

RESPECTING NATURE
An English tale
Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: English farmland with three ancient trees

Characters:

Narrator

Farmer Divens

Louis

Wayne

Kevin

Narrator: Three ancient trees stood on a hill at the top of Farmer Divens' field. For generations, his ancestors took great care of the land and everything on it. As was the custom, on Midsummer Eve, primroses were taken from the garden and placed at the root of each huge tree. One day, Farmer Divens gathered his sons around him.

Farmer: My sons, this land is my responsibility. I have cared for it the best way I could. When I am gone, I pass it on to you. Come here, Louis.

Louis: Yes, Father.

Farmer: Louis, you will have the farm, and the hill with the three ancient trees. Come, Wayne.

Wayne: Yes, Father.

Farmer: Wayne, you shall have the pasture land at the bottom of the hill. And Kevin.

Kevin: Yes, Father.

Farmer: Kevin, I give you the rocky land behind the hill. You are a clever lad. See what you can make of it.

Narrator: A few months later, Farmer Divens died. Louis gathered his brothers together to talk about his inheritance.

Louis: Wayne and Kevin, come here. You see the great farm, hill and trees that father has given to me. **THESE ARE ALL MINE! FINALLY, I CAN DO WHAT EVER I WANT** with these fields and trees.

Narrator: Louis was not interested in caring for the land or the trees. When Midsummer's Eve came, he didn't follow the custom of taking primroses to the ancient trees.

Louis: Ha! Primroses and ancient trees? I don't believe in fairy tales. I'll **NOT** take flowers to the trees. It's just silly nonsense.

Narrator: But that night, Kevin remembered and picked three small clusters of primroses, climbed the hill and set the flowers at the root of each tree. As he came down the hill, Louis shouted at him.

Louis: **WHAT WERE YOU DOING ON MY HILL?**

Kevin: I was taking primroses to the trees just like father taught us.

Louis: Those trees are mine. You are NOT to set foot on my land again!

Kevin: But I love to sit under those ancient trees.

Louis: Did I not make myself clear? You are not to sit there again. Tomorrow I'm cutting down one of those ugly old trees to build a new barn. So that will teach you who the boss is!

Narrator: And the next morning, Louis climbed the hill and chopped and chopped the oldest tree down. But as the tree began to fall a mighty wind came up and whirled that tree skyward. Then the tree fell directly on top of Louis and killed him.

Wayne: Kevin, now that Louis is gone, I INHERIT ALL THAT FATHER LEFT TO LOUIS AND MY PASTURE LAND. I CAN DO WHAT EVER I WANT. You just keep working on your rocky land while I decide what I'm going to do with all I have inherited.

Narrator: But Wayne was lazy and didn't take care of his land. Midsummer Eve came and once again Kevin placed primroses under the ancient trees. And just like his older brother, Louis, Wayne became angry.

Wayne: WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU ARE ON MY LAND! THOSE TREES ARE MY PROPERTY. I FORBID YOU TO DO THAT AGAIN!

Kevin: But I'm just doing what our father always did and his father before him and his father before him.

Wayne: Well, Father is no longer here. And I'm in charge. Those old trees are so ugly, I've decided to chop one down tomorrow and build a fence beside the barn.

Narrator: And the next day, Wayne went up the hill and chopped and chopped the second oldest tree down. As the tree began to fall, it let out a loud cry! A roaring wind came up and twisted that tree so hard it smashed into Wayne and killed him.

Kevin: How sad it is that my two brothers were lazy and didn't care for the land. They didn't care for the tradition of placing primroses under the ancient trees on Midsummer Eve. But I love the land and I will care for it as my father did and his father before him.

Narrator: And so Kevin took great care of the land and it prospered. His sons took care of the land and continued the Midsummer Eve tradition of placing primroses under the one remaining ancient tree. And their land prospered.

There was one fear that haunted the sons: What if one day someone comes and says, "ALL THIS LAND IS MINE. I PAID FOR IT SO I CAN DO WHAT I WANT."? What if he takes his axe and begins to chop and chop and chop the last ancient tree? What then?