

## **The Good Neighbours and the Mournful Map**

Once upon a winding way the great Fey Baba Yaga was wishing for an item she had lost many years ago - a powerful map that would show you the path to what you desire most. Many moons ago the map had been misplaced and only through the whispers of the wind did Little Grandmother know that it now sat amongst the treasures of the Court of the Summer Queen. She called in a favour and so the Good Neighbours were sent to her door.

*'O Neighbours you are summoned  
From battle or from rest  
Return to me my treasure  
Now this must be your quest*

*A map to all the holder wants  
Now rests in Summer's field  
Your Master bids you do this task  
But first this warning heed:*

*Do not read the map I seek  
No matter your distress  
For you will learn what you want most  
But lose what you possess"*

Shrouded in darkness the Good Neighbours walked the hidden paths to the Summer Court to retrieve the lost map. Finding it unguarded each lay down a flower bright as the midday sun: The Fairy, a rose as red as blood; The Dryad a starflower purple as the night; The Dwarf a lily as orange as fire; and The Leprechaun a chrysanthemum the soft pink of a summer's dawn.

Claiming their prize they turned to return however the journey back to the Mother of Witches was swiftly beset with trouble and terrors. Wild beasts harried their every step and once The Fairy almost fell, and all the while the Good Neighbours held firm against the temptation of the map to show them an easy way home. Harsh winds came, nearly carrying The Dwarf away - his great height a disadvantage - and still the Good Neighbours obeyed.

In the final steps of their journey to Little Grandmother's hut a fog fell, thick as soup, thick as sorrow, as inescapable as fate. It was then that The Leprechaun, blinded by the mist and looking to his fellows and not his hands drew forth not the map that he was reaching for, but the Mournful Map itself. Turning his eyes upon the map he saw the path to his greatest desire... and doom!

What happened next, dear listener? I fear I cannot say, as the Good Neighbours were never heard from again...!