

## The Braw Guidwyfe an hir Nicht Veisitors

Ae tyme, ae place, the war a fermer. Bien he wes, an him wi sairvant louns for ti help wi his corn an his cattil beiss, his sowin i the spring tyme an his sheirin at hairst, his yowes an his lambs, an thaim feedin on the green braes o the hirsil an giein him guid maet. an guid woo for the cleidin o aw his houss an haudin.

He haed a wyfe anaw. Heich an braw she wes, an hir name wes Mhairi, an wi hir lassies, she keepit awthing naet inby the big ferm houss. Thegither, did thay no cuik an bake, clae an polish, feed the hens an milk the kye? Thay did aw that an a sicht mair, for the war butter ti kirn an kebbok, an monie anither thing forby. An the war woo an flax ti kaim an spin, an weive inti fyne claith for aw the lads an lassie aboot the place, forby makkin claes for the guidman an his guidwyfe. The war aneuch, an mair nor aneuch for awbodie ti dae.

Sae awbodie wes eydent aw day lang, but thay war weill content tae, for the fermer wes a guid maister til aw his louns, an his guidwyfe, Mhairi, a kynd mistress til aw hir houss lassies.

Weill, ae nicht, the guidman, forfochen an wabbitie eftir a lang day ootby, wi him dargin frae daw till gloamin, gaed awa aerie til his bed. But the guidwyfe haed wark yit ti dae, for said she:

“Nou Ah maun set oot the woo an the linen threid for the morn’s cairdin an spinnin an weivin. Gin it is no richt reddie, ma lassies an me wul be wastin the guid daylight rinnin here an thare, feshin an cairriein, afore we can sit down til oor wark, an a rowth the ir o that!”

Sae Mhairi wrocht awa, but the mair she did, the mair it seemed the war aye ti dae, an at lest, she said til hirsell:

“Ai dearie me! Ah im fair duin. Ah im hattert ti daith. Gin onlie sumbodie wad cum for ti help me! Oniebodie at aw, whuther frae laund or sie, frae ferr or near. Ai, wad Ah no be gled o a haund the-nicht?”

Nae suiner war the wurds oot hir mou, nor a chap cam ti the dure, an a smaw vyce cryin:

“Heich Mhairi, braw wyfe that ye ir, Ah wul gie ye a haund, sae Ah wul. Open you this dure ti me!”

Sae Mhairi, wunnerin til hirsell, opent the dure an whit soud she see but a wee wumman cled in green? In she cam, the wee bodie, sat hirsell down on the creepie stuil asyde the spinnin jennie, an beguid ti spin.

Nae suiner haed she stertit, nor whit soud thare be but anither chap on the dure, an anither smaw vyce cryin:

“Heich Mhairi, braw guidwyfe that ye ir, Ah wul gie ye a haund, sae Ah wul. Open you this dure ti me!”

Again Mhairi opent the dure, an whit soud she see, buit a saicont wee wumman cled in green? In cam the saicont wee wumman an beguid ti caird the saft woo ti git it reddie for wurkin.

An anither wee wumman cam in at hir heels. An anither an anither. An mair tae, or the haill room wes fou wit the wee fowk, wee men an wee weimen baith, an thaim lauchin an yatterin sae that Mhairi wes verra near deifent wi the clash o thaim.

Sum set thairsells ti cairdin, sum ti windin it, sum ti spinnin it, ithers brushin claith that wes wuiven areddies, an ither sum ti settin a mukkil caudron o wattir ti haet at the ingil for the washin o the claith whan aw wes feinisht.

At first, the guidwyfe stuid watchin thaim fou o wunner. Never in aw hir leevin days haed she seen the wee fowk, lat alane haein thaim in hir ain kitchen an thaim wurkin thair weirdrie for hir. But she wesna ti staun for lang, for suin the wee fowk war cryin sairly til hir, first ane an syne anither:

“We ir hungirie, Mhair! Bake us breid, Mhairi! Na, dinna bake breid, bake bannoks! Ir thay no quicker in the makkin? Sae thay ir, an ir we no that hungirie, Mhairi? Ay, ir we no? That hungirie---! Sae bake you bannoks for us! Richt nou, Mhairi, an hurrie up about it!”

Sae Mhairi fell tae ti bake bannoks for the wee fowk as fest as she micht. But the mair she bakit, the fester did the wee fowk gorbil up aw she set down afore thaim! An waur nor that, did thay no yerp on for mair bannoks? An mair? An yit mair? Thay did juist that, or the guidwyfe didna ken hou she wad mainage, for the giral wes amaist tuim. An aye the wee fowk wrocht at thair cairdin, an syne windin, an syne spinnin, an syne weivin, an still aw wesna feinisht. Hou coud it be, for warna the woo an ti spare for the makkin o guid claith for sae mukkil a houss an haudin?.

At lest, puir Mhairi coud thole it nae mair an ran awa up the stairs for ti wauken hir guidman oot his sleep. But steir he wadna, wi him sleepin as soond as gin he war deid. Mhair cryit til him, an shuik him wi aw hir micht, but the war a glaumerie on him as weill as a spell in the kichen, an naething, it seemed, coud wauken him.

Sae awa gaed the guidwyfe back inti the kitchen. An whit soud she finnd thare but the wee fowk dargin awa an girin that thay war aye hungirie.

“Mair bannoks, kynd Mhairi, for we ir fair stervin wi kempin sae lang an sae haurd for ye! Mair bannocks, Wumman! Bake for us, Mhairi! An be gleg about it, Mhairi!”

Sae Mhairi keikit again in the giral, an richt aneuch, it wes gey near tuim. Whit wad she dae nou for hir ain houss quynes? It wes chappin midnight areddies, an hir wi nae meal for the morn’s morn.

“Haud on, juist you byde a wee!” she fleicht at the wee fowk. “The gurnal is amaist tuim, sae it is, an Ah maun rin awa doun the road ti see gin ma neibor haes meal ti len me.”

An wi that, she ran oot the dure an awa ti rouse the Wyce Man o thareaboots frae his sleepin bed, an him sleepin content lyke. But he wes fairlie waukent bi the clatterin o Mahiri’s neives on his houss dure, an he rase oot his bed for ti see whit it nicht be that wes makkin sic a dirdum throu the nicht..

Whan the Wyce Man haed haird aw Mhairi’s storie, did he no flyte hir for a silly wumman? He did that, for he said:

“You yeirsell brocht the fairies inti yeir houss, stuipit tawpie that ye ir! Div ye no ken that never soud ye wush or prig the help o thaim on land, or sie, frae ferr or frae near? It is the fairie fowk that haird ye, an it is geyan ill ti git quut o sic freins aince thay hae wun tintil yeir houss. Ye did weill, tho, ti cum ti me, for Ah im the verra ane that kens hou ti help ye, nane ither.

“Tak tent, nou, an mynd whit Ah im gaun ti tell ye, for Ah wul speak but the aince. Sae mynd weill ma wurd! Yeir guidman is anaith spells an ye canna be lowsed frae thir or the fairie fowk is oot yeir houss.. Gang you back hame nou, an staun you on the green knowe forenent yeir houss. Syne, as loud as ye nicht, cry oot thir wurd thryce:

**‘BURG HILL IS ON HAUD! BURG HILL IS ON HAUD! BURG HILL IS ON HAUD!’**

“The wee fowk wul be in a hurrie ti win hame ti sauf thair bairns an thair plenishins, sae thay wul rin oot yeir houss as fest as thay dow.

“Whan aw hae gaen, gang you in an steik yeir ooter dure siccar! Cowp awthing owre that the wee fowk hae laid haunds on in yeir houss, an whan ye hae duin that, tak the caudron o claenin watter frae aff the ingil. Pit sum o the wattir intil a tassie an strinkil it owre yeir guidman whaur he sleeps. Syne he wul be lowsed frae the spells that ir on him. Steir yeirsell, nou, an forget nocht!”

An wi that, the Wyce Man steikit his houss dure an gaed grumfin awa back til his bed, an Mhairi ran hame i the mirk o the nicht. Swyth she clum til the tap o the green knowe asyde the houss. An swyth she raired oot as the Wyce Man haed bidden hir:

**“BURG HILL IS ON HAUD! BURG HILL IS ON HAUD! BURG HILL IS ON HAUD!”**

At aince hir ain dure flew open, an wha soud breinge oot but the wee fowk, an thaim strampin ane anither in thair strioushie an cryin oot ane til anither:

“Ma wyfe an brairns! Thay wul burn! Ai, ma kebbok an ma butter wul be brunt up! Ma sons an ma dochters wul be lost, sae thay wul! The kaims for ma woo, an ma spinnin jennie wul aw burn! An ma roke an ma luim! Ma cou an ma horses wul dee!

Hou wul Ah sowe ma corn gin Ah haena a plou? Ai, ma stiddie an ma hammer! Gin Burg Hill be brunt, hou sal Ah leeve?

As suin as the lest o the wee fowk ran doun the loan, Mhairi ran intil hir houss, an steikit the dure ticht. Fell fest did she no whummil awthing that the wee fowk haed set haund on? She did juist that! Tapsalteirie gaed the rok, tapsalteirie gaed the kaim, tapsalteirie gae the spinnin jennie, tapsalteirie gae the luim, an aw the creepie stuils whaur the wee fowk haed suttin thairsells doun. An syne she liftit the caudron o claein wattir awa frae the ingil an set it ti the ae syde, sayin:

“Ai mercie me! Whitna lyke mess awthing is! Wul it no tak the lassies aw the morn ti redd awthing up again? It wul that! An Ah hae ti mak ae lest bannok sae that ma guidman can swallae a moufu afore he gaes awa til his day’s darg. That wul Ah dae even tho Ah dinna win ti ma bed aw nicht.

An wi that, the wabbitie guidwyfe taen the lest neivefu oot the giral an set hersell ti mak a littil tottie bannok. Nae suiner haed she set ti ti bake at the ingil, nor thare cam chappin haunds at hir dure, an cryin wee vyces:

“Lat us in! Lat us in, guidwyfe! Lat us in, Mhairi! We ir the anes ti help ye, sae we ir!”

But never a wurd spak Mhairi, an she never gaed hir fuitlenth ti the dure, for aw the dirdum grew louder, an louder yit. For weill she kent that the wee fowk war back an she wesna gaun ti be the ane ti lat thaim owre the dure. Never again, for she myndit weill whit the Wyce Man haed telt hir.

But the wee fowk didna stap thair cryin. No thaim---! Suin ane o thaim wes keikin throu the kiehole an cryin at the spinnin jennie:

“Spinnin jennie, spinnin jennie, unsteik you the dure that we nicht cum in an wurk!”

An the spinnin jennie gied back:

“Ah wad be gled ti obleige ye, sae Ah wad, but Ah im cowpit owre, sae Ah canna cum.”

“Weill than,” cryit anither of the wee fowk, “creepie stuils, creepie stuils, lat ane o ye unsteik the dure! Shuirle ane o ye aye stauns on thrie guid legs?”

But the stuil nearesthaund the dure said:

“Na, fient ane o us. We ir aw tapsalteirie. We wad be gled ti obleige ye, but we canna!”

An sae it gae on. The wee fowk askit awthing in the room, but aye the aunser wes the same, for haedna the guidwyfe duin as the Wyce Man said? She haed that, an naething, it seemed coud budge. But hinnerlie, ae wee man wi his ee ti the kiehole, saw the wee bannok daein awa at the ingil.

“Ho! Ho!” he cryit. “But Ah see a bodie that can help us, sae Ah dae. Littil bannok, ye ir richt syde up! Cum ye ti the dure an lat us in this meinit!”

An the wee bannok said:

“Ah wul dae juist that, sae Ah wul,” an here it rase up on its edge, an rowed alang the fluir for the dure. In an oot an atwein, an ablo aw the creepie stuils an the roke. Amang the cairdin kaims an the spinnin jennie, the luim, the rowes o claith an the waps o woo an the hanks o flex it rowed, or it wan til the dure.

Ai, but wha wes thare afore it? Nane but Mhairi hirsell. An swyth as ye lyke, whit soud she dae but stramp on the wee bannok sae that she brouzilt it flat, sae that the war naething left ti unsteik the dure but a wee haep o murlins. An whit coud thay dae? Naething at aw, ti be shuir.

Ootby the dure, the wee fowk war roused, an gittin mair roused. Louder an louder thay raired an skellocht, sae that pur Mhairi’s heid wes lyke ti burst wi the clash o it. An syne, did she no mynd the ae lest thing the Wyce Man bad hir dae? She did that. Sae she doukit a tassie inti the caudron o claenin wattir, an awa she ran wi it ti whaur hir guidman wes aye lyin sleepin, an him hauden anaith a spell. Swyth as ye lyke, she strinkilt the claenin wattir on him whaur he lay, an at aince, he waukent up oot his sleep an spiert at hir whaur aw the dirdum wes cummin frae?

Mhairi telt him strecht o hir ill wush that haed brocht the wee fowk intil his houss, an up rase the guidman at aince, an awa doun ti the kitchen gaed he an unsteikit the houss dure! An syne, the wee fowk ran awa stourin lyke shaidaes blawn bi the wund. For is it no weill kent that nane o the wee fowk wul face up ti the maister o the houss, an him staunin on his ain durestep? Shuirlic it is, bi aw the wyce fowk in the warld. Sae mynd you an mynd that!