

The Lest o the Ettins

Ti this day, the'r a cave in the Hills o Fearn in Ross, that wes aince the hame o the Lest o the Ettins. Whan he wes a yung callant, this ettin wes that heich he straid abuin the trees an thay war lyke gress at his feet. He wes that braid that whan he cam atwein onie man an the sun, the mirk fell. His maucht wes mair nor that o aw the mukkil elephants in the warld an his vyce wes louder nor the blowsterin storm. His sicht wes that sherp he coud pick out a speug a hunder myle awa. An his hearin wes that gleg that frae the heichest ben, he coud hear the waves laipin saftlie on the sea shore. He coud haud a ship in the luif o his haund an his fuit coud cuiver a haill field. O aw the ettins in the age of the ettins, he bure the grie.

But whan he grew aulder lyke, his maucht dowed, his sicht bleirit an his bodie dwyned or he wesna mukkil bigger nor ither heich fowk. Aw the ettins he haed kent in his youth-heid haed died an he wes left aw his lane. It wes his weird ti be the Lest o the Ettins.

But he haed the ae dochter that he loued dearlie, an she luikit eftir him in his auld age. This dochter wes mairrit on a chiel o ordnar hicht, an this fallae haedna mukkil respek for auld ettins, sae he an his guidfaither war aye argie-bargiein thegither.

Ae day, thay war sittin roun the table in thair cave, wyrin in at thair denner.

“Gey guid beef, this, ma lassie!” said the auld ettin til his dochter, an he opent his mukkil mou, an here a gret syde o beef gaed doun his thrappil in a glisk.

“Ah dinna suppose in your day, auld yin, ettins ever haed the chaunce ti eat beef frae a bullik as big as this yin wes?” said his guidson. He wes unco proud o the cattle-beiss he brocht up.

“Ye hae a gey queerlyke notion o ettins, ma laddie,” gurlt the lest o thaim. “Ah can tell ye strecht that the legs o the verra burds we uised ti eat war lourder an sonsier nor the hint legs o the buirdliest o yeir shilpit kye.”

On hearin this, the guidson beguid ti lauch, an he leuch or he wes fair intil a kink.

“Ah never hard sic styte!” he cryit, in atwein rairs o lauchter, wi the tears rinnin doun his chowks. “Listen til him!”

The ettin's dochter jyned in wi hir man. “Mercie Faither,” she kekkilt, “whit blethers ye speak whyles! Ah haurlie ken ee.”

“Ai, but we maun forgie the auld yin his haivers,” said the guidman, “an mynd he is dottilt gittin, an near blinnd. We maun mak allouances!”

At this, the ettin lat out a rair o rage. “Dinna traet me lik a bairn,” he bullert. “Ah'm tellin ye the God's honest truith, an Ah'l pruiue it ti ye. Dottilt, is it?”

He cryit out loud til his mansairvant an the waws o the cave dirlt wi the dirdum, tho the soun wes nae mair nor a whusper bi the maucht o his vyce in his yung days.

“Fesh me ma bou an thrie arraes, Murdo!” says he, an wyse me ti the forest.

Sae aff he an his sairvant gaed out thegither, an whan thay haed wun til a kent steid in the forest, the ettin stappit.

“Ah dout ma een is a whein bleirit, the-day,” says he. “Tell me, Murdo, see you a heich craig owre yonder?”

“Ay, A see it!” aunsirt the sairvant.

“An ir the rashes at the fuit o it?”

“Ay, ir the?” said Murdo.

“An ir the a step in the craig face?”

“Ah see it,” aunsirt the sairvant.

“Syne tak me ti that step!”

Sae the sairvant taen his maister doucelyke til the step in the craig face.

“Luik nou, an tell me whit cums!” said the ettin.

The sairvant cuist his een first ti tae syde an syne ti the tither, owre the land an owre the lift..

“Ah see a hantil fliein burds,” he said, “naething but burds.”

“Ir thay bigger nor onie ither burds ye hae seen afore?” spiered the ettin.

“Na, thay ir juist the same as at hame,” aunsirt the sairvant.

Eftir a wee whyle, the ettin spiered again, “Whit dae ye see nou, Murdo?”

The sairvant cuist his een about again.

“Burds, burds! Mair burds! Burds awhaur!”

“An ir thay bigger nor onie burds ye hae seen afore?”

“Ay, thay ir that!” cryit out Murdo, fou o winner. Mukkil burds, thrie tymes bigger nor aigils.”

An eftir anither wee whyle, the ettin spierit, “Dae ye aye see burds?”

“The lift is fair blek wi thaim nou. Ah hae never seen the lykes o this. The biggest yin is thrie tymes the bouk o the biggest bullik.”

“Rax me ma bou!” said the ettin.

Sae the lael sairvant pat the bou in his maister’s luif, set the arrae ti the string an wysed the bou ti the lift.

The ettin lowsed the boustring an the arrae stoued awa wi virr inti the lift. A saicont eftir, the war ane unco skraich an doun cam the arrae amang the rashes ablo, at the fuit o the craig, feshin wi it the biggest mukkil burd o aw.

“Nou snek aff a hint leg!” said the ettin.

Whan the burd’s hint leg wes aff, Murdo pat his maister’s haunds ti the ae end, whyle he hystit the ither. Syne thay haigilt the mukkil leg hame atwein thaim.

The war haurlie waygait for ti cairrie the leg throu the mou o the cave, an whan the guidson saw it, he wes fair dumfounert, sae he wes.

“Thare ye ir!” cryit out his guidfaither. This is the hint leg o a burd lyke us ettins is uised wi eatin.”

“Ah hae never seen the lykes o this in aw ma born days,” admeitit the yung man. The leg itsell is bigger nor a haill stirk. Man, A’m hert sorrie Ah ever doutit ye.”

Thay aw dyned weill on the buird’s leg, an frae that day on, the guidson gied the blinnd auld man the respek that wes due til the Lest o the Ettins.