

DEDICATION

It has always seemed to me that the Monts d'Arrée is one of those special and remarkable 'edge' places that sharpens the mind and stimulates the imagination to an acute degree. Here the forms of reality and fantasy blur easily, here the realms of serious thought and ironic humour blend as naturally as sky and clouds. I've tried to capture some of these compelling fusions in the stories of this collection.

This book is dedicated with gratitude to the land and people of the Monts d'Arrée.

With special thanks to Yves Marhic for understanding that translation is not only about words.

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KORRIGANS IN CRISIS

A small fire flickered inside the dolmen. Everyone was bickering, personal insults flying all around, the original topic forgotten. It was all comfortingly familiar. An old korrigan dozed in the corner, big head nodding on his chest, little snoring belches puffing out.

Prim cleared his throat and called for silence, raising his voice above the general racket. This in itself was rare enough for an uneasy hush to settle over the gathering. The only sound was a bit of scratching and the odd burp.

“I’ve got some bad news, lads.” Prim brandished a piece of paper in the air. “We’re going to be abolished. This letter is from the head of the ‘Brittany for the Future’ Tourist Board. They’re saying we’re too old-fashioned, harping on an old quaint image of Brittany that no-one wants anymore.”

“BASTARDS!” The old chap rose from his stool with a roar.

Prim pushed him back gently and raised a flagon to the leathery lips.

“Sit back down, Tad. Have another drink.” Tad relapsed into slumber.

“Now as I was saying, this letter...”

Droch was already on his feet, spluttering with anger.

“But we are an icon, the quin...., quin whatever image of Brittany!”

“Quintessential, you mean,” said Pismig, who’d once read a book, “but I don’t think that matters much these days. There’s those in Léon who use a Bigoudene lady on a bike as their symbol, so what price authenticity.”

“But what have they got without us?” said Droch.

A general murmur of ‘Yeah, right’ went round the dim space. Then there was a short reflective silence.

“Well,” Pismig began, ‘there’s a lot of history, megaliths and all that...’

“And who built the bloody megaliths, mate,” Droch shouted. “We did!”

Pismig shook his head.

“No, actually we didn’t. In Neolithic times...”

“Just shut up,’ Droch put in. ‘If that’s the best you can do...’

Pismig ignored him.

‘There’s the religious heritage too, the chapels and calvaries, and what about all the natural wonders, the otters and beavers...’

‘One of those bastards nipped my ass the other day,’ Krak interrupted.

“But what can we do?’ said Bi, the youngest korrigan, speaking a little nervously in front of the others.

“BITE THEIR ANKLES”, yelled Tad, struggling to get up.

‘Sit back down, Tad”, said Prim gently, patting the old chap’s shoulder. ‘Get your pipe going, that’s it.’

Pismig and Droch were snapping and pushing at each other now. Prim raised his hands for silence.

“Come on, lads, this isn’t getting us anywhere. It’s a serious