

"MAIDEN, MOTHER, CRONE"
Tales of the Echowood - Minisode 02
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by

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Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner"

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1. EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Two witches -- one older, one younger -- stand on the hand-carved steps at the foot of a sprawling tree house. The birds sing as the trees shiver in the spring breeze.

MAEVEN

(nervous)

It's just another walk in the woods.

ANTHEA

(reassuring)

Like we do every day.

MAEVEN

(trying to reassure herself)

Like we do every day.

ANTHEA

And I'm here with you.

MAEVEN

(anxiety lessening)

Yes, you are.

ANTHEA

We can keep each other safe. Besides, we haven't seen the Witchbane at all since--

MAEVEN AUDIBLY REACTS, stiffening at the memory.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

(annoyed at herself)

Sorry, I shouldn't have said anything.

A pause, and then Maeven begins to descend the stairs cautiously.

MAEVEN

Some days are just harder than others.

ANTHEA

(following after, gentle reassurance)

I know, love.

They reach the foot of the steps, then begin to walk through the woods. The noises of life become more present as the move over bare, solid earth.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

What should we do today? Perhaps we could gather more sticks for the dead hedge?

MAEVEN

(agreeing)

The squirrels will be wanting somewhere to have their babies soon, I suppose.

ANTHEA

(fond memory)

And it was so lovely to see them gather last spring.

MAEVEN

(saddened)

I don't remember much of that.

ANTHEA

(surprised)

No?

MAEVEN

(somewhat bashful)

I remember you.

ANTHEA

(CHUCKLES, smiling)

But you do remember when they birthed those babies, don't you?

MAEVEN

(considering)

Hmmm...

ANTHEA

(stopping, focused on Maeven)

The days were getting warmer. We took our breakfast outdoors...

MAEVEN

(starting to remember)

Yes...

ANTHEA

We had that fresh bread, and--

MAEVEN

--and the eggs, yes.

ANTHEA

And we sat on our steps. It was the first time I called them "our steps."

MAEVEN

(fondly)
Of course I remember that.

ANTHEA

And we looked out into the half-built dead hedge, and there they were. The little squirrels.

MAEVEN

You're right. I thought I'd forgotten that.

Anthea takes Maeven's hand, and they continue walking.

MAEVEN (CONT'D)

(long pause)
I wish I could forget the Witchbane. It isn't natural for me to fear the woods. And besides -- you were the one who fell ill, not me.

ANTHEA

(reassuring half-truth)
You nearly watched me die, remember? Nursed me back to health. Battled the cursed thing with your own two hands. I was just taking a long nap.

MAEVEN

It's only... I've pledged my life to the service of the Echowood. Death, danger, rot... it's all a part of it. A natural balance to the life and beauty of this place. If I can't hold both in my hands... what am I?

A gentle stream burbles nearby, and Anthea comes to a stop beside it.

ANTHEA

(trying a new approach)
Do you think the stream questions what she is?

MAEVEN
 (annoyed)
 Anthea..

ANTHEA
 The stream just is.

Anthea turns, facing Maeven and clasping both her hands.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)
 Be like the water. Whenever you
 feel frozen, whenever that old fear
 rises... just let those thoughts
 flow by.

MAEVEN SIGHS, trying to release her fear.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 See that leaf? *That's* a though of
 Witchbane. You don't need to grab
 onto it. Just let it flow
 downstream.

The pair watch the leaf float down and out of sight. MAEVEN
 EXHALES.

MAEVEN
 What would I do without you?

ANTHEA
 (smiles and squeezes her
 hands)
 Lets hope you never have to find
 out, Princess.

FADE TO:

2. EXT. FOREST - EVENING

A wagon rolls away from the towering witch-house as insects
 sing in the tall grass. Maeven and Anthea wave them off from
 the foots of the stairs.

MAEVEN
 Farewell, travelers!

ANTHEA
 Farewell!

They watch the wagons disappear around the bend, then EXHALE
 IN RELIEF.

MAEVEN

Oh I thought they'd never leave.

ANTHEA

You're telling me.

Maeven undoes a button on her corset top, SIGHING as the pressure is released.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

(struggling slightly)

Can you get mine?

MAEVEN

Of course.

She turns and releases the tension on Anthea's dress as well. SHE EXHALES, relieved.

ANTHEA

I don't know why you insist on putting on this act for passersby.

MAEVEN

(offended)

I do not!

ANTHEA

Oh yes you do! If it were up to me, I'd throw these dress laces straight into the fire.

MAEVEN

Don't you dare, it took me forever to spin those--

ANTHEA

--in the summertime, no less.

MAEVEN

(conceding)

Alright, alright.

ANTHEA SIGHS, THEN GIGGLES.

ANTHEA

You get so cranky when you're hot.

MAEVEN

If that isn't the pot calling the kettle...

ANTHEA
 (hiding a knowing smile)
 I'll get started on supper.

Anthea turns and climbs the stairs into the house, rummaging through a cupboard of onions and other veggies before she starts chopping.

Below, Maeven rubs her sides, WINCING SLIGHTLY. After a moment, she turns and climbs after Anthea, opening the door.

MAEVEN
 Anthea, do you think we--

She stops short, hearing ANTHEA WINCE IN PAIN as she clutches the countertop.

MAEVEN (CONT'D)
 (worried)
 Anthea? What's wrong?

ANTHEA
 (dismissive)
 Nothing, just... just a dizzy spell.

MAEVEN
 (close to panic)
 Sit, sit.

Maeven grabs a chair and pushes it behind her. Anthea sinks into it.

MAEVEN (CONT'D)
 There -- I've got you.

ANTHEA
 (disoriented)
 Sorry, I... it must be the heat in here.

MAEVEN
 I'll open the windows.

Maeven rushes to the wall and pushes several rough, heavy shutters aside, letting in the cool night air.

After a moment she returns to Anthea's side. ANTHEA LAUGHS, GRATEFUL.

ANTHEA
 Thank you, Mae.

MAEVEN
 (more worried than she
 means to be)
 Of course. I'll... I'll take care
 of supper, you rest.

Maeven rises and resumes Anthea's chopping, then pauses. She quickly grabs a pail and fills it with fresh water from the hand pump in the corner, fed by their well.

ANTHEA
 (knowing)
 I washed those this morning.

MAEVEN
 (ignoring her)
 I've got it, Anthea.

Returning to the counter, Maeven takes the vegetables and dunks them inside, swishing them around as she counts under her breath.

MAEVEN (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 One, two, three.
 (reverses the direction)
 One, two, three.
 (reverses it again)
 One, two, three...

ANTHEA
 (quiet, worried)
 Mae...

Maeven pauses, then turns.

MAEVEN
 I'm sorry. It's just... it helps
 me. It helps me to know.

ANTHEA
 I know.

MAEVEN
 (heart sinking)
 Please, I can't bear your
 disappointment.

Anthea pauses, then gently rises, hugging Maeven close from behind.

ANTHEA

(soft)

I'm not disappointed. How could I be?

MAEVEN

I don't want you to think I don't trust you. It just... helps, sometimes. Washing the food myself. I can't help thinking of--

ANTHEA

--the spores.

MAEVEN

(disappointed in herself)

Yes.

ANTHEA

(gentle reassuring joke)

Well you did an excellent job of rinsing them off again.

Anthea pulls the veggies out of the water and set them down before picking up the pail and gently pouring the water into the basin, letting it flow down the drain.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

(wryly)

Oh I see what you're up to.

MAEVEN

(gently smiling)

It helps me too, you know. To just watch the water flow.

She lets the pail empty, then sets it back down.

MAEVEN (CONT'D)

You know, I've always loved you.

ANTHEA

(smiling, soft)

And I always will.

FADE TO:

3. EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT

Anthea and Maeven sit beside a crackling fire in the autumn twilight, just outside their home.

ANTHEA
 (quiet, trying to be
 positive)
 The fresh air helps.

MAEVEN
 (edge of cold fear)
 I'm glad.

ANTHEA
 I've been working inside so much
 lately, I completely missed the
 harvest. It really is beautiful out
 here.

MAEVEN
 Not completely?

ANTHEA
 Well, no. I suppose I was there to
 see what came in. And that was
 exciting in its own way. A new way,
 perhaps.

MAEVEN
 Maybe it will be better next
 harvest?

They both go silent. Then...

ANTHEA
 Maeven?

MAEVEN
 (quiet, fearful)
 What?

ANTHEA
 My mother--

MAEVEN
 Please, Anthea, don't--

ANTHEA
 --Maeven, I must tell you.

MAEVEN
 Why? Why must you?

ANTHEA
 Don't you want to know what might
 happen to me?

MAEVEN

Not until we've tried everything we can.

ANTHEA

Mae--

MAEVEN

Are you telling me that you and I, two witches with decades of magic between us, are completely helpless to stop this? That I can do nothing but watch you fade? The brightest light that's ever graced this forest, and I'm to let that disappear?

ANTHEA

(firm, uncompromising)
You are to let it be.

Anthea's words hit Maeven like a hammer, and she goes quiet and still. After a moment, Anthea scoots closer to her on the log.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

(softer)
And you are to let me show you how to love me. Can you do that?

MAEVEN

(SAD SCOFF)
You know I can't argue with you like this.

ANTHEA

(CHUCKLE, affectionate)
Oh, we both know that isn't true.

Maeven turns to look at her, the golden light of the sunset shining like a halo through her hair.

MAEVEN

(gathers her strength)
Tell me, then.

ANTHEA

(pauses to gather thoughts)
I don't remember my mother -- my birth mother. My father remarried when I was very young, and I was he last child.

(MORE)

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

But he did tell me what became of her... what took her from this world.

Anthea's voice fades out.

FADE TO:

4. INT. WITCH-HOUSE - NIGHT

A quiet midwinter snow falls outside. The wind is still, and the world is silent. A fire crackles in the hearth, a warm stew gently simmering over it. Anthea and Maeven lie together beneath the sheets, facing each other

ANTHEA

(trying to hold it together)

I guess this was inevitable, wasn't it?

MAEVEN

(a little stern)

I don't like you saying that.

ANTHEA

I know.

MAEVEN

I want more time with you. Isn't that strange? Seventy years we've had, and it's not enough.

ANTHEA

I know.

MAEVEN

(all comes spilling out)

I can't lose you. I need to do something. There has to be something we haven't tried -- some poultice or treatment, something that'll keep me up days and nights working on it -- anything to keep you here! I've done it before, I-- I--

ANTHEA

(beat)

I know.

(beat, loving)

But you know what wasn't inevitable? Our time together.

(MORE)

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

We both chose a solitary life. We both sought out the far corners of the world. And even still we dragged our feet on our way to each other. This time with you *wasn't* inevitable. We fought it, even. And then our defenses melted in a glorious spring. And we built a world more wonderful than we even could have on our own.

MAEVEN

(SNIFFLING, trying to see it)
It's a miracle, isn't it?

ANTHEA

It is.

MAEVEN

(trying to find hope)
Suppose... suppose in another lifetime, we'll find each other again. Do you think that's possible?

ANTHEA

It took the threat of death for me to see how much I needed you, Mae. Far as I see it, death and I are old friends.

MAEVEN

So you think something can be arranged?

ANTHEA

(smiling softly)
I do, indeed.

The kettle bubbles, getting close to boiling over.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

Stew's almost done.

MAEVEN

I'm not ready to leave this moment.

A pause, then Anthea raises her arm from beneath the covers.

ANTHEA

Pot, pot, boiling hot...
give us witches time in thought.

The bubbling slows as the fire cools. ANTHEA WINCES SLIGHTLY as she brings her arm back under the covers.

ANTHEA (CONT'D)

Then don't. Let's not leave this one just yet.

The two witches snuggle closer beneath the covers.

MAEVEN

It is nice... just to watch that quiet snow falling outside.

ANTHEA

Letting it flow...

MAEVEN

Watching it drift...

(beat)

I'm trying my best not to hold on too tightly.

ANTHEA

I know.

MAEVEN

(repeating their familiar refrain)

I've always loved you, Anthea.

ANTHEA

(answering)

...And I always will.

The fire crackles as the moment lingers into eternity.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS