

September assignment – Plants – Iscador

I was inspired to write this fairy tale-like story after our presentation on Iscador, working with it, and researching it further. I find Iscador and its mythic history quite magical and fascinating and I wrote this story to capture some of that essence.

Hans and Marie-Luise grew up on neighbouring farms and as children they would meet to play each day on the border of their properties where stood a tall, majestic apple tree. In summer, its green leafy leaves kept them cool as they played in its shade, in spring they created countless games playing with the fallen blossoms and in autumn they relished eating its beautiful, round fruits, as many as they liked, until their bellies were so full, they would need to rest under the tree.

The tree was home to a little bird that became their friend, it was often there, and they would talk to it, and in time, as they attentively watched and listened to the bird, they could hear it talking to them, at first little chirps about what they were doing and then more.

The children loved climbing the tree and did so in all seasons. Each year as they grew older, they would climb higher and higher. Over the years they noticed a plant growing in the canopy of the tree and marvelled at the round, white berries that grew on it in the midst of winter, and the pretty yellow leaves in summer. They knew the mistletoe was special as the bird had told them so. The bird had shared stories of its powerful properties: warriors would stop their warring against their enemy if there was mistletoe in the forest and make peace. They knew their mothers too had placed mistletoe in their cribs as babies and each year, in summer, their mothers would ask them to bring home some leaves, stem and flowers and in winter the berries, which they made into something special that seemed to use to treat all sorts of ailments.

‘What are they?’ they asked the bird one summer, when they saw something shimmering around the mistletoe flower. ‘They’re my friends the sylphs that you can see in the flower. They bring love to the plant, as well as to me and to all of us.’

As the children grew, they didn’t climb the tree as much but would still sit under it talking about their lives. Their friendship developed into a deep love, the apple tree was their special place to go to be alone and they would picnic and kiss under the tree.

After some time, they married and built a cottage on the boundary of their family’s properties, right near the apple tree and started their own family. Maybe it was a coincidence, but it seemed that each time they kissed under the apple tree soon after a new child would be on their way.

Their children grew and they also loved to play under the apple tree and enjoy the changing seasons, and as they grew older, they were also asked to pick the leaves, stems, and flowers from the mistletoe in the summer and the beautiful berries in the winter.

The children grew up and Hans and Marie-Luise also grew older and continued to live happily in their little cottage. One day Hans started ailing and did not know what was wrong with him, as days and weeks went on, he got sicker and sicker and weaker and weaker and could no longer work on the farm.

One night as Marie-Luise was outside, worrying about Hans, a little bird, perhaps the same one they’d once known, said to her, ‘Perhaps give him some of the mistletoe preparation?’ And she did right then and each day following. From that moment forward, each day Hans grew stronger and healthier, until he was once again able to do some work around the farm. Hans and Marie-Luise lived happily to a fine old age. - *Cath Lanigan, October 8, 2023*