

The Ill-Gien Guidmither

About the year 800, there leaved a walthie laird in an outlin pairt o Scotland. He haed gaen there in saicret an he didna want oniebody ti ken whaur he belanged. Sum fowk said he wes Malcolm, brither ti Fingal, Keing o Morven, an that he wes in danger o his lyfe owre the heid o sum ill deid he haed duin as a hauflin. Whaever he wes an whitever he haed duin, he haed the guid sense ti mairrie on a guid an godlie wumman, but here did his wyfe no die no lang eftir, whan she gied him a littil dochter.

This dochter wes cawed Beatrix, an she grew up ti be a richt bonnielik quyne. Hir faither, Malcolm, (gin that he wha he wes) leaved as a weidower for saxteen year, whan he thocht til himsell that it wadna be lang or his dochter left him his lane, an she gat a guid offer frae a callant. Nou he didna ettil ti byde his lane for the lave o his days, sae he gaed awa til the pairt o the kintrie whaur the Thane o Mull steyed, an made luiv til ane o his dochters, bi name o Shona. Syne he mairrit hir an brocht hir hame til his ain steidin.

Nou nae suiner haed the new bryde set een on Beatrix, nor she kent she hatit hir deep in hir hert. She wes that jaeluss o Beatrix's bewtie that she coud haulie sleep at nicht for thinkin on weys o gittin quut o hir guid-dochter. Ae day, whan Malcolm wes awa at the huntin she yokit on Beatrix an thraetent ti kill hir binna she didna dae as she askit. Syne she gart Beatrix sweir an aith that whitever she saw hir dae or haird hir say, she wad keep it a saicret frae hir faither. Weill the first thing the guidmither did wes ti tak the aix an hagg doun Malcolm's favorite tree in the gairden, for aw it wes in ful blossom at the tyme. Syne she sneddit aff the brainches an brunt the haill thing up, or the war naething left but a haep o whyte aiss bi the tree ruit.

It wesna lang eftir Malcolm's hamecummin or he kent the want o his favorite tree, an he wes that roused, that for a guid whyle, naebodie daured gang near him. Hinnerlie, he gethert hissell an said til his wyfe:

"This hae gien me a richt sair hert, Shona. Wha wad dae siccan an ill thing, dae ye think?"

An his wyfe aunsert him, "It's nae guid spierin at me, naither it is. Ah ken naething about it, for Ah wes ben the houss whan it happent. Ye'd better ask yon dochter o yours, for Ah saw hir ootby wi the aix this mornin!"

Sae Beatrix wes brocht til hir faither an stuid doucelyke afore him whyle he rantitt an raened at hir. An whan he spiered gin she kent onioething anent his tree, she wad say nae mair nor this:

"God abuin kens about the tree."

A saicont tyme, Malcolm gaed frae hame, an whan he cam back he fand his favorite hound lyin deid in a puil o bluid. This made him even mair roused, but whan Beatrix wes askit about it, she gied hir faither the same aunser as afore:

“Gods abuin kens wha kens about the hound.”

A third tyme he gaed ti the huntin an cam hame ti finnd his favorite hawk lyin deid. But whan he yokit on his wyfe, he wes telt again ti spier at his dochter, but she wad say nae mair nor afore.

“God abuin kens wha kens about the hawk.”

No lang eftir this, the guidwyfe gied hir guidman a braw son, an the bairn suin becam his faither’s darlin. For aw that, the wyfe wes as jaeluss o Beatrix as ever, an raither nor gang on this gait, she made up hir mynd that she wad sacrifice hir ain wee son ti be richt quut o his guid-dochter. Sae ae nicht, whan Beatrix wes sound sleepin athout a care, she taen a gullie knyfe an taen the lyfe awa frae hir littil bairn. Syne she laid it alang wi the reikin gullie in Beatrix’s airms, an gaed awa til hir ain bed, whaur hir guidman wes lyin sleepin.

Eftir twa-thrie meinits lyin in the bed, up she bangs an rairs oot:

“Whaur ma bairn? Whit haes befawn the bairn? Sumbodie haes stown ma bairn!”

The faither wes alairmed at this an lowpit owre the bed, an whan he saw the bairn wes naewhaur ti be seen, the mither said:

“Ah ken, that dochter o yours haes taen it an murdert it.”

But Malcolm wadna credit that his dochter, that haed aye haen a douce an cannie naitur, wad ever dae sic a thing, but whan thay gaed inti Beatrix’s chaumer, thare wes the mangilt deid bairn, lyin in hir airms, wi the bluidie gullie lyin thare on tap the bed claes. Eftir that, it didna maitter whit Beatrix said, hir faither wadna heed hir—the pruif wes owre strang agin hir. She wes nou charged wi the ither ill deeds i the year bygaen, an hir faither made up his mynd ti pit his dochter ti daith.

Sae Beatrix wes taen ferr inti the wuids an hir faither drew his sword an haggit at hir or she fell ti the grund, sair mittilt. An aye she pled on him that she wes saikless.

“Faither,” said she, “on yeir wey hame the-nicht ye wul jag yeir fuit, an a skelf wul stick anaith yeir skin. Syne yeir fuit wul stert ti beil, an beil, an naebodie wul can pou oot the skelf, or Ah cum hame ti cure ye. Syne ye wul ken that Ah im saikless.”

“Ye liein jaud,” says he. “Ye wad murder ma bairn wad ye? Ye wad murder ma bairn, yeir ain flesh an bluid as weill’s ma ain, ye limmer that ye ir! Ah’l hear nae mair o yeir lies.”

An at aince, he cut oot hir tung, turnt awa, an left hir lyin thare ti dee, or be etten bi the wyld beiss in the wuids.

Aweill, Beatrix didna die, for no lang eftir, a knicht cam brankin by, an whan he saw hir, he lowtit doun aff his horse an spiered at hir whit ailed hir. As she coudna speak at aw, she made signs til him ti fesh a pen, ink an paper, an whan he brocht thaim, she wrate doun aw that haed befawn. Syne he hystit hir ontill his horse ahint him an cairrit hir hame til his mither.

Nou the mither wes a spaewyfe that ken o a byuss wal neirhaund whaur the wattir haed magic pouers an afore verra lang, she wes able ti hael Bearix's mittilt bodie. Hir tung, she coud dae naething wi. For aw she coudna speak, the knicht wes fair taen up wi hir bewtie, an afore verra lang thay war mairrit an leaved blyth an weill content thegither.

A wee whyle eftir thay war wad, the knicht haed business o his ain in Kintyre, an as he wes lyke ti be awa frae hame for a guid whyle, he made arrangements afore he set oot, for his wyfe ti wryte til him, uisin hir page as a messenger. Sae he gaed aff on his traivels, an he haedna been lang awa, whan Beatrix fand oot she wes cairriein his bairn. This gart hir grein ti see hir guidman, sae she sent aff hir page wi a letter spierin him ti cum hame for a wee whyle.

Nou the page haed been weill telt no ti daidil on the road, but eftir a wee whyle, here did he no cum ti the touer o Beatrix's faither, an fix ti byde thare the nicht. Bi this tyme, Malcolm wes laid up in his chaumer wi a beilin fuit, frae the skelf that he haed picked up on his road hame. Leeches haed been brocht in frae ferr an wyde, but nane o thaim coud pou the skelf, an aye the fuit beiled. He beguid ti rue the day he haed mittilt his dochter an grat whyles, thinkin she wes deid.

Doun in the haw, his guidwyfe, seein the page wes a streinger an littil mair nor a laddie, spiered at him anent his eirant an fleicht him ti lat hir see the letter he wes cairriein. It wesna lang, ye can be shuir, or the page gied Shona the letter, an she taen it awa ti read bi hirsell. Whan she opent the letter, she suin kent wha haed wrutten it an ture it it up inti littil bits. Syne she sat doun ti wryte anither letter that made oot ti be frae the knicht's mither, miscawin Beatrix an askin him ti pit awa sic a bad wumman. This wes the letter she haundit back ti the page.

Whan this ill letter wes deleivert ti the knicht, he runcht his teeth but made nae aunser, an sent the page hame tuim-haundit, wi nae message. Beatrix wes sair fasht at this an wrate him anither letter spierin whit ailed him. Again the page stappit on the road an bade the nicht at Malcolm's touer, an this letter, tae, fell inti Shona's haunds. An again she pat an ill letter, fou o hatred an byle for Beatrix, in its steid.

Whan the knicht saw this saicont letter, he wes naither ti haud not ti binnd. He hoyed hame at aince, an finndin his wyfe in the houss, athout sayin a wurd, he harlt hir ootby, an threw hir bi the hair o the heid bedein, intil a sheuch, ti git quut o hir aince an for aw. But Beatrix didna ken whit wes wrang, an made ti sklim oot the sheuch, an the perr o thaim stertit ti warsil thegither. An here, whyle thay war fechtin, did an unco herb frae the sheuch no win intil hir mou an hael hir tung, sae that she coud speak aince mair.

An the first thing she said wes, “Guidman, Guidman, whit haes cum owre ye? Whit ails ye at me? Whit hae Ah duin that ye soud ill-uisse me this gait?”

Sae the knicht said, “Sae ye can speak, ye randie! Whit hae ye duin ti rouse ma mither?”

An Beatrix said, “Whit the mischief ir ye haiverin about/ Ah’ve duin naething ti displease yeir mither. Naething awa---“

Syne he shawed hir the letters that Shona haed wruten. Beatrix read thaim throu an said til him:

“Yeir mither wad never hae wruten sic letters as thae. Ah wunner at ye, for weill ye ken yeir mither an Ah haes aye been the best o freins. You juist shaw thaim til hir an ye’l suin ken Ah’m tellin ye the truth.”

Aweill, the mither wes cawed in an she wes rael vext at hir son for ill-traetin his wyfe for naething. Syne the page wes brocht in an quaistent. He suin awned up ti whit he haed duin an athout mair adae, the knicht taen his sword, dang aff his heid, an kuist it awa, as a wairnin ti ill-daeers.

Syne awbodie jaloused that Beatrix’s guidmither haed been ti blame for aw hir ill fortun. Beatrix gaed ti see hir faither, an wes he no gled for ti see that she wesna deid? She poued oot the skelf in his sair fuit, sae that it haeled up at lest. The ill guidmither wes taen an thrawn intil a dungeon bi Malcolm an putten til the torment, o the warst kynd, an lang did thay hear hir skellochin or she died. An naebodie coud say it didna serr hir richt for aw hir ill-daein.

Syne thay aw leaved til a guid eild an died in peace.