to escape and went to the lake, witness of their amorous encounters. He was there, sitting on the rock, gazing into infinity. She sat next to him.

“I won't tell you that what you've told me is beyond my wildest imagination. Fuck, I couldn't imagine these things existed," he said, "but when I look at you," he continued, turning to her, "all I know is that I want to be with you, witch or not, because I've fallen in love and I love you, Siobhan. Maybe it's too soon, we've only known each other for a few weeks, but I know it's you”.

She burst into tears with emotion and hugged him. They kissed and hugged for a long time.

“Could you come to Glasgow, or would I have to move here?”, he said after a while. She looked at him in wonder.

“I'll go with you. I don't know how my mother will take it, but if you accept me, I'll go”.

“Of course, I accept you forever, we'll get married as soon as we get to my city. If you want me to”.

“ I do, Oliver”.

When they returned, each on his own, to Black Rock, he went to talk to his mother, who was just finishing settling accounts with his father, who had just arrived. He was glad, so he could tell them both at the same time. Her father was a quiet man, who accepted his wife's role in the community, even though he wasn't home much.

“Parents, I have something very important to tell you”.

They both put their pencils down on the table and listened.

“I'm going to live in Glasgow with Oliver. And I'm taking Louise with me. I'll get married there”.

They turned pale and then the discussion began.

“You're not going anywhere, young lady, what do you think you are! I'm sure once you're there, he'll dump you," said the horrified mother, "you've only just met him!

“And I know he's the love of my life. Besides, he's a lawyer and almost has a job”.

“What are you going to live on? What about Black Rock?”

“Mother, you can, and there are the cousins. I want to get out of Glencoe”.

“The cousins don't have the same energy as you," said her mother.

She pushed her father, who was still staring at her in astonishment.

“If he has fallen in love...”

“That's all I need," said Katherine, getting up from her chair and throwing it on the floor. You're making a mistake, Siobhan. You can't leave.

“I will go. And I will take my daughter with me”.

“You can't, she's in my care, she's listed as my daughter and if you take her, I'll report you for kidnapping”.

Siobhan's reddish hair stood up around her face.

“I'll leave tomorrow and come back for Louise when she's settled. And you can't take her from me”.

The girl turned back to her room, to pack her bags. Oliver was waiting for her in the corridor, and from her face, he could tell that it had not gone well.

“Maybe if I speak....”

“No. My mother is capable of doing a ritual and cursing you. Get your things and we'll leave on the next bus”.

“What about Louise?”

“We'll come and get her when we're settled. And married”.

“Whatever you say, my love”.

As Oliver went to pack his suitcase, there was a knock at the door. He found himself face to face with Siobhan's father. He was a tall guy and he feared the worst.

“I want to talk to you”.

“Please come in”.

“My daughter is a bit peculiar, I suppose you're aware of everything”.

“Yes, sir”.

“And yet you accept her, that's good. I can only ask you to take good care of her. I know she's going to leave and her mother won't accept it. It's complicated”.

“I know, sir, and I've offered to stay here, but she won't have it”.

“Siobhan was always a free spirit. She never wanted to stay here. I suppose I can come and see you at your place, can't I?”

“Of course, sir. Thank you”.

The man nodded and left the house. The next day they would leave to start their new life.

Barbara blew out the candles for her third birthday and, as they wouldn't go out, because her father had made a joke by buying one of those that don't, she raised her hand and moved it, throwing the cake against the wall.

She clapped her hands and they both stared in amazement at the girl's strength.

"I didn't expect this," said his mother worriedly.

Three years had passed too quickly. First, when they went to Glasgow, got married and she found out she was pregnant, then she had to go on bed rest. When the little girl was born, her mother flatly refused to let Louise go, and she was afraid to go to Glencoe with Barbara. She didn't want me to initiate her.

And finally, cancer. A witch didn't look like she could get sick, but she did. So she said nothing and let Louise grow up with her mother. The next thing was to bind Barbara's powers. Her illness may have been mild, but what she was about to do would have consequences for her. It was inside the ritual section with effects for the witch.

But he had to do it. He didn't want his daughter to have anything to do with magic. He wanted her to have a normal life, to grow up, as beautiful and intelligent, to have friends, a partner, children, as normal.

So she asked Helen by letter for some ingredients and prepared the pendant. She made another one for her sister, without the ritual that her daughter's would wear, and that day, together with Oliver, she filled the stone that she made her daughter and her husband promise never to take it off.

The ritual would take a heavy toll on her vitality, but she did not calculate that it would cause the cancer to spread. From being a tumour with a good prognosis, to being fatal.

It was very sad to leave her little girl with her father, but she knew that they would be fine, that she would grow up normally and that, when she turned twenty-five, her life would be like any other.

"Are you going to talk to your mother?", Oliver said to her in the hospital. She shook her head as she stroked her daughter's reddish hair as she lay on the bed.

"No, it's not worth it now".

"Maybe she could do something".

"No. I don't want you to go to Glencoe or take Barbara. Because they'll take her pendant and she could die. Promise me".

"It's all right, my love, don't tire yourself".

But the time came and, as he expired, he felt he had not made peace with his mother.

Years later, a letter arrived for her daughter. She, who had never abandoned her and was proud of the beautiful, intelligent woman she had become, saw that perhaps it was time. When Barbara left the letter behind, she took it home. When she dropped it on the floor, she put it on the sofa. After all she had been through, she wanted him to know where she came from.

And the Universe did the rest.