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The Wee Christmas Cabin of Carn-na-ween

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Sawyer, Ruth. *The Wee Christmas Cabin of Carn-na-ween*. Illustrated by Max Grafe. Candlewick, 2005. ISBN 04636625531. \$14.99. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Christmas stories;

Subject: Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Ireland--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Waif Oona Hegarty, who grows up to be both kind and clever, has one wish—to have her own little cabin. But her lowly status prevents her from marrying, and she spends her life caring for other people’s children and for the sick and old. Now herself old and abandoned, Oona is homeless and hungry on a snowy Christmas Eve. With her earthly possession in a bundle she climbs the hill to the bogland where she finds shelter under a blackthorn and sleeps, waiting for death. The Gentle People come to her and grant her wish. Ten hundred fairy men carry her bundle and arrange her new home. Now on snowy Christmas Eves, Oona Hegarty keeps a hot griddle and a warm kettle to welcome a hungry stranger.

This redemptive story of kindness returned for kindness is from Sawyer’s retelling of *The Long Christmas* and was originally published in 1941. Grafe’s mixed media illustrations are dreamlike and poignant—cold, hunger, loneliness, humble endurance, and reward are portrayed through color and impressionistic strokes. This tender story will linger after the covers of the book are closed.