

## The Wurfs o Merlin's Craig

About thrie hunner year syne, the war a puir man that wrocht on a ferm in Lanarkshire. He wes whit is kent as an 'orraman'; that is ti say he haed nae kynd o raiglar wark set out for him, but wes expekkit ti turn his haund ti whitever wes needfu.

Ae day, his maister sent him out ti kest peats on a bit muirland that wes pairt o his ferm. This muir ran up at the ae end til a craig wi a byordnar maik. This wes kent as 'Merlin's Craig', kis the namelie warlok haed aince bidden thare langsyne; or sae the kintrie fowk said.

The man did as he wes telt an kis he wes an eydent chiel, he set ti tyauvin wi aw his micht as suin as he wan ti the mair. He haed juist liftit a hantil peats frae near the Craig whan he gat an unco glif. Aw at aince, the tottiest wee wumman he haed ever seen in his lyfe kythed afore him. She wes nae mair nor twa feet in hicht, an she wes cled in a green goun an reid hose, an she haed a heid o lang yallae hair that hung lowss about hir shouthers.

She wes sicc an dentie littil craitur that the dumfounert fallae stappit his dargin, cawed his spade intil the grun an goavit at hir. His wunner grew the mair whan she liftit up ane o hir wee fingirs an raened at him.

"Whit dae ye think gin Ah war ti send ma man ti tirr YOUR houss? You mortals thinks ye can dae whitever ye lyke."

Syne, strampin hir wee fuit in a tid, she telt him: "YOU pit back that turf at aince, or ye'l rue the day ye ever liftit it.

Nou the puir man haed aften haird o the Fairie Fowl, an the skaith thay coud dae ti mortals that haed fasht thaim throu nae faut o thair ain, sae, chitterin wi fricht, he set tae ti undae aw his sair wark an ti pit back ilka divot in the verra place it haed been. Whan he wes richt feenisht, he luikit roun for his droll veisitor, but she haed santit awa awthegither; he dochtna tell hou or whaur.

Sae he pat up his spade an gaed his gait hamewith, an whan he wan ti the steidin, he gaed strecht til his maister an telt him anent wee fairie wumman. Says he:

"Dae ye ken whit Ah think, Maister? Ah think eftir this, we haed better aye cut the peat frae the tither syde the muir."

But his maister juist leuch. He wes a strang crouss man an haed nae tyme for gaists, bogils or fairies, or onie ither unbienlyke craeturs he coudna see wi his ain een. For aw, he wes vext his sairvant suid believe in sic things, sae ti redd his mynd o whit he thocht wes superstition, he telt him ti tak a horse an cairt an gang at aince ti fesh the peats back ti dry at the steidin.

The puir man wes gey sweir ti gang an dae this, but eftir the weeks gaed by an nae skaith cam til him, he beguid ti think his maister haed been richt an the haill thing haed been a dream, lyke.

The tyme gaed in. Wunter gaed by, syne Spring an Simmer, an the back end cam roun aince mair, an syne the verra day whan the peats haed been liftit the year afore.

That day, as the sun sklentit doun ahint the bens, the orraman set out ti gang hame eftir his day's darg til his sheilin, an kis his maister wes pleased wi him for the wey he haed been tyauvin, he haed gien him a littil stowp o milk as an aumus ti cairrie hame til his guidwyfe.

Sae he wes feelin gey blyth this nicht, an he deidilt a tuin til himsell as he dandert alang. His road taen him bi the fuit o Merlin's Craig, an as he cam up til't, he wes ferlit ti finnd himsell growin unco wabbit. His eelids drappit owre his een lyke he wes gaun ti faw asleep, an his feet turnt as lourd as leid.

"Michtie! Whit ails ma legs the-day?" says he til himsell. Ah never mynd this road be-in sae lang afore. Ah hae turnt fair weirdless.

Sae he hunkert doun on a gress divot i the beild o the Craig, an afore he kent whaur he wes, his heid fell awa an he haed dovert aff intil a soun sleep. Whan he waukent, it wes near midnight an the muin haed risen owre the Craig. He rabbit his een, an Ai, whitna gliff he gat, whan bi the siller licht o the muin, he made out a haill clekkin o wurfs aw daunsin roun an roun, glowerin at him, pyntin thair wee fingirs at him, an shakkin thair littil neives in his gizz.

He wes fair dumfounert at this an made ti rin awa frae thaim, but whitever he ettilt ti dae, the wurfs seemed ti ken, an whitever airt he taen, thay follaed him, rinkin him roun in a glaumerie ring he dochtna brek. Hinnerlie, thay stappit an wi skraichs o lauchter, brocht the bonniest littil leddie up til him for ti be his pairtner. Syne thay cryit:

"Daunse Man, Daunse! Syne ye'se no be sae fain ti jouk our cumpanie!"

Nou the puir darger, wes a gey hochlin daunser at the best o tymes, but the fairie at haed been walit ti be his pairtner raxt up an gruppit his twa haunds, an here did sum glaumerie no birze intil his veins? In a glisk, he fand himsell waltzin an birlin, mimpin an mouin, gin he'd been fair gleg at the daunsin aw his days.

An nou the maist byordnar thing! – he forgat aw about his hame an bairns, an he felt that blyth, he nae langir haed onie notion ti pairt frae the wurfs' cumpanie. The haill nicht the splore gaed on. The wee fowk daunst an daunst lik thay war wud, an the cannie orraman hoocht an daunst in his mukkil takketie buits alang wi thaim, lauchin an skirlin, an lowpin, or hinnerlie, a skraich cam owre the muir. Here wes it no the cock frae the ferm steidin crawin his loudest craw for ti hansil the dawin?

At aince, the gilravagin stappit, an the wurfs, yowlin wi sturt, howdert thegither an breinged owre ti the Craig face, whaur a byuss dure at he never myndit seein afore, opent in it bi itsell, an clattert shut ahint thaim as suin as thay war aw throu.

This dure gied intil a mukkil, derklyke haw fou o wee binks, an here the Wee Fowk sat doun ti rest, fair pechilt wi aw thair faucht, whyle the orrraman hunkert doun on a stane in the neuk, wunnerin whit wes gaun ti befaw neist. But in sum wey, his senses seemed ti be daunert, for even whan the wurfs waukent an beguid ti dae thair houss skodgies an tak pairt in sum unco ploys he haed never seen afore, he wes weill content ti byde still in the bit an watch thaim, an never made ti rin awa.

The day wure on, an as it cam roun ti the forenicht, sumbodye tiggit his elbuk an whan he turnt roun, here it wes the wee wumman wi the green goun an reid stockins at haed flytit him the year afore, staunin asyde him.

“The divots ye taen frae the ruif o ma houss haes aw growne back again,” said she, “an aince mair the houss is weill cuvert wi gress. Nou ye can gang hame again, for ye hae tholit yeir serrin. But first ye maun sweir never ti tell ti mortal lugs whit ye hae seen the tyme ye hae spent wi us.”

The orrraman swure he wad never tell a leevin sowl. Syne the dure opent afore him an he wes free ti gang. Thare on the grund wes his stowp whaur he haed putten it whan he fell asleep, an for aw it wes nou tuim, it seemed ti him at the fermer haed gien him it onlie yestrein.

But whan he wan hame, he suin saw hou he haed been begunkit. His guidwyfe kythed a sicht aulder lyke an she ganjed at him lyke he war a bogil. His bairns at he haed left as infant weans, war nou weill-growne lads an lassies, an didna ken him.

“Whaur hae ye been aw thir lang, lang years?” yowled his wyfe, eftir she haed gethert hir wuts. “Hou coud ye dae sic a thing as ti leave yeir bairns an me ti fend for oursells?”

An syne he kent at the ae day he haed pitten in wi the fairies haed lestit seivin haill year abuin the grund, an it cam hame til him wi a fell stound, juist hou ill the serrin haed been at the wurfs haed gien him for tirrin thair houss ablo the grund.