



I was born de day de veil thin. Beltane. No mama. No papa.
Just de swamp and de mud and a cry dat echo between de
cypress like it belong to sometin' else.

I don't remember who find me or if anybody do. I remember de
water was warm. I remember de gator – my kin now, his
grandfather den – he watch me like I was sometin' to keep or
sometin' to eat, and he decide I was his business either way. I
remember de taste of mud and crawfish and rain. I remember
de fever that come and go and come again. I remember
learnin' to know which root kill you quick and which one slow.

I was not a child. Children need somebody to mother dem. I was
a thing de swamp raise.

Dey don't teach you dat in de world out dere.

But it true.

And when you come before me now – two hundred and one
years later – you come before sometin' dat never belong to
nobody but de mud and de dark and de old things dat live in
water.

Dat is where y'all get it wrong. De swamp don't keep what it
don't want.

Remember dat when you come before me.

