

Late One Night In The Woods
by Roni Keller

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Fade In:

EXT. O'CONNER HOME - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

A rambling old vine-covered home. A garden path meanders across the neatly tended lawn, passes under an ivy covered trellis.

An oak tree shades wooden lawn chairs. Dragonflies zip over a fishpond.

A wonderfully wild and eccentric flower garden along the picket fence. Bumblebees hover, drunk with pollen.

Tulips, buttercups, irises gently nod as MRS. WONG, the housekeeper, waters them, humming to herself.

UNDER A THICKET OF LEAVES

An ELF in a yellow rainslicker and rain hat deals playing cards to a FROG. They sit at a small picnic table, next to a small pup tent. The water from Mrs. Wong's watering can cascades on and around them.

ELF

What 'ave you got, Mervyn?

A FLY buzzes by, distracting the Frog.

FROG

Croak, croak.

The Frog, being a frog, idly snaps at the Fly. Drowsily closes his eyes. The Elf, reaching across the table, picks up the Frog's cards.

ELF

(studying the cards)

Hmmm. Queen ... pair o' fours ...

The Elf puts the Frog's cards back down and picks up his own hand.

ELF (CONT'D)

Have you got a Queen?

The Frog blinks his goggly eyes and falls asleep.

ELF (CONT'D)

(in a croaky kind of
frog voice)

Why yes, I do Mr. Elf, Sir.

The Elf takes the Queen from the Frog's hand.

ELF (CONT'D)

My lucky day! Pair of Queens!

He slaps down the queens down on the table.

ELF (CONT'D)

I swear, if I weren't on duty, it'd
be off to the races with me.

INT. O'CONNER HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A sunny kitchen. Country style, checkered curtains that
billow in the breeze. The radio is on.

DOVE O'CONNER, 8, bright, droll, sits at the breakfast table
toying with the remains of her peanut butter sandwich. She
wears a pokemon sweatshirt and a milk mustache.

Mrs. Wong enters from the backyard. Dove jumps up from the
table.

DOVE

I'm done. Can I pick flowers for
dinner?

A FLY buzzes in through a hole in the screen door, landing
on a left-over peanut butter sandwich.

MRS. WONG

You have to ask your mom.

Dove wipes off her mustache and heads down HALLWAY

KITCHEN

Mrs. Wong notices the Fly and shoos it away. The Fly darts
through HALLWAY

And catches up with Dove in

LIVING ROOM

Comfortable and cozy. Overstuffed sofa and chairs. An oak
dining table.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

But Lucille, we have environmental
protection approval on the project!

The Fly darts ahead into

GEORGIA'S OFFICE

Neat and self-sufficient like the appealing redhead perched
on the edge of her desk, GEORGIA O'CONNER, 33.

The Woman's Voice belongs to her.

GEORGIA
 (on the phone)
 If some fanatics want to picket the
 board meeting, let them.

Dove enters.

DOVE
 Mommy?

Georgia holds her finger to her lips to say hush.

GEORGIA
 (on the phone)
 I'll pass out donuts but I won't
 stop the meeting.

The Fly lands on the sidewalk of a model for an idyllic housing development, "Woodside Homes." Tiny trees, tiny walkways, tiny people. He struts up the avenue.

DOVE
 Momm-mee!

GEORGIA
 (on the phone)
 One sec.

Georgia puts Lucille on hold, taking a waiting call.

The Fly walks into a model home and wanders around inside.

GEORGIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (on the phone)
 Jack, come up with a competitive bid
 or you're out of the game.

DOVE
 I'm running away from home!

Georgia holds up her index finger to say wait one minute.
 Dove shakes her head no and crosses her arms, mad.

DOVE (CONT'D)
 I'm going away and you'll never see
 me again!

Georgia holds up her index finger emphatically!

GEORGIA (V.O.)
 (on the phone)
 I need someone who can play ball
 with me.

Dove shakes her head no even more emphatically.

GEORGIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I can't talk right now.

Georgia punches the hold button.

DOVE
Mommy, could I pick some flowers for
dinner?

GEORGIA
(thumbs up)
Dove, the answer is yes!

Dove skips out.

Georgia punches a phone button.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)
(on the phone)
Lucille, I'm back. You have to
understand the Woodland Homes project
is my life. It means everything.
I've put everything on the line for
it...Lucille, is there something
you're not telling me? Is there
some fly in the ointment I should
know about? I'm just saying --
Okay, see you tonight!

Georgia hangs up the phone, exhales deeply and, exhausted
and exasperated, buries her head in her hands.

The Fly buzzes out of the room.

EXT. O'CONNER HOME - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Under the thicket of leaves.

ELF
Let's see what we can see, shall we?

The Elf takes binoculars out of his raincoat.

POV ELF THROUGH BINOCULARS: Scanning from the ground up.
Sneakers, rumpled socks, a scraped knee, pink shorts...

ELF (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Human child close at hand.

POV ELF THROUGH BINOCULARS: The pokemon creature on the
sweatshirt. Innocent and menacing at the same time.

ELF (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Alert! Alert! She's got some kind
of monster with her!

POV ELF THROUGH BINOCULARS: The creature seems to be moving!

ELF (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Some god awful freak of nature, and
it's coming right at -- !

POV ELF THROUGH BINOCULARS: Under the sweatshirt is a T-
shirt with a picture of tinkerbelle on it.

ELF (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oooh, look Mervyn, it's okay, it's
our old friend Tinker --

POV ELF THROUGH BINOCULARS: Fly eyes.

The Elf yelps in surprise, dropping the binoculars. The Fly
hovers in his face.

ELF (CONT'D)
Eh gad, you're an ugly thing!

FLY
Look who's talking.

The Elf takes off his raingear. Under his raincoat, green
camouflage fatigues.

ELF
Come on, come on. What's the report?

FLY
If I tell you, what'll I get?

ELF
You won't get snapped up for lunch
is what you'll get. And that's a
lot, considering who you happen to
be talking to.

The Elf nudges the Frog. The Frog groggily rouses himself
from sleep.

ELF (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
Honestly, flies. What a bunch of...

FLY
I can tell you one thing, she won't
stop the project.

ELF
Yeah, well, she hasn't met the Queen yet. So what. What else?

The Frog looks over the cards.

FROG
(to the Elf)
I say, Harry. Did I miss anything?

The Frog counts up the number of pairs in front of the Elf.

FROG (CONT'D)
I see you won. As usual.

ELF
(to the Frog)
Extraordinary run of luck I'm enjoying, wouldn't you say?

FLY
Could I have some of that? Just a little.

The Fly extends a feeler toward a flask. The Elf pulls it away.

FLY (CONT'D)
(pissed off)
Oh man, I'm really thirsty.

The Elf sniffs the air.

ELF
(to the Fly)
I smell peanut butter. You stuffed yourself in there, didn't you?

The Elf indicates the O'Conner home.

FLY
(defensive)
Well, I, the little human didn't want her sandwich and I --

ELF
-- Glutton.

FLY
Crissakes, I just had a little.

ELF
Eating on the job, the Queen's not going to like that.
(MORE)

ELF (CONT'D)

Best just give us the report, now,
before we tell on you. Come on,
come on.

The Frog gulps down the Fly, momentarily startling the Elf.

FROG

Sorry, call of the wild, balance of
nature, all that.

ELF

Bit inconvenient though, considering
he was about to give us a report,
don't you think?

FROG

I said I'm sorry.

ELF

Ah, he was a pig anyway. Never cared
much for him.

FROG

Not bad as a snack.

ELF

Suppose his life cycle was about up
anyway. Only live a hundred days or
so anyway. Breed like rabbits though.

FROG

Is that so?

ELF

Not much room in that brain pan.
Not intelligent like us superior
beings. His report wouldn't've
amounted to much. I hope.

The Elf yawns. He takes a swig from the flask and offers it
to the Frog who declines.

ELF (CONT'D)

Gad, this round the clock surveillance
duty is murder. Mind if I drop off,
take a little nap?

FROG

Course not, Harry.

As the Elf closes his eyes, a stream of yellow rain hits
him.

ELF
 (leaping up)
 What the...?!

OUTSIDE THE THICKET

A BIG SHAGGY DOG finishes peeing.

UNDER THE THICKET

Disgusted and irate, the Elf tries to wring out his clothes.

FROG
 Maybe he would've warned us about
 the dog.

The Elf hits the Frog with his wet baseball cap.

ELF
 We'll never know now, will we?!

EXT. O'CONNOR HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Mrs. Wong cuts vegetables to the beat on the radio.

Dove enters from the backyard with fresh picked flowers.

DOVE
 Mrs. Wong, could I ask you something?

MRS. WONG
 Asking is permitted in certain
 countries. This is one of them.

DOVE
 Do you remember my father?

MRS. WONG
 I am an old woman. My memory is bad --

DOVE
 Tell me about him.

MRS. WONG
 -- very bad.

DOVE
 Maybe I should ask my mom about him.
 Remember the last time?

Mrs. Wong does remember, not fondly.

DOVE (CONT'D)
 I could ask her again.

Mrs. Wong thinks for a moment as she arranges the flowers in a vase.

MRS. WONG

Women are like flowers, tend here, water there. Your father, he like flowers, he like to cross-pollinate.

DOVE

Cross what?

MRS. WONG

That's all I remember. I don't even remember that.

DOVE

Did he love me?

MRS. WONG

Yes, of course. Just one day here, next day not. Your mother, very strong woman.

Mrs. Wong finishes the flower arrangement and hands the vase to Dove.

MRS. WONG (CONT'D)

Okay, Dove.

Hugging the vase of flowers, Dove hip-hops out of the room to the music.

DINING ROOM

Dove dances in with the vase. She carefully places it on the dining room table and steps back to survey her work. She adjusts the vase just so.

INT. O'CONNER HOME - GEORGIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

MARK JOHNSON, 27, lanky and boyish, tortoise shell glasses, pulls sketches out of his portfolio while he waits on the couch, a sweet but goofy grin on his face.

GEORGIA

(pleads, on the phone)

Two weeks, one week. I'm closing a huge deal, you could have the money by Monday ...

(charming)

I suppose it's too late to say the check is in the mail. Would "please" work? Please?

Dove bounces in, the music trailing in behind her.

Mark picks up the beat.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Oh, thank god. Bless you, bless you! I will not let you down.

(to Dove and Mark)

Yay!

Georgia grabs Dove and gives her a smooch. The phone rings. She picks up the phone to take yet another call.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Irv? Thanks for waiting. Look, I've been talking to Jack, and he's willing ... What?

MARK

(to Dove)

What's shakin' bacon?

DOVE

We're having a special dinner. My favorite, tater tots and macaroni and cheese. Mommy said so.

MARK

What, no brocolli?

DOVE

(shrugs)

There's bound to be something green. It's like a fact of life or something.

(beat)

Nice tie.

MARK

You like it?

Mark slips off the tie, sliding it onto Dove. He picks her up, whirling her round to the music. She leans her head way back.

GEORGIA

(on the phone)

Look, I have people in my office. Call you back? Terrific, thanks.

POV DOVE: The room whirls around upside down.

Georgia hangs up the phone.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

Love your tie.

MARK

Thanks.

DOVE

Thanks.

The telephone rings. Georgia reaches for it.

MARK

I brought the interior design sketches
for the model.

GEORGIA

How about some milk and cookies while
I take this call?

Mark and Dove look at each other.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

I think we have mallomars.

MARK

(to Dove)

Whaddy say, kid?

GEORGIA

(on the phone again)

Georgia O'Conner.

Mark starts out of the room dancing, Dove still in his arms.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

(her hand over the
receiver)

And please ask Mrs. Wong to turn
down the radio.

MARK

(bowing low as he
exits)

My queen.

HALLWAY

GEORGIA (V.O.)

Look, Mare, I just got off the phone
with Jack and Irv, and ...

Mark and Dove hip-hop side by side to

KITCHEN

Their jaws drop. Mrs. Wong hip-hops full out.

Noticing Mark and Dove, she stops cold.

MARK

(awkward)

Um, George said there might be some cookies around. Mallomars?

Mrs. Wong pulls herself together as she turns down the blaring radio.

MRS. WONG

Um...yes.

She reaches into the cupboard for the cookies.

MARK

Something in the music, huh?

MRS. WONG

No, more like...something in the air.

EXT. O'CONNER HOME - BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Under the Thicket. The Elf sits up suddenly from his nap.

ELF

Can you feel it? In the air.

FROG

The Queen.

ELF

The Queen.

A MOUSE, energetic and quick, suddenly appears, startling the Frog and Elf.

MOUSE

(squeaky and speedy)

Hey guys, how's it going?

FROG

Not bad.

MOUSE

What's new?

FROG

Nothing much.

MOUTH

How's that new fly working out?

ELF

Him? That lazy bugger?

MOUSE

Yeah, him.

The Frog panics.

FROG

Went south for the winter. I mean,
summer.

MOUSE

Now? At a time like this.

ELF

(covering for the
Frog)

A swatter! A fly swatter. Saw it
with my own eyes.

MOUSE

How awful.

ELF

Nothing could be done.

The Elf removes his cap mournfully.

MOUSE

Of course not.
(to the Frog)
Tasty?

FROG

Very.

The Elf hits the Frog with his cap.

MOUSE

(indicating the house)
Anything I should know before going
in?

ELF

Going in? What's up?

MOUSE

Mission for the Queen, message to
deliver.

ELF

A mission?

FROG

For the Queen?

MOUSE
 (heading out)
 Coming?

INT. O'CONNOR HOME - BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Morning glory vines with vivid blue flowers and white dovebirds on the wallpaper. Matching towels and soap.

The handle on the closed window jiggles. Again. When it jiggles a third time, the catch unlatches.

The window swings open -- the Elf holds on for dear life to the handle. But he loses his grip and falls into the toilet bowl.

The Mouse and the Frog pop their heads up over the ledge. They try not to laugh at the sight of the soaked Elf climbing out of the toilet bowl.

GEORGIA'S OFFICE

Georgia studies Mark's drawings.

GEORGIA
 These are fabulous.

MARK
 If you change a thing, I have to start all over again.

GEORGIA
 I just wonder, does it say, safe and secure? Does it say everyone who lives here will live happily ever after?

MARK
 Take a look at the nursery.

He lays out a drawing proudly. Georgia is really moved.

GEORGIA
 Oh. Oh, Mark, it's beautiful.

Dove peers in.

DOVE
 Mrs. Wong says dinner's almost ready.

GEORGIA
 Thanks honey, but I've got to go out tonight.

DOVE

But Mom, I thought we were -- !

GEORGIA

-- Honey, it's work. It came up suddenly. I have to go.

DOVE

But -- !

GEORGIA

Dove.

MRS. WONG (O.S.)

Dove!

BATHROOM

The Frog, the Mouse and the very wet Elf stand on the linoleum looking up at the sink.

The Frog jumps up to the sink. The Mouse throws him a rope. The Frog lassoes the faucet and pulls up the Mouse.

The Elf stands watch at the slightly cracked open door, surveying the outer hallway.

The Mouse opens the medicine cabinet and climbs up the shelves. On the way, he picks out a nice red lipstick.

MRS. WONG (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Did you wash your hands?

DOVE (O.S.)

Do I have to? Look, they're clean.

The Mouse hangs by his tail from the top of the mirror on the medicine cabinet and scrawls, "STAY HOME!"

MRS. WONG (O.S.)

Dove.

DOVE (O.S.)

Okay, okay.

The SOUND of Dove's footsteps as she approaches the bathroom. The Mouse drops the tube of lipstick.

ELF

Hurry! Hurry!

The Mouse and Frog leap down. The Frog hops up to the window ledge, rope in hand. The Mouse and Elf clamber up the rope. Just in time, the Elf, the last of them, disappears out the window.

Dove runs in. The words scrawled in lipstick are too high up for her to see. She washes her hands and runs out.

INT. O'CONNOR HOME - UPSTAIRS - DOVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Teddy bears and dolls. Pink and cozy. Through the window, moonrise. First stars twinkle.

Dove in her pajamas in bed, and Mrs. Wong, read and improvise from a big picture storybook.

MRS. WONG

And then the little girl came to the door of the faery castle --

DOVE

It was all twinkling and sparkling with bits of gold and silver like glitter --

MRS. WONG

And when she knocked on the door --

DOVE

The twinkling sound of a million tiny jingle bells like Christmas only a zillion of them --

MRS. WONG

And the air smelled like --

DOVE

Cookies in the oven and flowers in the garden.

Mrs. Wong turns the page.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM - DOWNSTAIRS

Entering, Georgia sees "STAY HOME" written in lipstick on the mirror. Looking down, she sees her lipstick and picks it up off the floor. It is open with the tip smashed from writing on the mirror. She is highly displeased.

Suddenly, the wallpaper seems to come to life. The morning glory vines grow outward from the wall. The dovebirds stir.

A DOVEBIRD steps off the wall onto the counter.

DOVEBIRD

There are no rules but love. Love is the rule.

Georgia panics. The wallpaper vines seem to reach out to grab her. Closer and closer they grow. The door closes behind her.

DOVEBIRD (CONT'D)

We gladly share our home with you
but now you want to take the last
remaining land for your own.

Suddenly, THE QUEEN OF THE FAERIES, appears. A full grown woman, tall, graceful, slender, seductively beautiful. Silk tie-dyed shimmering gown, silk slippers. Jeweled CROWN adorned with flowers. Jeweled SCEPTER wrapped in a vine. And WINGS. All faeries have gossamer wings.

QUEEN OF THE FAERIES

We come in peace, but take our home
and we will make war. Choose love
and be loved. Make war and find out
what Mother Nature is really made
of.

Faint, Georgia fumbles for the knob of the bathroom door.

QUEEN OF THE FAERIES (CONT'D)

So our advice is stay home tonight
and stop it. Stop the project.

Georgia manages to open the door and runs out into the

HALLWAY

Slamming the door bathroom behind her. She catches her breath then cautiously reopens the door.

BATHROOM

Back to normal except the words scrawled on the mirror.

Georgia closes the door to the bathroom again.

HALLWAY

Georgia reopens the bathroom door again. Nothing out of the usual except the words on the mirror.

She shakes her head and breathes deeply. She picks the tube of lipstick up off the floor.

CUT BACK TO:

DOVE'S BEDROOM - UPSTAIRS

Dove turns the storybook to the last page.

DOVE

And the king and the queen and the princess lived happy ever after.

MRS. WONG

Come on, time for sleeping.

DOVE

Is Mommy coming?

Georgia bursts in, smashed lipstick in hand.

GEORGIA

Dove, did you do this?

DOVE

I didn't do it!

GEORGIA

I suppose you didn't write on the bathroom mirror, either. Who did it? Mrs. Wong?

DOVE

I didn't use your lipstick and I didn't write on any mirror!

GEORGIA

We'll talk about this tomorrow. Meanwhile, go to sleep, right now.

Dove smashes her face down in her pillow. Mrs. Wong scoots out of the room.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

You know I don't like your playing with my make-up, Dove. This was an expensive lipstick. Not to mention the mess on the mirror.

DOVE

I didn't do it!

GEORGIA

Then, who did?

Georgia shuts lights and the door.

Dove cries into her pillow, angrily.

EXT. O'CONNER HOME - GARDEN - NIGHT

The Frog pulls the leaves aside, peering out from under the Thicket. The fishpond shimmers back invitingly.

FROG

Hey, how 'bout a dip in the old pond,
Harry? Lovely evening.

ELF

That murky old fish toilet? You
must be joking.

The Frog gives him a look.

FROG

Respectfully, Harry, you're a bit
ripe.

ELF

Suppose I'm being a bit picky,
considering today. Through no fault
of my own, I might add.

INT. O'CONNOR HOME - DOVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dove lies in bed awake, angry and tearstained.

SOUND of a SPLASH in the fish pond.

Dove sits up and looks out at the backyard.

POV DOVE: A ripple in the fishpond. Nothing else.

She looks up at the night sky. The stars glimmer.

DOVE

Star light, star bright, first star
I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish
I might, have the wish I wish tonight.

EXT. O'CONNOR HOME - GARDEN - NIGHT

The Frog reemerges to the surface of the fishpond. He paddles
around and jumps out to rest on a LILY PAD.

Nearby on the porch, the Elf reclines in the Dog's WATER
DISH. He wears bright polka dot bathing trunks, swim fins,
a bathing cap and water wings. He munches on animal crackers
from a box shaped like a circus wagon just about his size.

ELF

What a lovely night.

The Elf sighs and closes his eyes. A golden light darts by,
whistling as it goes, startling the Elf.

ELF (CONT'D)

What was that?!

FROG

A wish, a wish went by. And a good one at that, well wished.

ELF

Ah, the Queen'll see to it then, I'm sure.

FROG

Sure as the algae grows. Have a bite?

ELF

Of what?

FROG

Of algae. Quite tender, actually.

ELF

Don't you eat anything normal or does it have to smell like a skunk's behind for you to enjoy it? Have a cracker, for crissakes.

The Elf offers the Frog an animal cracker.

FROG

A bit unnatural in your tastes, aren't you, Harry? Why eat something with the feel of cardboard when you can have scum?

ELF

No, thanks.

The Dog lumbers out of his Doghouse to his water dish.

ELF (CONT'D)

(to the Dog)

Back off you bounder.

Oblivious, the Dog starts to drink. The Elf scrambles out of the dish, narrowly escaping the Dog's tongue.

ELF (CONT'D)

(to the Dog)

If I needed a towel, I'd've called for one. Keep your slobber to yourself you overgrown --

The water sloshes out of the dish over the Elf.

ELF (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)

Oh, nice. Very nice.