

The Wal at the World's End

A lang whyle syne the war an island, whaur the sun shane gowden, an the blue wattirs o the sea laipit doucelyke on the siller forelands, an the sweet burds sang the haill day lang. An the war fowk bydin on the island mukkil content, ilk man the frein o his neibor. It wes a wee kinrik aw til itsell, i the warld's neuk. Richt aneuch, it haed nae keing, for the keing haed dee'd. But he haed left ahint him a queen an thrie bonnie dochters, an the Queen stuid in for him an ruled the island wi mukkil mense. Awbodie wes prood o thair queen an thair thrie bonnie princesses, an awbodie wes content, wi never a waesum thocht bi day or nicht.

But wae wes lyke ti cum, for aw that. Ae day the Queen fell seik, an nane it seemed, cuid richt hir. Men wyce in the airt o medicine cam ti the island frae ferrawa places, but tho thay tryit this thing an that, the Queen grew nae better, an i the end, ilkane o the wyce doctors shuik his heid an gaed awa mummil-mummilin til himsell. The war nae betterment in onie o thaim. It seemed that the guid Queen maun dee.

Syne, ae day the guid Queen haed a thocht til hirsell, as she rowed owre on the silken bowster o hir mukkil gowden bed, an she cryit hir auldest dochter til hir. An the lassie cam ben. Heich an fair she wes, wi chowks as pink as the petals o roses, a mou that wes as reid as rowan berries, een as blue as the simmer seas, an hair as gowd as the sunlight itsell. An the guid Queen said:

“Ma dochter, nane it seems, can richt me. But it is in ma mynd that gin Ah nicht hae ae drink frae the Wal o True Wattir, syne Ah suid be weill again.”

The bonnie princess regairdit the Queen. Never, in aw hir days haed she heard tell o the Wal o True Wattir, sae hou wes she ti finnd it? An syne she said:

“An whaur nicht it be, this Wal o True Wattir? For Ah hae never heard tell o it, never that Ah can mynd o.”

But the guid Queen kent o it, an she telt hir dochter whaur it nicht be fund.

“It is awa, ferr awa, at a steid cawed the Warld's End, at the ferrest neuk o the island. It is a sair trek, an lang, for ti win thare. Ye maun gae owre hills an craigs an athort mosses an muirs an throu derk wuids afore ye cum til it.”

The princess thocht til hirsell that she wadna lyke sic dour traivil for hirsell at aw. Sae she aunsert hir mither, sayin:

“Weill than, Mither, lat us send a sairvant bodie ti this place richt awa. Monie a ane wad be gled for ti gang for gowd, an hae we no gowd aneuch an ti spare? Sic traivel as this is lyker for a sairvant bodie, nor for a princess, shuirle?”

“Ye nicht weill think that ma dochter. True it is we hae rowth o sairvants, an gowd forby. But this maun be a trip made no for gowd, but for luiv alane, or nae guid wul cum o it. The'r weirdrie in't, an weirdrie haes its ain weys.

“Howt!” said the princess. “Whit haivers, Mither! Ah’m no ane for herkenin til auld wyfe’s tales an siclyke. But sen yeir hert is richt set on wattir frae this place, Ah maun gang an fesh it for ye. Lat nane say Ah’m no a guid dochter til ye. Sae juist haud you yeir wheisht an Ah’l awa at aince!”

An set out at aince she did, tho it wes mair that she thocht it the richt thing ti dae, nor for the Queen hir mither’s sake. An wesna she the proud ane? She wes that, an awa she gaed on hir lang dour traivil---owre heich hills an craigs an athort mosses an muirs an throu derk wuids. She grew wearie an trauchilt, huggerie muggerie an hungirie, but on she gaed, an on, or at the fuit o the ferrest ben, she cam til a tottie wal o bubblin claer wattir, beildit ablo green brekkin an a rowan tree. But juist as she made ti fill the flesk in hir haund, she heard a vyce. An here the vyce pypit up:

“Haud on, nou, ma bonnie princess!”

The bonnie princess luikit roun an roun about hir, but no a thing cuid she see. Syne the vyce spak out again:

“Ho! Ho! Ho! Luik down at yeir feet, ma bonnie ane, an ye sal see whit ye sal see!”

Sae the princess did juist that. An whit did she see, hunkert on a stane at the lip o the wal but a puddock? A mukkil, green puddock, sonsie an ugsum. The princess wes fair dumfounert. But he spak aince mair til hir::

“Ay, me! Weill, did ye never hear tell o glaumerie, ma lassie?”

The princess wesna mukkil pleased that a puddok suid speak til hir in sic a forritsum lyke wey.

“Mebbe Ah hae,” says she, an than again mebbe Ah haena . An mebbe, Ah dinna believe aw Ah hear. But never heed! Ah haena cum aw this road for ti crak wi a puddok. An siccan an ugsum ane tae! Out ma road wi we, beiss, whyle Ah git sum wattir for ma flesk!”

But the puddok never budged. He luikit at the proud lassie wi his wee bricht een, an syne he spak again:

“Na! Na! Ye canna git wattir. No you---! Ah gaird the Wal o True Wattir an naebodie but me can fill yeir flesk.”

“Atweill!” said the princess. Fill it up than, craetur, sae Ah micht gang on ma road an the Queen, ma mither, be richtit!”

“Ai,” the puddok aunsert. “But the’r mair til it nor that! A sicht mair---! An Ah gie ye the wattir, ma lassie, wul ye mairrie me?”

The proud lassie cuid haurlie credit hir ain lugs.

“Maurrie YOU? ME, mairrie YOU?”

“Mairrie me,” said the puddok.

“Nae fears! Whaever heard the lyke? A princess disna mairrie wi a puddok! Ye’r shuirly no verra wyce! It is ill aneuch that ye ir ugsum, but ti be a gomeril forby! Ah’m rael vext for ye!

The puddok luikit strecht at the princess.

“Sae ye winna mairrie me? Than ye git nae wattir frae me, ma proud lassie. Tak yeirsell hame again as quick as ever ye lyke! Naething the princess coud say wad gar the puddok chynge his mynd, sae she turnt hir steps for hame again, an as she gaed, she wad say til hersell:

“Mercie me! Mairrie a puddok. Ah never heard the lyke. Ma mither wul hae ti think o sum ither thing ti help hir, as shuirly she wadna want a puddok for hir auldest guidson. Ae day Ah sal be Queen masell, an Ah cuidna thole a puddok cockin up, sittin asyde me, on the throne. Ma mither maun grie, it is owre hie a fee for a sowp o cauld wattir. Whitever wad fowk think?

But the puir seik Queen. kent that onlie wattir frae the Wal at the Warld’s End wad serr hir, tho she coud weill unnerstaun that hir auldest dochter wes no the the ane ti fesh it til hir. She wes a proud, proud quyne, an lykit fowk ti think weill o hir. An the war nae dout that fowk wad juist lauch at a lassie that wes mairrit on a fat green puddok.

Sae whan hir dochter cam hame tuim-haundit, the Queen gied a lang sech, rowed hersell roun again on the silken bowster o hir mukkil gowden bed, an cryit in hir saicont dochter. An the lassie cam in, hir lang hair blek as a craw’s weing, an hir een as derk as a sternless nicht. She listent til awthing hir mither said, an gaed awa in hir turn, ti fesh wattir frae the Magic Wal. She wes richt shuir she coud mainage the puddok. Hir sister, she thocht, wes owre prood for ti speak in a kyndlyke wey ti the puir craetur. An shuirly the puddock wad unnerstaun whitnalyke thing he wes askin.

This dochter wesna juist sae proud as hir aulder sister, but she wes a wee thing fykie an easie skunnert. But Ai, the puddok wadna listen ti sense, an he wes that ugsum, he gart the saicont princess grue, an she coudna byde the thocht o pittin a fingir on him! Sae she haed ti cum hame anaw, wi hir flesk tuim.

An nou the war but the yungest princess left---a lauchin, broun lassie, that never daunert whan she micht rin, an never ran athout singin lyke a lintie in the sun. An *she* loued hir mither weill.

Sae awa she gaed, wi a gled hert----owre the hills an owre the craigs, an athort mosses an muirs an throu derk wuids or she cam, anaw, ti the neuk at the End o the World. Thare she gethert a spirl o the bricht reid rowan berries frae the tree that stuid owre the Magic Wal, pat it in hir hair, an sat hirsell down bi the bubblin wattir, an thare she waitit. An shuir aneuch, out lowpit the puddok frae ablo a brekken leaf that wes as green as himsell.

“Megstie me! Here anither lassie! An whit wad ye be eftir, littil ane? Ai, but Ah ken fyne masell. But lat *you* be tellin *me!*”

The yungest princess smyled at the puddok an said: “Wattir frae yeir wal an ye please, kynd puddok.”

An the puddok leuch. Kynd is it? Mebbe ay an mebbe no. The’r but the ae wey ti draw wattir frae this wal.”

“An that is?” said the princess. “Ah ken, but lat *you* be tellin *me!*”

“Ye maun mairrie me, for shuir,” the puddok telt hir.

“Mairrie *you*? Juist that---?”

“Ay,” the puddok telt hir. “Mairrie me, juist that! Nae mairriage, nae wattir---! It is a sempil as that, sae it is.”

The yungest princess regairdit the puddok for a lang, lang whyle.

“Ir the nae ither wey,? Nae ither wey ava?”

“Na, nae ither wey,” said the puddok.

The yungest princess luikit at him aince mair, an syne she spak.

“Weill, that is whit Ah maun dae. For Ah loue the Queen, ma mither, weill. An gin she disna git a sowp o this wattir, she wul shuirlye dee. An Ah canna git it for hir athout mairriein ye, weill, Ah maun mairrie ye!” Whit ither?”

The puddok luiikit at the princess wi his bricht, bricht een an syne he spak til hir.

“Lat it be. Ye hae spoken weill. An kis this is a magic place, ye maunna gang back on yir wurd. Mairrit ye ir frae this verra meinit, on a puddok, an lang lyfe an happiness til the perr o us, ma bonnie lassie.”

An here, did the puddok no tak the flesk frae the littil princess, an fill it wi wattir frae the wal? Syne he haundit it til hir.

“Gang hame, Wyfe! Gie you the Queen, yeir mither, the wattir that is in the flesk, an aw sal be weill. Aff wi ye nou! On yeir road! Ah’l be eftir ye suin, an Ah im a fest traivlar.”

An awa back hame gaed the broun princess as fest as hir legs was cairrie hir, aw the lang road hame til hir mither’s pailace.

Ye wul mynd, bairns, that the broun princess haed ti mairrie a puddok afore she coud bring the magic wattir frae the Wal at the World’s End ti sort hir seik mither.

As suiin as she wan hame ti the pailace wi the wattir, she gaed strecht in ti the Queen, whaur she lay quaet in hir mukkil gowden bed. As quick as ye lyke, the princess taen the stapper oot the flesk an gied hir mither a sowp o the caller cauld wattir o the Magiv Wal. An richt awa, the Queen wes weill again, as weill as ever she wes.

The war gret rejycing in the pailace, Ah can tell ye.. Awbodie cam rinnin an suin the wurd wes aw owre the island that the Queen wes weill again, an aw the fowk sang, praisin the broun prkincess. But thay didna ken the haill storie. An naiter div ye---no yit!

Inby the pailace, heids war be-in putten thegither, counsel wes be-in gien; aw wes mixter-maxter, naebodie richt kent whit ti dae, an the auldest princess wes geyan roosed.

“Haed ye nae sense ava, ye stuipit tawpie!” she skellocht. Hou cuid ye gang an mairrie a puddok? A PUDDOK---! MERCE ON US! Whitever wul fowk say? Whitever wul thay think? An whaever wul want ti mairrie me, wi a puddok for a frein? Ah never heard the lyke. Ye maun gang an tell the craetur ye hae chynged yeir mynd!”

The saicont princess wes a bit pit oot tae---she said as mukkil, but she wesna juist as roused, for she wes mair couthie nor hir aulder sister.

But the broun princess wadna listen til aither o thaim. She haed made a bergain an that wes that.

“Did Ah no promise? An a promise maun aye be keepit. Fyne ye ken that. Oor mither is weill again, she winna dee nou. Ti haud ti ma promise is a smaw fee ti pey for that, shuirlie?”

Syne the Queen said ti thaim:

“Dochters, Ah telt ye strecht that onlie a true lousum hert cuid fesh the wattir frae the Magic Wal. Twa o ye thocht ye loued me weill aneuch, but, Na, ye didna. Littil ane, be patient! We haena seen the feinish o this yit.”

An the forenicht slippit awa inti nicht; an the ful muin shane owre the island whaur, outby the pailace, awbodie wes skellochin an rejycin. But inby the pailace, fowk gaed waesum til thair beds.

The yungest princess aye sleepit in the chaumer o hir ain chuisin, nearhaund the mukkil outer door, an as she made ready for ti sleep, thare cam a quaet chappin at hir winnok. She lowsed the snek, an thare stuid—ay, the puddok. Bigger an sonsier an mair ugsum he wes nor ever he hae kythed ayde the ferrawa wal.

“Ay, ay, Wyfe!” says he. Did Ah no say Ah’d no be ferr ahint ye? Here Ah cum! Steir yeirsell nou, an help me, ma bonnie lassie!”

“Oh ay,” said the broun princess. Oh ay, atweill, Guidman. Cum you inby the houss.....! See, here a cushin at the door for ye. Ye can sit doun thare on yeir hunkers or the mornin. It is geyan late on, an ye maun hae happit ferr the-day. Ye wul be wantin yeir sleep nou., Ah daursay. The-morn we wul hae a confab thegither.”

The puddok sat doun on the cushin, an regairdit the yunget princess wi his glowerin een, an she clam back intil hir mukkil bed an hid her face in the saft pillaes o it. But syne, he spak:

“Guidwyfe! Ah’m no uised wi cushins. The lyke o this is a het an mochie thing for a puddok sit sit on, an the’r a wund blawin on ma legs frae anaith the door. Wyfe.....dae ye hear me whan Ah’m speakin?”

An the princess spak back doucelyke at him:

“Ay, Ah hear ye. Ah’m vext ye iran cumfie. Ye see, Ah dinna ken mukkil about puddoks. The-day wes the first tyme Ah ever spak ti ane.”

“Weill, weill,” said the puddok. It is never owre latre ti lairn, ma lassie. Never owre late---!”

“Na, Ah’m shuir it’s no,” said the princess. Ah’l try again.”

An she rase oot hir mukkil bed an liftit up hir puddok cannilie in hir twa haunds.

“See nou---Ah’l pit ye in the neuk, doun here ablo this flouer pat. Thare ye wul be cuil, but beildit frae the wund. Sleep nou, an the-morn we’l speak thegither.”

Syne, aince mair the yungest princess clam back inti.hir mukkil bed for ti sleep, but no for lang. Ai, Na! For the puddok didna lyke his flouer pat aither, an again, he cryit on hir.

Wyfe! Ah’m no uised wi flouer pats aither. The’r nae air in thaim for me ti breathe, an Ah’m hauden in an canna lowp aboot. Hey Wyfe! Dae ye hear me? Dae ye hear me, Wyfe?

Ai, but the yungest princess heard him awricht. She did that!

“Ay, Guidman. Ah hear ye. Mercie, whit wul Ah dae nou? Ah wul ryse up an tak aff the flouer pat. Thare nou---is that no a sicht better?”

“That’s a wee thing better ma luiv,” the puddok telt hir. “At least Ah can draw braith! Ai, but whitna graund place is this ye hae! It wad tak me a guid whyle ti hap round it, an Ah im nou forfochen, for Ah hae traivilt ferr an fest ti cum ti be wi ye.”

“Sae ye hae,” said the princess. “Ah haed haurlie expekkit ye this suin. Ye maun be unco wearie.....Ah ken, Ah’l mak ye a smaw bed aw ti yeirsell, on the fluir asyde ma mukkil ane, an ye’l sleep thare or the morn’s mornin, an the-morn, we wul speak thegither.”

An sae she did. But the puddok didna lyke that aither, an wadna lat the peincess git sleepit for his girnin. He wes owre het, he wes owre cauld, he wantit wattir, he wantit leafs; whaur cuid he ly richt? Naething wad please him.

The broun princess wes fair deived wi his girnin at hir, an at hir wuts’ end ti please him. An in the hinner end, he said:

“Wyfe! Ma broun lassie---! Ah see that Ah canna leeve wi you nor ye wi me. Ye ir the kyndest hertit lassie in the haill warld an no a bit lyke yeir twa sisters. An ye hae keepit the bergain ye made wi me. The’r no monie lassies wad hae duin that. Ye hae tryit ti gie me oniething Ah askit o ye. But the’r nae leevin thegither the wey we ir nou. Nou listen ti whit Ah hae ti say! Ahint yeir mukkil bed thare stauns a sword. Dae ye see it thare?”

“Ay,” said the princess. Yon belanged ma faither, an it wes ti hae been gien ti ma man, tho hou Ah can gie a sword til a puddok, Ah dinna ken.”

“Syne Ah’l tell ye ma lassie. Gie me the sherp edge o the sword on ma craig, for Ah im the waesumest puddok alive. Snek you aff ma heid wi yeir faither’s sword an lowse me frae ma dule!”

But the broun princess cryit oot that she coudna dae a sic a thing. Haed she no made a siccar bergain that she wad mairrie the puddok? An haed she no been his guidwyfe frae the verra meinit she hae made hir promise? He kent she haed. But for aw, the puddok pled on hir the mair, an said:

“Atweill, ay. Ye war ma guidwyfe the meinit ye made yeir promise. An a wyfe maun aye dae as hir man bids hir. Hae ye never heard that?”

“Deed ay,” said the princess. “But a wyfe maunna kill hir guidman, shuirlye?”

“Dae as Ah bid ye, Wyfe! Dae as Ah bid!” the puddok aunsert hir.

But bi this tyme, the princess haed taen til the puddok, in a lyke wey. She coudna beir ti dae him skaith, an for shuir, she coud never kill him. Sae she fleicht an argit an pled, but the puddok wadna heed hir. He juist gat roused, an ordert hir ti dae as she wes bidden, an at lest, wi dule in the hert o hir, the broun princess taen hir faither's sword an dang aff the puddok's heid.

At aince, the air wes fou o sweet muisic that seemed ti cum an gang, airtin back an forrit frae the ferrest neuk o tha warld, owre an owre agin. An syne, regairdin the princess, afore hir stuid the brawest callant she haed ever seen. An he leuch at hir, an hir staunin thare quaetlyke afore him.

“Weill Wyfe? Weill ma bonnie lassie? Didna the Queen, yeir mither, say, ‘Be patient! We haena seen the feinish o this yit.’”

An the princess, fou o wunner, said:

“She did that. But Ah dinna unnerstaun. Whaur ma puddok? Ah didna want ti kill him.”

“Ye didna kill him, ma lassie. Ye loused him frae a spell. Ah hae been hauden in the puddok's bodie thir monie year. Ill magic pat me thare. Div ye no ken the'r ill magic forby guid? Ay, ir the no? Ah coud never be loused frae the spell or the day soud cum whan a lassie wad mairrie me as a puddok on his ain free wull, an snek aff ma heid whan Ah bid hir. Wha but yeirsell wad hae been sae bauld?”

Ye can jalouse hou blyth wes the broun princess than, an hou awbodie in the haill island wes delytit. The prince an his lass nou haed anither waddin for awbodie ti sing an dance at. An the twa aulder princesses war weill pleased. For haedna thay no the brawest guidbrither in the haill warld, wi a kinrik o his ain. Thay haed that. Sae nou thay haed a guid chance o finndin men for thairsells.

An as for the littil broun princess, she bade wi hir prince athout fasherie an in gledness an content aw hir days. An for aw Ah ken, thay micht be leevin sae yit!

