

the way of
Water

THE MONTHLY IMMERSION INTO THE WORLD OF

Móin &
MARROW

ISSUE 2
SEPT 2026

FROM
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A DEEPER WORD

móin

(móin)

gen. móna

n. bogland,

peatmoss,

moss

CLAN

Language creates the soundtrack of my life. When I am scared, when I am excited, when I am intimidated or nervous, when I am joyful, through all the emotional seasons of life, letters and sounds build my safety net. When words themselves threaten hard-won peace, I've discovered comfort, like that of a soothing lullaby, in uncovering ancient meaning.

A central theme of the novel is the concept of family. Bréaca's word for this is "clan." I've been very intentional about choosing words whose meanings go beyond the surface definition to say something more about Bréaca's story and how it can apply to our lives today. Because of this, I considered multiple words that her people could use when referring to *family*: tribe, clan, unit - the modern word *family*. I researched each one's etymology and contextual use throughout history and then layered those findings with Bréaca's story and the larger themes it carries.

Clan gripped me, for more reasons than one: within it hides conversations about community, identity, growth and sacrifice.

Eons ago, the word came from Gaelic **clann**, "family, offspring, descendants." That part wasn't startling. What was startling was what I found when I dug a layer deeper and traced it even farther back. It can be traced back to Latin's *planta*. In other words, *clan* and *plant* are distant versions of the same word.

A child is an offspring; a family
is something that branches

When I think of *plants*, I immediately think of something that gives life because plants leave seeds. I cannot eat a watermelon, for instance, without instinctively wanting to plant the seeds to grow new watermelons. I've had small gardens and grown everything peach trees to grapes.

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CLAN

Plants leave something - seeds - behind that the ground then covers, soaks in, and nourishes into something new. This train of thought stopped me in the middle of research and then made bubbles start bursting in my belly because of how eerily close to the story this felt.

You see...

Bréaca loves collecting seeds; she breaks rules to gather bog cotton and, later, she stashes seeds of all kind into a fiber-woven bag that she will always carry with her. But it's deeper than her simply collecting seeds. Her husband, Éogan, becomes violent, in part, because she cannot conceive a son. So, the idea of **clan** acting as the word for "family" felt true because a primary tension between the characters is the idea of propagating, of adding to their line, of creating something new from the two of them. **And she cannot do it.**

I was thirty-three years old when I had a hysterectomy. I had been bleeding, without stopping, since the birth of my second daughter

Our deepest sense of identity is synonymous
with our deepest sense of worth

seven years prior. I had tried everything doctors recommended, including two uterine surgical procedures, various types of birth control, lots of natural remedies, prayer. Sometimes the treatments would slow it to where it was "manageable" but it never stopped it. Simultaneously, I received intravenous iron treatments for chronic anemia that the doctors told me was exacerbated by the bleeding.

One day I was (thankfully) at treatment center, getting the iron, when I had an anaphylactic reaction to a new type of iron. They called Code Blue on me and I ended up getting an overnight stay. It scared me and, if stopping the bleeding could mean an end to the anemia, then I needed to stop the bleeding.

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Doctors had suggested a hysterectomy before and I had vehemently refused to even discuss it. **Because my central sense of being is tied to motherhood.** Voluntarily giving away any chance of having another child devastated me and it took me a very long time to recover. I felt as though something were missing; I felt **less than**. My very femininity and womanhood felt threatened if I gave up the potential of carrying life even though I had been single with zero chance of pregnancy for at least 4 years by that point.

Now imagine if **every month I didn't get pregnant** was evidence for a man I loved, **and was bound to for life**, that I was a failure. What would that do to my sense of identity and worth, and how long would it take for both of those things to plummet?

So the idea of *clan* being tied to procreation, building community and identity was striking. A clan wasn't just something that stood beside you. It was something that stood after you. A clan depends on growth: parent > child > child and so forth. Which took my brain into deeper, and darker, places.

Families often talk about "roots" but "clan" doesn't give us "roots." It gives us **shoot**. Roots burrow deeper in place; they stay attached. Shoots grow; occupy new ground. They become something beyond what birthed them. And this sent cracks right down the middle of my heart.

Because what does a family really want for its children? To be a root? A branch? A seed? Her village feels that, in order for the whole structure to continue, it must stay the same. But, biologically, a child is not her parent. An offshoot is a new growth. It comes from the plant, but is not identical to it. **And this makes me wonder things like: so what happens if the shoot threatens the identity of the plant?**

Roots burrow deep;
shoots grow

A DEEPER WORD

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CLAN

I've experienced circumstances where family expected or needed me to behave in such a way that I couldn't. Many people feel the tension between expectations of their families and what they truly want or need in life. Sometimes protecting a way of life or maintaining deeply rooted behaviors threatens growth and there's a pull between what could be and what used to be.

Some families bridge the gap.

And sometimes they don't.

A plant can survive if a shoot is broken or sacrificed.

The story features a common village. Her parents love her; they are not cruel. They are realistic about the expectations of life in Iron Age Ireland. Another sees, but chooses not to intervene. Not out of malice but because sometimes *things need to be controlled for the sake of us all*. When does the welfare of the community, or the family at large, become threatened by an offshoot and what are ways families confront that change?

It's ironic because scientists who found and analyzed the Ballymacomb More Woman's remains theorize her death was sacrificial or ritualistic. Bréaca's story doesn't go into that type of murder... or does it?

"Clan" then felt closest to the story because it can inspire conversations about community, identity, change, growth, sacrifice and--mostly, what it means to be part of something, what it means to have a family. Though this letter has focused on heavier themes within that, a clan can also teach you how to know where the river is, how to climb for birds' eggs, which seeds to save... and how to fight back.

A clan is a group of people
who shape each other.

THE CURRENT'S LETTERS

We've never breathed air, but we have felt the wind across our surface. Mostly, it tickles and we laugh; we like to pretend we move at our own speed and aren't directed by anything else. When it barely skims across our turquoise body, we feel a little playful; one of our fish may even leap out and try to catch one of its many faces. Sometimes, air is just a whisper we answer and every ripple we make is a thought carried to the world.

But it's not always playful or serene.

Sometimes wind is a sculptor, carving river bends we must follow. Sometimes the wind ceases but even then it leaves its mark on us because the sun's breath can stir us into steam. And then... sometimes it's as if the very air gets violent, whooshing every which way, snapping heavy branches off the sallies into us, until we're swirling and churning.

Most are afraid of us. "It's moving too fast," they say or, "it's too deep," and they pull the brave adventurers further onto the banks. But the wind has taught us something. Brave feet are not always reckless and sure feet are not always safe.

UNEARTHED

THE LAW THAT LEFT NO PAPER

*In Iron Age Ireland, the law was not written in books.
It lived in people.*



THE BREHON

Trained poets and legal experts remembered the law and recited it aloud. Law was a performance — carried in memory, not on parchment.



THE WITNESS

Judgment depended on people — kin, neighbors and the community. What was known, remembered and agreed upon gave the law its force.



THE PRICE

Wrongdoing was often answered through compensation, status and obligation rather than imprisonment. The value of a person — and the harm done — was measured and repaid.

There were no courtrooms, no prison walls,
no written law books. There was law because
people carried it.



*The past leaves traces in
soil and bone.
But some truths
lived only in
memory*

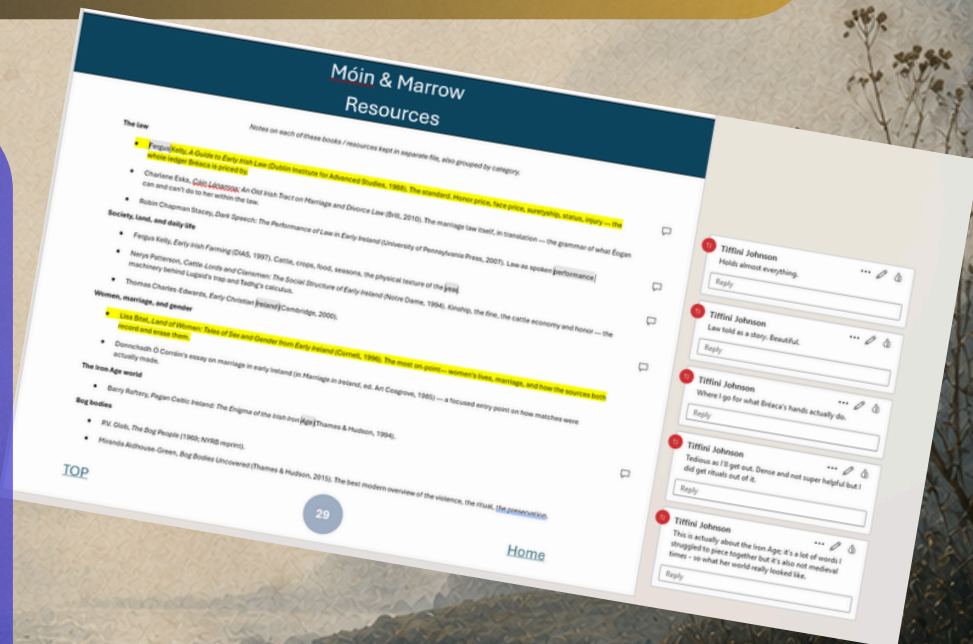
SURFACING

The Story Map is a large, complex table with multiple columns and rows. It appears to be a detailed outline or index of the book's content, organized into sections and chapters. A large teal arrow points from the table towards the right, indicating a flow or direction.

The Story Map has been fleshed out, and I'm nearly more than halfway through the completion of section one, but am working on editing and proofreading each chapter as I go. The biggest finding is that the research never seems to end with this one!

One night, not long ago, I dreamed of Bréaca (which tells you how much she's in *every* thought of the day). She was splashing her feet in the river.. but she also was doing something not in the book: rubbing her wrists.

I rub mine as a way of grounding myself.



Favorite Quotes:

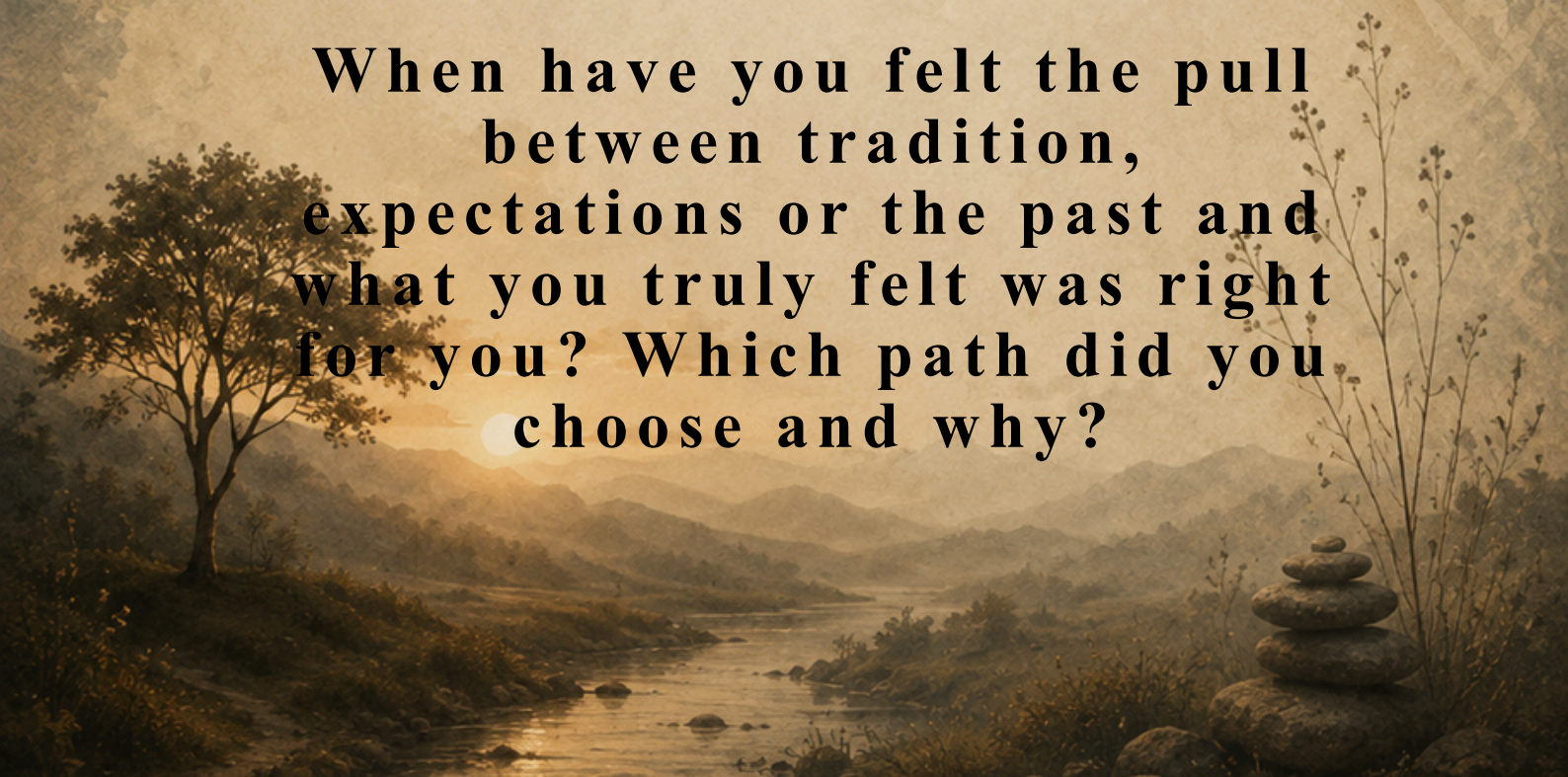
The morning wakes slowly. Purple and pink streak across the pale blue sky before the sun washes the colors away. A robin flies past; I run after it, spreading my arms as if they were wings.

WHAT WE CARRY

**When does tending to the
whole become permission to
sacrifice an offshoot?**

**If a clan is made of its
offshoots, how much
difference can an offshoot
contain before the clan stops
accepting it as its own?**

**When have you felt the pull
between tradition,
expectations or the past and
what you truly felt was right
for you? Which path did you
choose and why?**



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COMING SOON

FOLLOW ALONG

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