

## The Birth

The screams echoed along the slopes as though someone was being ripped apart. Which was almost literally occurring. The tall Sidhe lords who stood on a rocky outcropping wrapped in shadows glanced at each other. "I sense that the delivery will be over soon and the mother and babe will both survive". He made some involuntary movement when another wail tore the night. In a human it might have been sympathy, but could that be the case with such a haughty unworldly lord? "Perhaps it would be wise to let this one stay with the humans. There will after all be other babes we can abduct." The other lord, as near to twin as made no nevermind nodded slowly in agreement. "Seems a shame to miss such an opportunity. The father neglected the safeguards, he forget salt and iron and rowan. It would cost us no effort to substitute the child." Another shriek caused some pebbles to roll downslope. He absent mindedly stepped aside to avoid the small slide. "I fear you are correct brother. This one shall tread another path." He gestured to the handmaiden carrying the changeling. "Let us be off and seek other amusement this night. I suspect that one will be too much trouble." They wrapped themselves tighter in shadows and vanished as though they'd never been there.

Meanwhile the work of delivery was done and the mother lay there exhausted. The midwife and the father both stared in amazement at the baby. It, no he, was in fishing parlance, a whopper. "I've never seen such a big baby before unless it be carrying ogre blood," the midwife said in awe. The father looked at her in shock and the exhausted mother was roused so far as to smack the midwife hard across the face. "How dare you! This child is ours and ours alone! Get out!" The midwife scurried out the door refusing the traditional chicken she was offered by the father. The door slammed behind her and the father hugged his wife. He kissed her forehead and asked, "What shall we call him?" The mother offered the baby her breast. He latched on lustily and wincing the mother said, "He has an appetite. Let's call him Tuck."

The news spread quickly from house to house throughout the valley carried by the birds and the faeries and pixies and borne on the breeze by sylphs. Arden and Bess were delivered of a boy and his name was Tuck.

*November 23, 2024*