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SEANAN MCGUIRE

An  
October Daye  
Novel



A  
RED-ROSE  
CHAIN

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—*LOCUS*

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—The Ranting Dragon

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SEANAN MCGUIRE

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Version\_1

*For Brooke.*

*I am so lucky to have you in my life.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Every new Toby book is an adventure for me as a writer just as much as it (hopefully) is for you as a reader. *A Red-Rose Chain* was a surprise from start to finish, and that's the best kind of book for me, as a writer. I learned things that excited me, and I'm so glad that you're still here.

As always, there are people who need to be thanked. Thanks to the Machete Squad, for tireless support and editorial assistance, and to the entire team at DAW, without whose faith in me this book would not exist. Thanks to Talis, Teddy, and Amal, for hosting me at various spots around the United Kingdom while I finished this book, and to my entire Parisian crew, for not drowning me in the hot tub located in the basement of our Murder Palace.

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Sheila Gilbert remains the best of all possible editors, Diana Fox remains the best of all possible agents, and Chris McGrath remains the best of all possible cover artists. While we're on this track, my cats are the best of all possible cats. So are yours, if you have them. All hail the pit crew: Christopher Mangum, Tara O'Shea, and Kate Secor.

My soundtrack while writing *A Red-Rose Chain* consisted mostly of *Songs About Teeth*, by Cake Bake Betty, *Caffeine & Big Dreams*, by Kira Isabella, the soundtrack of *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, endless live concert recordings of the Counting Crows, and a really awesome playlist made for me by Amal. Any errors in this book are entirely my own. The errors that aren't here are the ones that all these people helped me fix.

Welcome back.

# OCTOBER DAYE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE THROUGH A RED-ROSE CHAIN

All pronunciations are given strictly phonetically. This only covers races explicitly named in the first nine books, omitting Undersea races not appearing or mentioned in book nine.



Afanc: *ah-fank*. Plural is “Afanc.”

Annwn: *ah-noon*. No plural exists.

Bannick: *ban-nick*. Plural is “Bannicks.”

Barghest: *bar-guy-st*. Plural is “Barghests.”

Blodynbrid: *blow-din-brid*. Plural is “Blodynbryds.”

Cait Sidhe: *kay-th shee*. Plural is “Cait Sidhe.”

Candela: *can-dee-la*. Plural is “Candela.”

Coblynau: *cob-lee-now*. Plural is “Coblynau.”

Cu Sidhe: *coo shee*. Plural is “Cu Sidhe.”

Daoine Sidhe: *doon-ya shee*. Plural is “Daoine Sidhe,” diminutive is “Daoine.”

Djinn: *jin*. Plural is “Djinn.”

Dóchas Sidhe: *doe-sh-as shee*. Plural is “Dóchas Sidhe.”

Ellyllon: *el-lee-lawn*. Plural is “Ellyllons.”

Gean-Cannah: *gee-ann can-na*. Plural is “Gean-Cannah.”

Glastig: *glass-tig*. Plural is “Glastigs.”

Gwragen: *guh-war-a-gen*. Plural is “Gwragen.”

Hamadryad: *ha-ma-dry-add*. Plural is “Hamadryads.”

Hippocampus: *hip-po-cam-pus*. Plural is “Hippocampi.”

Kelpie: *kel-pee*. Plural is “Kelpies.”

Kitsune: *kit-soo-nay*. Plural is “Kitsune.”

Lamia: *lay-me-a*. Plural is “Lamia.”

The Luidaeg: *the lou-sha-k*. No plural exists.

Manticore: *man-tee-core*. Plural is “Manticores.”

Mauthe Doog: *mwa-th doo-g*. Plural is “Mauthe Doog.”

Naiad: *nigh-add*. Plural is “Naiads.”

Nixie: *nix-ee*. Plural is “Nixen.”

Peri: *pear-ee*. Plural is “Peri.”

Piskie: *piss-key*. Plural is “Piskies.”

Puca: *puh-ca*. Plural is “Pucas.”

Roane: *row-n*. Plural is “Roane.”

Satyr: *say-tur*. Plural is “Satyrs.”

Selkie: *sell-key*. Plural is “Selkies.”

Shyi Shuai: *shh-yee shh-why*. Plural is “Shyi Shuai.”

Silene: *sigh-lean*. Plural is “Silene.”

Tuatha de Dannan: *tootha day danan*. Plural is “Tuatha de Dannan,” diminutive is “Tuatha.”

Tylwyth Teg: *till-with teeg*. Plural is “Tylwyth Teg,” diminutive is “Tylwyth.”

Urisk: *you-risk*. Plural is “Urisk.”



# ONE

**March 11th, 2013**

*Thus he that overruled I oversway'd,*

*Leading him prisoner in a red-rose chain:*

*Strong-tempered steel his stronger strength obey'd,*

*Yet was he servile to my coy disdain.*

—William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*.

“SO HOW LONG ARE you and the kitty-cat plannin’ on doing this whole ‘engagement’ thing?” Danny punctuated his words with a sweep of one heavy hand. The motion neatly swatted the enormous black dog that had been leaping for my head out of the air, sending it crashing to the ground. It yelped. Danny pointed at it, saying sternly, “Stay down, ya big mutt!”

“Could we focus on the Mauthe Doog for right now, and talk about my engagement later?” I asked, as I swung my sword at another of the shaggy canines. It dodged easily. They all had. I wasn’t as good with a blade as Danny was with his hands, and in the end, I was just too *slow*. “I don’t want to be torn to shreds because you’re planning floral arrangements!”

I would normally have felt bad about attacking dogs with swords. I like dogs. Most dogs aren’t feral teleporters the size of small ponies. Human animal rights groups have very different problems than fae ones. For one thing, most human animal rights groups don’t have to worry as much about being eaten.

“I’m just sayin’, maybe you need to start talking about dates.” Danny grabbed another dog by the tail, scolding, “No. Bad. We don’t eat people.”

The dog snarled and snapped at him, not quite managing to twist around enough to sink its teeth into his arm. That was a pity. Danny’s a Bridge Troll, with the solid, concrete-like skin to prove it. If the dog had tried to take a bite out of him, it would have probably broken several teeth, and made itself a lot less dangerous to *me*.

With most people, it’s unfair for me to expect them to play shield. I heal faster than anyone else I’ve ever met, to the point where if I watch closely I can actually see my skin knitting back together—and trust me, that’s even more unnerving than it sounds. Danny is one of the few exceptions to this rule. He’s huge, imposing, and virtually indestructible. He heals slower than I do, but that doesn’t matter, because there’s

almost nothing that can actually injure him. All of this makes him uniquely well-suited to being my partner when I have to do something ridiculously dangerous—like, say, clearing out a pack of Mauthe Doog that should never have been roving the salt flats of Marin.

Not that we were out there alone. My squire, Quentin Sollys, and my boyfriend-slash-fiancé, Tybalt, were about fifty yards away, dealing with their own contingent of black dogs. Quentin had his sword, and was handling his share of the problem with a grace and finesse that I will probably never possess, even if I live to be a thousand—although he hadn't managed to land a hit, either. The dogs were just too fast for something as clumsy as a sword. Tybalt was having better luck. He had shifted far enough into his feline mien that his hands had become heavy with claws and his mouth bristled with teeth, and he was taking out his share of the Mauthe Doog in the classic cat-meets-dog fashion. I could hear his feral snarls, and the dogs' pained yelps, all the way down the beach.

Mauthe Doog are native to a few small islands in Avalon, one of the deeper realms of Faerie. All the deeper realms were sealed by Oberon centuries ago, as part of the process of locking up the house and hiding the valuables before he went on an extended vacation, leaving his descendants to fend for ourselves. Most of the really dangerous monsters fell under the "valuables" category, and were shut off from the rest of us, leaving our asses unchewed and our pets uneaten. Unfortunately, there'd been an incident about nine months ago involving an uncontrolled, overpowered teleporter named Chelsea Ames. Chelsea was strong enough to rip holes in those closed walls between the realms, leading to leakage from all the deep, dark places into the Summerlands, the last accessible Faerie country. Which also happened to be the one closest to the mortal world. Which meant that once something was *there*, it could easily wind up *here*.

We'd managed to stop Chelsea before she could completely destabilize Faerie, leading to the loss of the Summerlands, or worse. That didn't do anything to stuff whatever had already managed to come through back into the places where it belonged. Sylvester, my currently semi-estranged liege lord, wound up adopting an Afanc, a docile lake creature big enough to squash cars. The local pixie tribes swelled by a factor of five, and promptly began battling each other for territory, shrieking in hypersonic voices and stabbing each other with tiny poisoned spears. And those of us unlucky enough to be on-call as knights errant or heroes of the realm got to spend a lot of time playing mediator between the warring swarms.

Guess what I do for a living. Lucky me.

"Toby, watch your back!"

Danny's shout caused me to whip around, sword raised defensively. The leaping Mauthe Doog rebounded off the blade with a yelp, leaving a smear of red-black blood behind. The fae dog retreated a few steps, alternately whining and growling. I stared in surprise at the blood on the blade. It smelled like hot copper and distant fens, a rich,

boggy smell that was as familiar as it was foreign.

They had been moving too fast before for me to draw blood. Danny had been doing a lot of damage, but it had all been blunt force trauma. Not much blood in that sort of fight.

“Danny, cover me,” I said, and brought the sword to my mouth.

“You’re not gonna—aw, shit, you are. That’s gross,” grumbled the Bridge Troll, and moved to shield me from the remaining dogs as I licked the blood from the side of my sword.

Faerie is a funny place. There are hundreds of different types of fae, all descended from the First Three: Oberon, Maeve, and Titania. We can look different enough from one another that it’s impossible to believe we could be related, much less share the same origin, but it’s true. And all of us have our own special talents to help us survive. Some are shapeshifters, like Tybalt. Others are built to last, like Danny. The rest of us have to depend on subtler magic. Like blood.

My kind of fae, the Dóchas Sidhe, are the best blood-workers of all. The fact that I’m a changeling—part human, part fae, although the fae part of me is getting stronger all the time, at the inevitable expense of my humanity—has never been enough to keep me from accessing the magic my lineage is heir to, even when I would have been better off leaving that magic alone. The fact that I hate the sight of blood is neither here nor there. If anything, it’s proof that the universe has a sense of humor.

The Mauthe Doog’s blood was tart and faintly bitter, like it had been tainted by some unknown substance. I closed my eyes as I swallowed, trying to find something—anything—that would tell me what the dogs wanted, or how to make them stop attacking joggers and eating people’s housecats. Instead, I found my own face, distorted by the Mauthe Doog’s fear until it became the visage of a monster. Danny loomed behind me in the red blood haze of memory, a walking mountain that dealt out death with every blow.

“They’re terrified,” I said distantly, only barely aware that my lips were moving. I swallowed hard, trying to chase away the shreds of blood memory. A faint headache was growing in my temples, warning me that I was pushing the limits of my powers again. Blood magic is hard on a body—harder, it seems, than regenerating most of my skin, or repeatedly healing broken bones. Louder, I repeated, “They’re terrified!”

“What?” The low rumble of Danny’s voice pulled me all the way back into the present. I opened my eyes and dropped my sword in the same motion.

The sound of the blade hitting the ground seemed louder than it was. Even Tybalt stopped his snarling, head whipping around as he stared in my direction. His ears were better than mine under the best of circumstances, and in his partially-transformed state, his hearing would be especially sharp. That was a good thing. I didn’t want to yell.

“They’re scared,” I said, lowering myself to a crouch. The three Mauthe Doog who were in any shape to fight watched me warily, but didn’t attack. I think they were just relieved that I wasn’t holding a sword anymore. “We’ve been acting like they were animals because they’re not shapeshifters, and that was sort of right: they *are* animals. They’re monsters. The Law doesn’t protect them, because they can’t claim its protection. But they’re not *dumb* animals, and they’re not attacking people out of malice. They’re doing it because they’re scared out of their minds.”

“What do you mean?” rumbled Danny.

“Imagine going from one of the deep realms—a place where there’s never been an Industrial Revolution, no people, no pollution, no cars—to modern-day Marin in the blink of an eye, just because you were standing in the wrong place at the wrong time.” I extended my hand toward the nearest Mauthe Doog, fighting not to let my nervousness show. I could probably grow back any fingers the big dog decided to bite off. Probably. I’d never actually experimented with regenerating limbs before, and this would be a lousy way to find out where the limits of my healing powers were.

“So you’re sayin’ that these are somebody’s pets?” Danny actually sounded halfway excited now. He had a big heart to go with his big body—and given that he was almost eight feet tall, that meant he had a *lot* of heart. He also ran the only Barghest Rescue Society in existence. He was supposedly trying to find homes for all his semi-canine, scorpion-tailed monstrosities, but since most Bridge Trolls didn’t live in houses with backyards and everyone who isn’t a Bridge Troll has issues with venomous pets, he hadn’t managed to adopt one out in the whole time that he’d been keeping them. I wasn’t sure he really wanted to anymore.

“I’m saying they used to be, a long time ago, before we went away and left them all alone.” Sometimes I questioned Oberon’s wisdom in sealing the deeper realms. Yeah, he kept the kids away from the guns and liquor, proverbially speaking, but he’d also kept them away from their quiet spaces and favorite toys. More, he’d locked them out while locking their companion animals in. Even fae creatures can live forever, under the right circumstances. How long could an abandoned fae dog wait for its master before it decided to turn loneliness into rage?

I turned my attention to the injured Mauthe Doog. “Hi,” I said, as gently as I could. “I’m sorry we hurt you. You scared us.”

Danny snorted. “They did more’n scare us.”

“Danny, hush,” I hissed—but he was right. Queen Arden Windermere in the Mists had asked me to gather my friends and take care of the Mauthe Doog problem in Marin after the third mortal jogger had come staggering back to his car raving about disappearing dogs with teeth like daggers. The fact that he’d been lucky to encounter the Mauthe Doog instead of something nastier—they’re not the only breed of fae dog, and some of their cousins are venomous—probably didn’t occur to him. He’d been so focused on convincing people that he wasn’t crazy that he’d actually managed to

stammer his story to a local newscaster before he was whisked off to a hospital. Arden had called me immediately. I was a hero of the realm, after all, which made this my problem, whether I wanted it to be or not.

I had turned around and called for backup. Which is maybe not a very heroic thing to do, but is definitely the sensible thing to do, and if there's one thing my friends and allies have been pounding into my head for the last four years, it's the need for support when I'm going into a dangerous situation. Some people call it personal growth. I call it the slowly dawning understanding that I enjoy being alive, and that it's easier to stay that way when I have people to help me.

The Mauthe Doog was still watching me warily, its ears pressed down flat against its head. All of them were about the size of healthy Rottweilers, but with thick, shaggy black coats that would have looked more at home on a Muppet. The other two had fallen back farther, whining in confusion. At least they weren't attacking us anymore.

"Tybalt, I know you can hear me, since you're all kitty-kitty right now," I said, raising my voice only slightly. I didn't want to scare the Mauthe Doog again if I could help it. "I want you to start falling back toward me. Bring Quentin along. Defend yourselves if you have to, but stop attacking. Don't make any aggressive moves." I paused before adding, "Trust me."

It was probably a good thing I couldn't hear whatever Tybalt said in response to my instructions, since it was almost certainly profane and laced with comments about my intelligence, or lack thereof. Tybalt's been just about everything I could ask for in a lover, which is why I agreed to marry him when he asked, but he doesn't like my habit of charging headlong into danger when there are people he likes less who could be doing it in my place. It's hard to argue with that sort of logic.

The Mauthe Doog slunk closer to my outstretched hand, its head hanging low and its ears slanted forward. I didn't know enough about dogs to know whether that was a good sign.

Dogs. That was it. Tybalt was a King of Cats, which was all well and good, but wasn't going to help calm a bunch of fae dogs. Luckily, Tybalt wasn't our only option. "Do you remember the Cu Sidhe?" I asked the Mauthe Doog. Its ears seemed to prick up a bit. I decided to take that as a good sign, and kept talking. "They're here, with us. You're on Earth now, on the other side of the Summerlands. That's why things are so strange here. But we can help you get back to the Summerlands, to the Cu Sidhe. You don't have to be alone anymore."

What we couldn't do was help them get back to Avalon. Those doors were sealed, and had been since we stopped Chelsea from her panicked flight through Faerie. She couldn't teleport at all right now, thanks to an alchemical potion that had blocked her powers, and was going to keep blocking them until a year had passed. When it wore off—and it would wear off soon; she only had about three months to go—she would have a normal Tuatha de Dannan's limitations. No more shredding the fabric of Faerie

for Chelsea, and no way home for the Mauthe Doog.

The Mauthe Doog closest to me whined. I heard footsteps approaching from behind me. Experience told me that they belonged to Quentin, not Tybalt—my squire might have the grace and elegance of a pureblooded Daoine Sidhe, but Cait Sidhe are in a league of their own when it comes to sneaking up on people. The day Tybalt did something as common as stomp would be the day he turned in his proverbial whiskers.

“These are my friends,” I said, gesturing toward the sound of footsteps and hoping that the gesture would encompass all three of the guys. “We’re all sorry we fought with you. We didn’t know.”

“I’m not sorry,” said Quentin. “One of them tried to take my throat away from me. With its teeth. I’m not you. I *need* my throat.”

“Whine about missing body parts later, talk nicely to the poor confused doggies now,” I said, keeping my eyes on the Mauthe Doog. “This is one of those moments when I could really use Etienne’s powers back in working order. Danny, call Muir Woods. Tell Arden we need a door from here to there, and tell her that Madden needs to be waiting on the other side.”

“I think attacking the Queen with a bunch of monster dogs is treason, Toby,” said Quentin, starting to sound concerned.

“Good for me, I haven’t committed treason against this monarch yet. I’m trying to complete the set. Danny?”

“On it,” rumbled the Bridge Troll, and moved away, his steps thudding against the ground like tiny boulders falling.

I stayed where I was, keeping my hand stretched out toward the dogs and making quiet, soothing noises. More Mauthe Doog slunk around us to join the three I’d started with, forming a pack of wary canines. There were seven of them, all told; I didn’t know how many we’d killed, or how many of them had teleported away and were now making their way back to check on their pack mates. I’ve never really been much of a dog person.

The smell of blackberry flowers and redwood bark drifted over me, out of place this close to the water. I twisted to look over my shoulder. Arden was standing behind me and not behind me at the same time, since there was no rational way of folding geography that put Muir Woods “behind” the Marin salt flats. A glimmering circle in the air marked the division between her location and ours.

“What in the world—” she began.

I cut her off. “Is Madden there?” It’s good to be on speaking terms with the Queen: it makes rudeness a little easier to forgive. But only a little. I had to be careful not to

push it.

Arden frowned, apparently not used to people interrupting her anymore. I was definitely pushing it. All she said was, “Yes, he’s here. Madden?”

“Coming!” The voice was followed by a large, shaggy man in jeans and a black T-shirt with the Borderlands Café logo on the front appearing in the frame of Arden’s portal. He would have looked completely out of place next to Arden, with her perfectly groomed hair and the dress that could have been lifted straight from the Italian Renaissance, if not for the red streaks in his otherwise snow-white hair and the wolfish gold of his eyes. Madden looked mostly human, but the parts of him that weren’t human were pure canine. “Hi, Toby! Hi, Toby’s friends!”

“Hi, Madden,” I said. “Can you step through for a second? I have some folks here who really want to meet you.”

“All right,” said Madden amiably, and bounced through the portal. Then he stopped, staring at the Mauthe Doog with open-faced delight. “Hey! Cousins!”

The Mauthe Doog perked up instantly, their ears going straight and their shaggy black tails beginning to wag. I straightened up and stepped back as Madden stepped forward. That seemed to be their cue: the Mauthe Doog who weren’t too injured to jump began jumping all over him, dancing up onto their hind legs to make it easier. Those who were too injured pressed themselves against his calves and ankles, sighing heavily, the tension going out of their bodies.

I turned to the portal. “They’re not monsters, Your Highness; they were attacking people because they were scared and confused. But they come from the same realm as the Cu Sidhe, so once I realized they weren’t actually hostile, I figured Madden was the answer.”

“You didn’t tell me they were Mauthe Doog, Arden,” said Madden, sounding hurt. I glanced back to find him standing behind me, one of the injured canines cradled in his arms. It had its neck bent at an improbable angle, and was calmly licking the underside of his chin. “I would’ve said they were good dogs, if you’d told me.”

“I didn’t know,” said Arden. “All the reports we had said ‘shaggy black canines,’ but they weren’t specific enough to let us figure out what *kind* of fae dog we were dealing with.”

“They’re good dogs,” said Madden. He turned to me. “They’ll come with me now. If that’s okay with you. I can call my brothers and sisters, and they’ll come to Muir Woods to get the Mauthe Doog that were here and take them back to the house before we come back and start looking for the rest. Any that are missing, we’ll find, once the pack trusts us.”

Cu Sidhe like to live in large family groups, almost like packs, but without the social

posturing and structure that humans have tried to assign to the word. They just want to be with other dogs. I could understand that. It's nice to be around people who understand you. "Sure, Madden," I said. "Do you need us to help you carry them?"

"There's only two who don't feel like they can walk so good, and I can get them," he said. "Arden, can you hold the door?"

"For you, the world," she said, with a faint smile. Arden and Madden had been friends since long before she had come back to Faerie and allowed herself to become a Queen. Their relationship wasn't romantic, and that was probably a good thing; she needed a friend more than she needed a lover. I knew what that was like. "Sir Daye, I'm going to need you and your people to come by the knowe to give me a full report. Shall I see you tonight?"

"As soon as we finish cleaning up here," I said. None of us had physical magic, but we could kick away the footprints in the sand and bury the blood, making it look like the salt flats had been invaded by a bunch of kids playing soccer or something, not a group of heavily armed fae having a pitched battle with supernatural dogs. That, too, was part of my job. The human world and Faerie were separate for a reason, and I had to help hold that line.

"Can I come visit the doggies?" asked Danny, looking at Madden.

Madden smiled. "We will welcome you," he said. He stooped to lift the second badly injured Mauthe Doog onto his shoulder, and then he stepped through the portal. The rest of the black dogs flowed through at his feet, vanishing from the salt flats and reappearing in the shadows of Muir Woods. Arden looked briefly nonplussed. Then the last dog was through, and she lowered her hand, closing the portal.

Danny, Quentin, Tybalt, and I stood alone on the sand in silence for a few moments. Two dead Mauthe Doog lay further down the beach, their necks broken, the blood running from their open mouths tinting the ground where they had fallen. The night-haunts would come for their bodies soon enough; we just needed to take care of the tracks.

Quentin spoke first. "So this was fun."

"Yeah," I said.

"We should do this every week," he said.

"I will drown you in the ocean and send your parents a very nice card to tell them how sorry I am," I said.

"Be sure you include a gift card for Tim Hortons," he said. "That's how we say 'sorry for killing your firstborn son' in Canada."