

The Weidae's Son an the Streinger

Langsyne, thare bade in a wee biggin, a puir weidae wumman wi siccan a clekkin o bairns, laddies an lassies baith, that it wes as mukkil as she coud dae ti finnd maet an cleidin for the craiteurs. Monie's the nicht did thay no gang greitin hungirie til thair bed, whan the auldest lad, Fergal, haedna the chaunce ti finnd a fish, in the river forenent the houss dure, or a mawkin in the wuid ahint the houss? Ay, thay did that aften! Monie an monie a nicht! An thair mither grat sair for thaim, sae she did, for she loued thaim aw weill.

Thare cam ae forenicht whan the war naither byte nor sowp i the houss, for Fergal haed haen nae luck aw that day. Never a mawkin nor mappie or bird haed he claucht, no even the tottiest fish ablo a stane or soumin on its gait ti the green wattirs o the sie. An aw the bairns war girnin for maet an the warna as mukkil as a neivefu meal for ti bak thaim the smawest bannok. At nichtfaw, the puir wumman coud byde thair peingin nae langir, sae whit did she dae but fill up hir kail pat wi wattir an pit a mukkil stane intil't? Syne she set the pat on the swey owre the peit fyre for ti haet, an spak ti the bairns, sayin:

“See, bairns, Ah hae set maet on the ingil for ti mak a guid brie. Gang you nou til yeir beds an sleep awa the derk oors or the brie is weill reddie. Syne Ah'l wauken ye up, an ye sal be fed.”

The bairns did as thay war telt—even Fergal the auldest that wes verra near a man—a hauflin oniewey. An his mither sat hirsell doun at the ingil neuk an wunnert whit thay wad dae the neist mornin, gin Fergal suid again hae nae luck. An the mair the puir weidae sat thare, the mair wae she gat. But aw at aince, whit suid she hear but a chap-chappin at the houss dure? Syne the dure opent ti lat in a streinger, an him spierin at the weidae, wad she gie him beild that nicht?

“That Ah canna,” said she, “for ma bairns is sleepin, eftir gaun supperless til thair bed. Ah hae nae maet even for thaim. Ah haena as mukkil as a crust o breid. Naither byte nor murlin ti offer ye, an whit the morn wul bring, Ah durstna think.”

“Guidwyfe,” said the streinger, “Ah dout ye ir feirt for the day ye never saw,” an he walkit owre til the ingil. “Whit than,” he spiered, innerlielyke, “whit than, is this in the pat hotterin here owre the ingil?”

“A stane,” aunsert the weidae, “nocht but a stane, an Ah hae hecht guid brie ti the bairns, an weill Ah ken a stane winna mak brie. But whyle ma waens is sleepin, thay wul aiblins no ken the pyne o thair hungir.”

“Atweill, thay winna,” said the streinger. But that's nae stane in the pat. It is a richt guid leg o mutton, gin Ah'm no mistaen Watch nou an see for yeirsell! Ah tell ye nae lie!”

An wi that, he pat his haund inti the pat an poued up a mukkil leg o mutton the lykes o whilk the weidae haedna seen for monie a lang year; weill duin an juist reddie for serrin. An whyle she goaved an goaved at it, did the streinger no speik again, sayin:

“Gang you ti the ferr end o the houss, an thare ye wul finnd a kist fou o breid an aither maet, sae ye wul hae rowth this monie a lang day.”

Fou o wunner, the weidae did as the streinger haed bidden hir, an richt aneuch, he haed spoken the truth. Sae wi a blyth hert, she gaed ti wauken the bairns, sae that thay an the streinger an hirsell nicht aw be fed. An whan ilkane haed etten his fill, Fergal spiered gin the streinger wad tell thaim aw a storie for a divert, for as he said, it wesna ilka day that sic a walcum veisitor suid be amang thaim, an never afore haed oniebodie brocht sic ferlies alang wi him.

The streinger leuch, an said he wad dae that gledlie, an the weidae threw mair peits on the ingil, that thare nicht be mair licht an haet.

Sae the streinger telt his yairn, an whan aw wes duin, Fergal thenkit him for it, him be-in a cannie an weill-mainnert lad. But the streinger luikit at Fergal ful in the face an says he:

“Whit, ma laddie is thenks? Thay ir but tuim wurds, sae thay ir. Whit wul ye gie me for ma yairn, is mair ti the pynt? Dis yae favor no deserr anither?”

An Fergal spak back ti the streinger, his een fou o wunner.

“But Ah hae naething ti gie ye, guid sir! Naething ava, we ir aw that puir ablo this ruif. Whit mair can Ah say?”

“Cum ootby an we’l see,” said the streinger. An thare, he heild up his haund, an here did he no turn Fergal aw at aince intil a glisterin siller fish. He did that, an syne he threw the siller fish intil the fest rinnin river. An as he did sae, he said:

“Ah’l gie ye seivin days ti tell me whit ye wul gie me, sae think weill on’t ma fyne loun!”

An at the end o the seivin days, the streinger cam again an poued the siller fish back oot the wattir. Syne he gied Fergal his ain maik back again, an spiered at him as afore:

“Whit wul ye gie me for ma yairn?” Dis ae favor no deserr anither?”

But here did Fergal no gie the streinger the same aunser as afore?

“But Ah hae naething ti gie ye, guid sir! Naething ava, that puir ir we. Whit mair can Ah say?”

The streinger hystit his haund a saicont tyme, an whit suid he dae but chynge Fergal intil a sairpent, that twurilt itsell roun the gray trunk o an esh tree, growin asyde the breingin wattirs o the river. An again he said:

“Ah’l gie ye yit anither seivin days ti tell me whit ye wul gie me, sae think weill on’t, ma fyne laddie!

An at the end o the neist seivin days, did the streinger no cum again, an gie Fergal his ain maik aince mair, an spier at him as afore:

“Whit wul ye gie me for ma yairn? Dis ae favor no deserr anither?”

But here did Fergal no gie the streinger the same aunser as afore? He did that. An syne for the third tyme the streinger hystit his haun, an this tyme he chynge Fergal intil a pyot, sayin aince mair:

“Ah’l gie ye yit anither seivin days ti tell whit ye wul gie me, sae think weill on’t ma fyne laddie, for this wul be the lest tyme Ah’l ever cum.”

An wi that, the streinger santit awa an wesna seen again or the seivin days war gaen. An this tyme, whan Fergal wes chynge intil himsell again, he said doucelyke til the streinger:

“Sir, we ir sair dounhauden wi puirtith, an Ah kenna whitfor ye ir sae ill on me. Ah hae still naething o ma ain for ti gie ye, but wi ma haill hert, Ah prigg the blissin o the blue heivins on ye, for siccan a grund storie as ye telt us on thon nicht? As shuir as Ah leeve!”

“Atweill than!” said the streinger. That wul dae brawlie. Gin ye haed said the lyke at the verra stert, ye wad hae spared the baith o us aw this hatter! Tak tent ti whit Ah hae ti say an lippen ti me weill, for Ah’m the ane that can mak yeir fortun an set ye up wi rowth o gear an siller aw yeir days. But Ah wul tell ye but the aince, for frae this day forrit, ye’l never set een on me again. Never in aw the days o the world.

An wi that the streinger telt Fergal ti tak his road athort the whummlin wattir o the river, bi the staupin stanes no a myle south o whaur he stuid. Syne he maun sklim the heich brae the ferr syde o the wattir, an whan he wan til its tap, he wad see spreid oot forenent him, a green glen, rinnin atwein fair green knowes wi sheep hirselt on thaim. Ayont aw this, the wad be a braw castel biggit o derk whunstane, an it wes thare that Fergal maun gae.

“An gang you bauldlie, ma braw lad! Ye maunna be feirt, for tho the castel belongs the Keing o Scotland’s dochter, the’r nae gairds for ti keep it. Fient the ane, for thay ir aw sleepin as soond as deid men inby. Thay ir aw this gait, for the castel an awbodie inby its waws, is anaith glaumerie, an haes been sae this monie a lang year.

“Walk you strecht inti the castel an gang inti ae chaumer eftir anither, leivin nane athout gaun in. An at the verra lest chaumer, whit wul ye see but the princess, an hir soond sleepin, lyke aw the ithers, binna she liggs on a taibil o pink merbil? Bonnie she is ti regaird, an o byordnar bewtie Hingin abuin the heid o hir, the wul be a rare jowel o monie culors. Tig you this jowel wi yeir fingir end an the princess wul wauken. Atweill, she wul dae mair nor that, for she wul tell ye hou ye can sauf hir an lowse ae the fowk that sleeps lyke deid aw owre the mukkil stane castel.

Wi that, the streinger wes gaen, Fergal kentna whaur, nor hou. Sae Fergal bad fareweill til his mither an sisters, an set oot richt awa ti dae as the streinger haed bidden him. An did he no cross the skirrievaigin river bi the staupin stanes, an sklim the heich brae, an frae its tap, see the green glen rinnin atwein fair green knowes wi sheep hirsilt on thaim? He did aw thir things an mair, an in a wee whyle he wes inby the castel aw made o gray whunstane, wi never a gaird ti hinner him, whit wi thaim aw sleepin thair lyfes awa.

Throu ilka chaumer gaed Fergal, fou o wunner at the walth an grandeur o the place, wi its gowd an its siller, an its rare silks an saitins, an velvets o skerlet an purpie, an blue an green, that lay aboot amang aw the sleepers in that haudin. Fergal haed never seen the lyke, for he wes the son o a puir weidae wumman wi never a bawbee in hir poutch. Sae whit wad the lykes o him ken aboot sic a steid as this?

An i the hinner end, he cam til the ferrest chaumer in the pailace. An thare, juist as the streinger haed foretauld, wes the taibil o pink merbil, an on it wes streikit oot the Keing o Scotland’s dochter, an she wes a quyne the lykes o wham Fergal haed never set een on, aw his leevin days. Hir hair wes blek as a sternless nicht, an hir skin wes as fauch as the muinlicht, an hir mou as reid as the holly berries wi the sun sheinin on thaim. Abuin hir heid, hung a rare jowel o monie culors, an whanever Fergal raxt oot his haund an tiggit the jowel wi his fingir, here the princess opent a pair o saft bonnie, broun een an luikit lang at Fergal. Syne she spak an spiered at him:

“Hou cam ye here, ma brave lad? Cum an tell me the haill storie!”

Sae Fergal telt hir aw that haed befawn, an aw that the streinger haed said, an hou nane haed hinnert his cummin, wi awbodie in the castel sleepin lyke deid men. Syne he spiered:

“Whit maun Ah dae ti lowse ye frae the spell that is on ye an on aw this haudin? Tell me richt, for the’r naething Ah wadna dae for ti serr a lassie as bonnie as yeirsell—naething ava!”

Sae the princess telt him, sayin:

“Awbodie here sleeps soond anaith the glaumerie o a mukkil ettin, an wul byde sleepin or that ettin is deid. But Ah ken hou ti kill him, sae lippen weill ti me, Fergal!

The ettin's lyfe is hauden in a egg, an it is keepit sauf bi a wutch. Auld she is an fell ugsum, an weill she kens that gin the egg is brukken, the ettin wul dee, an aw o us heild sleepin here in this castel wul wauken an be free again. Sae finnd you this egg, Fergal, an brek it! But first, ae wey or anither, ye maun git quut o the wutch. That ye wul aiblins ken hou ti dae whan ye meet up wi hir. Guid fortuin til ye than."

Syne the princess telt Fergal o the path throu the green knowes that he maun tak for ti win ti the auld wutch's biggin, an Fergal set oot on his traivel an hoyed on as weill as he micht.

Eftir a whyle, he cam on the biggin whaur the auld wutch bade an opent the dure an gaed in. Thare bi the ingil sat the auld kerlin, greitin til hirsell, an hir that ugsum that Fergal cuid haurlie byde ti luik at hir. But the bauld laddie gethert himsell an said:

"Guid day ti ye kerlin. Ah can see ye ir no in the best o fettikl the-day."

"Ay, ma laddie, Ah'm no weill thir days at aw," the wutch aunsert him, but it is in ma mynd that gin Ah coud git ma auld banes oot inti the caller air an sunlicht, Ah wad be lyker masell again. Ah haena haired the sweet burds lilt this monie a day."

"Gin that is aw ye ir wantin," said Fergal, "syne Ah wul cairrie ye ootby on ma back, sae Ah wul, sae ye can breithe the caller air til yeir hert's content."

Sae, did Fergal no hyst the auld wutch ontill his back, but he cairrit hir naewhaur, but at aince threw hir aff his shouthers an inti the ingil! An awa she gaed up the lum wi a soond lyke a thunnerclap! Sae thare she wes, weill awa, stourin up i the lift, skirlin as she gaed.

Syne, whan the lest soond o hir wes gaen, did Fergal no set aboot huntin for the egg that keepit the lyfe o the ettin? He huntit for it awroads: in ilka drawer, press an shelf, an even in the wutch's verra bed, but naething coud he finnd, or he cam on a haep o clairtie auld clouts ablo the dresser, asyde the kitchen ingil. An happit up among the clouts whit suid be lyein thare but a egg as whyte as a snawflake? An quick as ye lyke, Fergal threw it haurd at the herth stane an it burst intil a dizzen bits. An at that verra saicont, thare cam a gret rair, an yit anither rummil o thunner i the lift, an the ettin foundert an fell doun deid, whaurever he wes!

An syne, Fergal gaed back til the gray whunstane castel as fest as his legs wad cairrie him. An whan he wan thare, the war a thrang o fowk aw lauchin, an as wauken an weill as ever thay war. Thare thay war, aw juist waitin ti walcum him an thank him for lowsin thaim frae the ettin's glaumerie. An the princess bad Fergal cum along wi hir ti the laich kintrie ti see hir faither the Keing, sae that he micht thank him for his smeddum. Atweill, the Keing did juist that, sae blyth wes he ti hae his bonnie dochter back again eftir siccan a lang whyle. Sae he made Fergal a yerl an gied him his dochter ti mairrie, rowth o siller an monie honors forby.

An as for the puir weidae wumman an hir ither bairns, Fergal an his bonnie princess taen guid care o thaim, sae that thay never wantit for oniething mair. Sae thay war aw behauden til the streinger i the hinner end.

