

The Pypar o Sutherland

Ae tyme langsyne the war a namelie pypar in Sutherland, bi name o Iain, that played the pypes mair skeillie nor onie pypar afore him. Whan he played the steirin mairches o Scotland, the yung callants that haired him war cuittilt ti ti be bauld in tulyie an ti dae gret deeds; whyle the auld bodachs dreamed o past glore an grie that haed been won on the battilfields o Scotland. Whan he saftlie played tuins o hertbrekkin bewtie, the yung quynes wad sech for whit thay kentna whit, an the cailleachs wad murn for thair lost youtheid. But whan he played the yaup an liltin reels o his kintrie, syne the feet o the callants an the quynes war set a-clappin an a-chappin. An the wad be lauchter an blythness an aw the cark an care o the warld wad be forgotten awthgither, for a wee whyle at laest.

Nae ither wunner than, that Iain wes aye mukkil socht eftir at waddins or whanever the war a splore, an fowk wantit ti daunse an be mirkie. Smaw wunner aither, that the fairies suid suin hear tell o his muisical skeil.

Nou it is weill kenmt that a whein wurfs, houever glaikie thair ain muisic nicht be, is mukkil taen up wi the muisic played bi mortal men, the mair sae whan it is played on the pypes. Sae that the Sutherland fairies ettilt ti claucht Iain, sae that he nicht play for thaim in thair ain haws ablo the grund.

Ae day, Iain wes bauld play at the waddin o a neibor's dochter. It wes a grund affair an verra near awbodie round about haed been cryit in. Whan the ceremonie wes owre an the haunlin wes richt stertit, Iain wes askit ti play. An siclyke wes his skeil that day that even the auld hirplin bodies banged up onti thair feet an jyned in the daunsin. On an on played Iain, eggit on bi hoochs an skirls, an whanever he stappit for a bit rest, the war aye rairs an yowls for "mair muisic, Iain, mair muisic!"—an he wad begin again.

He played awa ferr inti the nicht, or i the feinish, even the glegest an souplest o the daunsers wes owre forfauchilt ti cry for mair, an Iain wes free ti set out owre the muir on his lang walk hame. Whan he wes hauf-wey hame, he felt that wabbit, he lay doun on a gressie knowe, an wi his pypes asyde him, he dovert aff. An it wes thare that the fairies fand him, an wi nips an progs, waukent him out his sleep. Gin Iain haedna still been in a dwam, he wad hae lowpit til his feet an stoured aff hame frae thaim, but as it wes, he wes fleicht bi thaim an aunsert thair quaistens blythlie.

"Ir ye Iain the Pypar?" spiert ae wee fallae.

"Ay, that Ah im," aunsert Iain.

"Wul ye byde wi us for an oor or sae?" askit a littil leddie whas green gown wes the culor o wat fug.

"Ay, thenkye kyndlie, Ah wul that," said Iain.

“An wul ye be sae guid as ti cum wi us til our fairie houss ablo the grund?” spiert anither wee man.

Iain swithert for a wee whyle owre this, an syne he gried ti gang wi thaim. It wesna that aften that a mortal haed sic a chaunce offert him, an it wad be a grund yairn ti tell his guidwyfe whan he saw hir in the mornin. Sae he lat the wurfs gyde him til a craig nearhaund, whaur the war an ingait intil a weim. Thay poured throu this wi Iain ahint thaim, cairriein his pypes in his oxter. Syne thay traikit doun a lang, derk througang or thay wan til a mukkil haw that wes litten bi a thousan fairie caunils, kestin a thousan shaidaes amang the yatterin an lauchin fairies. Sum o thaim sat thairsells doun on binks an stertit ti aet frae gowden ashets an beb frae siller tassies, whyle the lave daunst an liltit ti the muisic o thair ain fairie pypars.

Nae suiner haed Iain set fuit in this haw nor aw his wabbitness fell frae him. He felt blyth an cantie, an whan the fairies spiert at him gin he wad play his pypes for thair cumpanie, he wes quick ti grie. The fairies war fair delichtit wi him, an gin thay haed never haird muisic lyke his afore, he haed never seen the lykes o thair daunsin aither. The fester he played, the fester thay daunst. Thir feet haurlie seemed ti tig the grund, an thair flindriken green gouns flichterin throu the mukkil haw kythed til the beglaumert Iain, lyke seaweed kelterin at the boddom o the sea.

He played awa for whit he thocht wes an oor or twa, but in fairielaund, tyme is rimless. Abuin the grund, his guidwyfe wes sair worrit waitin for him ti cum hame, an whan he didna turn up the neist day, she gaed owre til the neibor whas dochter haed been mairrit the day he haed vainisht.

“Whaur is Iain, ma guidman?” she spiert.

“He quat whan the haunlin broke up aerie this mornin,” the neibor telt hir.

Iain’s freins huntit for him awhaur, but he wes naewhaur ti be fund. The months gaed in, an aye the war naither sicht nor sound o him. The years gaed in, an aye nae wurd o him. Syne fowk beguid ti forget him. His guidwyfe mairrit again. That micht hae been the feinish o it, an it haedna been for an auld kimmer cawed Meg.

Meg wes lyke a guid frein ti the fairies, an whyles, whan the war seikness amang thaim that thay docht na sort wi thair ain fairie herbs, thay wad send for hir. An ae day, monie a year eftir Ianin haed santit, a fairie caddie peyed Meg a veisit an pled on hir ti cum ablo the grund whaur a fairie bairn wes laid up no-weill.

Sae Meg pat on hir bonnet an set out. She wan ti the craig, gaed inti the weim an gaed throu the lang derk througang. An thare in the fairie haw did she no see Iain blawin awa at his pypes? But afore she haed a chaunce ti speak til him, she wes taen til anither chaumer whar she tentit the seik bairn. It haed been sic a lang tyme sen she hae seen Iain, she wunnert whuther it wes richtlie him she haed seen.

“Is it Iain the pypar than?” she spiert at him.

“Ay,” he aunsert, “wha ither, but whit’s that ti you?”

“Ah mynd ye,” says Meg, whan Ah wes a bit lassie, Ah mynd gaun til a waddin whaur ye played. Ah’ve never forgotten yeir playin.”

Iain goaved at the auld cailleach forenent him. She wes fair cruppen thegither an bent in twa wi the rheumatics. Hir gizz wes yallae an runkilt an hir hair wes whyte lyke the snaw. He shuik his heid.

“Whan YOU war a lassie---? Whit ir ye on about? Ah dinna unnrstaun ye at aw.”

“Ai but ye hae been here a lang whyle, Iain the Pypar.. It is in ma mynd that ye vainisht no lang eftir the waddin Ah spak about.” An she named the quyne whas waddin it wes.

“But that wes yestrein!” cryit Iain. “Lest nicht the fairies askit me ti byde here for an oor eftir that waddin. Awa wi ye wumman! Ye’r gyte an kenna whit ye say!”

“Dae ye mynd o Angus, the hird?” spiert Meg. He wes yung whan ye war yung. Lest wunter thay yirdit him i the kirkyaird, an his graundbairns gaed ti the beirial. Mynd the forester’s laddie ye uist ti tak ti the fishin wi ye? His yungest son wes mairrit i the kirk lest Spring. Mynd MacLeod the fermer’s bairn? Ye played at hir kirsnin did ye no? Weill ye warna thare ti play at the kirsnin o hir first bairn lest week.”

Iain wes fair dumfounert, for he coudna credit whit the cailleach haed juist telt him. His haund trummelt, but he liftit his pypes an beguid ti play wi aw his micht, for ti try ti pit this awfu wurd out his heid.

Meg hoyed awa hame, an suin the wurd she brocht wi hir wes aw round the clachan. “Iain the Pypar is in fairielaund, an he haes been thare aw this tyme!” The quaisten wes, hou ti git him out? Nearhaund, the war a wyce man wha, it wes said, haed even mair pouer nor the fairies. An as Meg wes the onlie bodie ti hae set een on Iain in his fairie steid, she wes made the troker for the clachan.

“Whit wey can we git the pypar out fairieland?” she spiert at the wyce man.

At first the war nae aunsert, an the wyce man skartit his heid an gaed awa ben ti hae a luik at sum o his buiks o glaumerie. But hinnerlie, whan he hae fund out whit he wes eftir, he cam back an said, “Tak you me ti the craig whau the ingait is ti be fund ti the fairie haw ye telt me about!”

Meg taen him thare, the fowk frae the clachan ahint thaim. The wyce man bade thare aw nicht, whyles yabblin wurd o glaumerie, whyles spierin at his buik, whyles noddin an mummil-mummlin awa til himsell.

At the dawin, the first cock cawed. The wyce man heild up his haund, an the yammerin vyces o the hantil fowk that haed steyed for ti watch aw nicht, lowdent. An here war the no a faint ferrawa sound o muisic frae the weim that raxt louder an louder, or out the weim maircht the pypar wi his pypes skirlin awa.. The war a gret pech frae the thrang, an syne a whein auld men that haed kent Iain in the years langsyne, hirlpilt up ti goam him. He didna seem ti want ti ken thaim.

Iain spak ti naebodie, but lay steive in his bed, his pypes asyde him, his face turnt til the waw. An he bade this wey for monie lang weeks, or ae forenicht, he rase doucelyke, liftit his pypes, an maircht awa airtin for the wurfs' craig.

Naebodie ever saw him again eftir this, an naebodie thocht it richt ti try ti fesh him hame again. His onlie lyfe wes nou ablo the grund wi the fairies. Whyles, on a fair lown nicht, his auld freins wad hear the sound o his braw muisic sumwhaur hyne awa—ferr, ferr awa. An gin ye coud juist finnd that verra green craig that is aye sumwhaur in Sutherland, aiblins you, anaw, micht hear, in ae blink o glaumerie, the muisic o Iain the Pypar, as he plays on, an on, an on, for the tireless fairie daunsars, lowpin an birlin an skirlin. An for aw Ah ken, he is aye at it yit.