

Fellowship & Fairydust



A CELTIC
CELEBRATION

*Fellowship
&
Fairydust*

Editor-in-Chief

Avellina Balestri

Assistant Editor

Sarah Levesque

Cover by

Byrnwiga

Graphic Designers

See page 82

Questions?

Comments?

Want to read more?

Check out our
website and blog at

**Fellowshipand
Fairydust.com**



DF&F&



Table of Contents

Editor's Note

Avellina Balestri - 4

The Men that God Made Mad

Ewan McTavish - 6

Ireland

Sarah Levesque - 9

Grandfather

Greg Manuel - 10

Hill of Tara

Timothy Mather - 16

Beware the Fairy Folk

Carolina Hobot - 18

A Gift of Thistle

Avellina Balestri - 24

Something of Time: A Personal Look at Nightnoise

Kevin Derby - 28

The Discussion

Donna Ferguson Dudley - 32

Twin Mischief

Beth Amos - 33

Life of Lives

Hannah Vincent - 38



Contents



Edinburgh and the Stately Palace of Holyroodhouse

Wesley Hutchins - 40

Ankou

Ruth Asch - 47

Robert Falconer: Translator's Preface

David Jack - 52

A Chalice Well Meditation

Benjamin Baum - 54

Finding the True King

Amanda Pizzolatto - 57

Tribute to an Irish Gentleman

Joseph Richard Ravitts - 66

A Tale of Peg Prowler

Harriet Sams - 67

Lament at Mabon

Rachel Schmidt - 69

Seven Wild Sisters: The Celtic Descendants of Appalachia

T.K. Wilson - 71

Passing

Kenneth McIntosh - 73

Our Next Issue - 84

Fellowship & Fairydust

All articles and artwork belong to their respective creators and may not be copied without permission.

We lay no claim to franchises or characters from franchises mentioned in this magazine; each is copyrighted by its own publishers and/or studios. All are used here for entertainment purposes only. See page 82 for more information and go to our website for complete disclaimers.

Image credits may be found on pg 83

Editor

The word “Celt” is believed to come from the Greek word “Keltoi,” meaning “secret people,” and has been used to denote various tribes of central European origin who migrated west, mainly across the spectrum of the British Isles. The binding factor used to identify these groups and their descendants has been the similarities within their ancestral languages and dialects, found in such guttural yet lyrical tongues as Welsh, Cornish, and Gaelic. But there are other defining features of what is now considered to be “Celtic,” both in a cultural and spiritual sense, and which is steeped in tradition which encompasses elements within Paganism and Christianity alike.

The Ancient Celts were a highly mystical people, with great emphasis placed upon fate and the fitness of things. They believed that life, death, and rebirth were endless cycles across the spectrum of multiple worlds and that wisdom was gradually revealed to the Spirit through a long string of lifetimes and manifestations, working inward, like a labyrinth, to the center-point of all Being in which all things are connected by the same energy, from human beings to animals to trees to rocks and all other forms within the broad-sweep of existence.

In Celtic mythology, we find examples of these alternate realities outside of time and space as we understand it, such as Tir na Og and Avalon, as well as a plethora of legends involving beings from other planes of existence that cross the borders and blur the edges of our worlds in order to move into our own universe as the sometimes trouble-making, sometimes aid-giving fae folk. We also see various examples of shape-shifting as symbols of spiritual growth, such as in the famous story of the goddess Ceridwen chasing Gwion Bach after he accidentally ingests some of the magical brew intended for her son. Both of them transform into various animals until she becomes a hen and he a grain, which she promptly devours, preparing for him to be reborn from within her as Taliesin, the greatest bard of the land had ever seen.

The spirits of ancestors were also said to have the ability to return to locations which had been “thin places” for them, a custom which is seen in the very popular Scottish ballad Loch Lomond, in which the ghost of a Scottish soldier hanged by the British government during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 takes the “low road” back home, symbolic of a liminal pathway traversing life and death, while his surviving comrade takes the “high road” over the mountains to reach Scotland once again. On the festival of Samhain, considered by some to be the Celtic New Year, the mysterious figure of Herne the Hunter is believed to blow his horn, unleash his hounds, and inaugurate the “Wylde Hunt” to gather together the souls of the dead, making that night the “thinnest” of the year, and setting the groundwork for the present celebration of Halloween.

The kings of Celtic society were supposed to symbolically “marry” the spirit of the land, the goddess whose body was the earth and whose blood were the rivers, and she would be the one to declare whether or not a man was fitting to rule. There are many legends mirroring this tradition, from the stone that screams at Tara when the rightful king stands upon it to the sword in the stone that can only be drawn out by a worthy hand. There is also the deep-running tradition of recognizing the sovereignty of the lady before being able to summon one’s own power, such as the story of Prince Pwyll being unable to catch up with the horse goddess Rhiannon in a chase until he courteously requested that she stopped.

The Druids served as priests, wise-men, and judges, performing religious rituals, counseling the kings, and meeting out justice to law-breakers. Today, modern-day Druids are mainly connected to this tradition via their belief in certain connective tenets such as a belief that Nature is conscious and containing within it the spark of a deep magic, the belief that the Soul interconnects all things as spokes on the same wheel, and the belief that the Prophetic Spirit lives on through the practice of various forms of artistry given birth to through “Awen”, the mystical inspiration that in mythology emanates

s Note

from the cauldron of the universe, mixing the various substances of our interior and exterior reality and giving rise to our identities as from out of a womb.

The bards in Celtic society were the guardians of legend and lore, the mouthpieces of the chieftains, and collective historians of their clans. According to Erse oral tradition, they memorized such things as treaties and land transactions, and were said to be able to tell a new story for each night of year. They also acted as heralds in battle, walking with immunity between warring clans, for they were greatly feared for ability to make or break one's reputation with their witty rhymes and ballads. But even worse than being taunted by the bard was to go unmentioned by him altogether, which was symbolically seen as robbing a person of their very existence. One the cruelest Celtic curses ran: "May your name be forgotten forever."

When Christianity came to Celtic lands, it took on distinct features within those regions, mixing past wisdoms with new theological concepts brought over first from the Middle East and then the Greco-Roman world. In part, this was an intentional effort to make the introduction of Christianity more palatable for the conversion of the pagan masses, but on the other hand, it was also a natural meshing that came into being via the practice of the people who found that on various levels the two traditions had certain areas of common ground that could be comfortably held together in unison and enrich each other, like the sight given by two eyes instead of one.

While there were certainly still notable differences and hostilities between the Pagan and Christian wings of Celtic spirituality in an historical as well present-day context, the unique blend that birthed Celtic Christianity should never be underestimated, especially as it has been made quite the come-back in recent years and inspired a rich outpouring of Christian spiritual literature with a decidedly Celtic flavor. Many of the Celtic saints personified much that was best in this through their lives, teachings, and examples, as well as the storytelling tradition that sprung up around them, carrying on the bardic prerogative and bringing a fresh sense of mystical awareness to doctrines rendered relatively dry by the Greco-Roman philosophical style of disputation and analysis.

This was especially true of the defining Christian tenets of the Trinity and the Incarnation as well as an emphasis on the sacramental principle, the contemplative tradition, the intersecting nature of time and eternity, the affirmation of creativity, the hospitality to outcasts, the scholastic imperative, and the beautiful concept of "Anam Cara", or "Soul Friendship", which not only involves the binding of persons as spiritual help-mates but also a deeper notion of reconciling oneself to all things. First and foremost, we must reconcile ourselves to God, then to our own souls, then to our fellow men, then to the natural world, and ultimately even to Sister Death herself, who, according to Celtic tradition and mythology, is like a fierce old crone who turns into a beautiful maiden if welcomed with a kiss.

In this issue, we have striven to assemble the best of both worlds under the Celtic banner, honoring the spiritual and storytelling traditions brought to the fore by our contributors of various faith traditions and cultural backgrounds who have in some way been touched by the Celtic spirit which proves as timeless as the tales woven by her bards.

In the Name of the Three Hands, Creator, Redeemer, and Guide,
And with the Blessing of the Four Elements, Fire, Water, Earth and Air,
Avellina Balestri, Editor-in-Chief of F&F Publications

The Men that God Made Mad

By Ewan McTavish

The Celts; a mysterious and misunderstood culture, who's myths and magic continue to affect us even today, thousands of years after after the Greeks first spoke of the blue-painted *Keltoi*. Who were they, really? In this issue of Fellowship and Fairydust magazine, we will be exploring the question of what it is to be Celtic; their music, myths, and culture. As a member of the Celtic diaspora, who has done a lot of research on the subject, I have taken it upon myself to dispel some misconceptions about who the Celts were, and who they are now.

The Ancient Celtic peoples didn't really think of themselves as having a collective identity; they were tribalists. Furthermore, modern genetics have shown that the Celtic nations came from a number of different lineages; there was no real "Celtic Race". That was an invention of 19th century race theory. However, they were bonded by a shared language and culture. They worshipped the same gods, and had similar way of life. They eventually began to refer to themselves as *Gaels*, or *Gauls*. They even have a book of the Bible dedicated to them; St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.



G.K. Chesterton wrote in his epic poem *The Ballad of the White Horse* “The great Gaels of Ireland are the men that God made mad, for all their wars are merry and all their songs are sad”. Above all, the Celts were a fiercely independent warrior culture. It took the Romans generations to suppress them, and even then, there were those who would not be cowed. Hadrian’s Wall was built specifically to keep the Gaelic tribes out. It was for this reason Spanish Celts were used as mercenaries by the Carthaginians in the Punic Wars; a decision that they came to regret when Carthage couldn’t afford to pay them.

Indeed, warfare was a favorite activity of the Celtic tribes. The Celtic sword was an efficient weapon, and so well designed that the Romans adopted it as the official sword of their legionnaires. In terms of the number of fatalities, the Celtic sword is probably the most deadly weapon in history prior to the invention of firearms.



A Hispaniensis sword used by the Roman Legionnaires

The Celtic tribes dominated Europe for millennia. Though we commonly associate them with the British isles, Britain was an “outpost”. The seat of Celtic culture was in what is now France and Spain. They created art, music, epic poetry, and complex myths. They farmed sheep, cattle, grain, fruits and vegetables. Horses were revered as sacred, and pigs were the food of the gods. They worshipped a pantheon of nature deities that controlled the weather, the crops, and cycle of the seasons. Much of Celtic life was devoted to appeasing these deities. Unfortunately, it often included human sacrifice.

When the Celts took up Christianity, they were among the most faithful in the West. indeed, it was probably Celtic piety that got Europe through the Dark Ages. Celtic monks in Britain and Ireland tirelessly copied down the Holy Scriptures, and other old and valuable books that otherwise would’ve been lost. Indeed, one could say that they were as fierce in their service to Christendom as they were in battle.

So where are they now? The Celts were eventually pushed out of central Europe, as waves of Germanic and Slavic tribes invaded and occupied the land which was once theirs. The Romans pushed up from the south, and eventually conquered and Romanized many of them. Some Celtic languages, like Galician, died out entirely. But they survived on the fringes of Europe; in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Bretagne. Through persecution, and invasion, they prevailed.

Celtic music is more popular now than ever, and is still evolving, informing modern music styles, like Rock, Country and Metal. Celtic myth provides inspiration to modern fantasy authors, TV and movie writers and comic artists and writers like myself.

The Celts have left an indelible mark on Western Civilization. Their art and music will continue to affect us for generations to come. So in a sense, the Celts will never die.



Scottish Band *Runrig* has been combining traditional Celtic themes with modern rock instrumentation since the 1970's

IRELAND

By Sarah Levesque

I've never seen the Emerald Isle
Nor walked where Patrick trod,
But I've heard tell of it's great beauty
Formed special by the hand of God.

Their dances are so merry,
So wild and so free.
To dance as if my feet were drums
Has been a dream for me.

Their music, Oh! So haunting,
Yearning, soft and fierce,
The drums, the pipes, the violins
My own strong heart have pierced.

I won't try to define
The lovely Irish brogue,
But I will be content to say
It never will grow old.

I wish to see the Emerald Isle
(Among many other things)
Whence music, dance, and poetry
Have given people wings.

GRANDFATHER

BY GREG MANUEL

He stood in front of the mirror, a wan candle his only illumination. He didn't know what he was doing, that much was obvious. He was doing what the internet and pop culture said you did in these situations. What kind of childish idiot did she take him for, anyway?! His face set in grim lines as he thought of his mother.

The source of his ire sat on the countertop in front of him. A box containing letters. Letters between his mother and a man. Now, she'd said the man was his father. She'd never told him much about his father, saying it was something she didn't like to remember. This box was a contradiction. Why keep a box full of letters and mementos of a man you didn't want to remember?

She'd told him a doozy of a yarn. He'd barely listened he was so incensed. It had ancient forest gods and men that dared to love Fae princesses. He was two days from his eighteenth birthday and she still treated him as a child. Telling tales to cover for a man who couldn't have cared less about being a father – At least not his father.

He had asked why the letters were signed Ailis. His mother's name was Deirdre. She had cut him off before he said the name. Deidre admonished him that he was not to speak that name aloud. She said it was her real name and when spoken by a child of her blood, her father would hear. The great forest deity would then abscond with the child! He snorted in derision.

So, there he stood in front of a mirror, looking like some loser about to call Bloody Mary, just to prove her wrong. He'd never admit it, but now that he was there with everything prepared, trepidation had settled onto his soul. He steeled himself though. He was nearly eighteen, almost an adult. Time to put away childish fears. He took a deep breath... then he took another.



Credit: Ian Wilson



"Ailis."

When nothing happened, he took another deep breath.

"Ailis."

A smile crept across his face at the absurdity of his apprehension.

"Ailis."

His smile widened... then abruptly disappeared as the candle snuffed out.

A scent, the forest right after the rain, wafted in. In the darkness, a wan light shone. Moonlight? The bathroom was windowless. He stumbled back when two red eyes flickered into life within the reflected depths of the mirror, two red candles burning free, just floating in the darkness.

"Oh, look, me daughter's made me another treat," said a deep, rumbling voice. It chortled, the sound like two rocks grating against each other.

The boy gave a short yip of terror when a hand composed of darkness reached out of the mirror. He tried to flee, but the hand caught him by his shirt and pushed him hard, straight into the wall. There were flashes of light as his head collided with the wall with stunning force. His entire body went limp and the last thing he saw as he faded into darkness was himself being drawn towards the mirror.

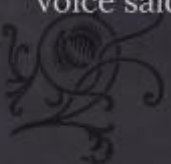
He woke, head throbbing, no idea how much time had passed. He looked around groggily, his head aching from the blow. He almost believed he was in his bed but his bed didn't have a fuzzy feel. Looking down, it took his brain a few moments to process what he was seeing. He was lying on a bed of moss inside a cave. No, not a cave, a tree hollow?

The familiar chortle made him jump out of his skin. A new flash of pain made him see stars, his head still woozy. His vision swam and he could only see a hulking shadow detach from the wall with two glowing, forge-red eyes. He hid his face, a primal fear driving him to believe if he didn't see it, it wouldn't see him.

"What's your name, boy?" a deep voice asked, reminding him of old forests, wild ones that existed before man walked the earth. He didn't know how he remembered ancient forests except that the memory was buried deep inside his blood.

"Thomas," he squeaked without thinking.

"No, your real name. The one that sings inside of your soul even though you've told no one," the voice said.





"D'arcy," Thomas said, his voice distant, alien to his ears.

"D'arcy," the gravelly voice said, tasting the name. "Yes, a fitting name for one such as you. Do you know what it means, boy?" Thomas shook his head, wincing at the remnant of pain, "It means dark one. Now, what has your mother told you of your grandfather?"

Thomas looked up at the speaker. At the movement, his vision swam once more for a second or two, but it cleared up quickly.

The creature before him was quite a sight. Standing twelve feet tall, it resembled a man in shape. Its face was ogreish, with a lower jaw that jutted out further and two huge, prominent canines in view.

It had a huge, sloped forehead with a set of antlers pushing towards the sky. The antlers were thick as a man's wrist. Its eyes were teal with no sign of pupils. The hair on its body was like hanging moss, and the lower half looked to be goat-like, even ending in cloven hooves. Thomas found speech impossible.

"Well, boy, what has she told you of me?" the creature asked.

"I haven't told him anythin' about you, Da," his mother's voice said from out of one of the shadowed recesses.

"A boy shouldn't know his grandfather?"

"Oh, and what should I have told him, Da? How much you like to eat your sweet, little grand-babies straight outta the womb?"

"Look, Ailis, you're scarin' the boy!"

"Don't act like you're even a wee bit concerned that I'm scaring him. You love his fear," his mother said. While it was his mother's voice, the woman standing there in the tree hollow looked nothing like his mother. This woman stood at least nine feet tall, a far cry from his mother's compact five-foot frame. She had violet hair that grew in patches around her body like fur, and on her head almost like flowers. Her eyes glowed purple in the dim light, and she had wicked looking claws and fangs that protruded from her upper lip. "Son," she said, "I wish you hadn't defied me on this. This is one genie we'll be hard set to get back in its bottle."

"Mo-Mom, is that really you?" he asked. He was bathed in cold sweat, barely able to get out the words, his whole body paralyzed in fear.

"Yes," she said, trying to take the edge from her voice, "Why couldn't you listen? You had two days left until your eighteenth birthday then I could have taught you what you needed to know about escapin' his notice."





"I-I'm sorry," D'arcy said.

"Well, the milk's spilt, as the sayin' goes."

"Two days, you say?" the great, shaggy moss-man rumbled, "Cuttin' it a bit close, aren't we?"

"You'd have been none the wiser, Da, if this fool hadn't taken it into his head to defy me," Ailis said, her eyes flashing a hard shade of purple.

"Why must we always fight, me darlin' daughter?"

"Because, Da," Ailis said, punctuating each word, "you keep eatin' me children!"

"Me dear little Ailis, it's water under the bridge, as they say..."

"Is that what you tell yerself, you old goat of a fool?" Ailis hissed.

"Why must you be so insufferably insolent?" her father roared back.

"Should I be more like Meaghan? The daughter you loved so much? Your favorite?" Ailis practically spat the words.

"She wasn't my favorite..."

"She was until you ate her!"

"That was centuries ago, why're you openin' up old wounds?"

"Because she was me sister! I loved her, not that you'd understand that."

D'arcy watched the verbal jousting between the two, frozen, lest he catch their notice once more.

"Of course I know how to love! You were created from me very being!"

"No, no, that wasn't love. Not truly. If we were formed of love, it was the basest form of love: Self-love. You've always been obsessed with yourself and when any of us challenged that, you didn't hesitate to eat us."

"I'll admit to being... rash in the past."

"You still think you're right, don't you?"

"You're me progeny. As a god, it is well within me right to dispose of you as I see fit. It's the way of the world."

"You backward, forgotten bastard! Not how the way world works anymore it isn't. You're cluckin' "





and holdin' on to ideals that haven't existed for centuries. You can't stand that you're a memory of a time the world wishes forgotten. We've moved on."

"I am not forgotten!" the giant forest deity stretched to his full height.

"Aren't you though? When did Man last leave gifts in your honor? How big's your forest, Da? Do they even fear you enough to not cut at your woods?" she said as if spitting acid at her father.

Her father's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Careful with your words, daughter... unless you wish to share your son's fate."

"Oh, quit your threatening, you old fool. Do it! Eat us both. I hope you choke on our bones."

"Hey, don't I get a say in this?" D'arcy said, his gaze swiveling between his granddad and his mother.

"No!" they both said in unison.

D'arcy bristled, his youthful anger overshadowing his fear. "Both of you talk about me like I'm not here! Well, I am. I'm here and I will have a say in my future," he said, finding it hard to control his breathing. It became erratic and his skin felt...tight. It was the only word he could find to describe it. He looked towards his mother. "What is happening to me?"

She looked at her son in concern. He was covered in sweat and doubled over in pain.

"I might have made a small miscalculation. Now, to be fair, your grandda was off chasin' me and your da. It was rough and tumble...so, I might have guessed at your birthday and... surprise! I was wrong," she said with a smirk. The moss-man took one look at the boy and moved forward, but Ailis stopped him with an outthrust hand. "Don't even consider it, ya damned old fool. I might not beat you outright, but I can stall you long enough for him to finish the Change. Then what are you going to do? Hmmm? Fight us both?"

Maybe I will," her father said in a slow and burbling way. Something dangerous flashed across his face.

"Is that how you want it? You've either eaten or chased off your daughters, one by one. I promise there'll be no one else knocking on your door. You'll be forgotten, well and truly. Just another mad god upon a wooden throne in his lonely hall. Is that what you want?"

"Maybe it's exactly what I want!" The god's powerful voice boomed throughout the hall, a hollow echo against the walls.

"Then you'd be a bigger fool than this one was for sayin' me name!"

Her father eyed his grandson, who was still tossing to and fro, caught up in the throes of the Change.





The forest lord had a thousand-year stare watching the metamorphosis in front of him. It was bringing up feelings that were written on his brutish face. How his ma had thrown it in his granddad's face that one of her children had lived. The rush of power that had suffused his being as he took his birthright. He looked back at his daughter, expecting to see her smug face, but found nothing there but...exhaustion. He thought he understood, as drained as he was. He was tired of waiting for the day one of her children came for him and tried to take his demesne. "What do you propose, daughter?"

"That we leave you to your grand hall and forest. Me son shall find his own place in the world, far from you. We shan't be darkening your doorstep ever again," she said.

A howl pierced the night, torn from the throat of the boy. He was no longer human. A thick coat of silver fur covered his body. His eyes were an icy, liquid blue. He was on all fours, resembling a giant wolf, eight feet at the shoulder. He stared warily at his grandfather, saliva dripping from his massive jaws.

His grandfather returned his stare with a thoughtful look of his own. He looked from the boy to his daughter and back. "I don't agree," he started, and both tensed. He threw up a hand to forestall any hostilities. "I mean, I'm tired of not havin' me daughter in me life."

"What are you sayin', Da?"

"I'm sayin' that this silly feud should end. Your son has taken his part of me power, over and done. He'll become a forest lord as I am... in fact," he said, knocking on a wall of the tree hollow. One root snaked down and he took something from it. "You should have this. An acorn from old Barta. It'll grow up, fast, into a tree hall of your own. A forest lord should have a proper place to rule his domain." He gave a smile, at least he tried, but it came out more of a weird cross between a grimace and a snarl.

The boy, now a giant wolf, dipped his giant furry head in acceptance. Ailis reached out her hand and accepted the acorn. Though he didn't understand the import, Ailis did, and it was with gravitas she took it in her hand.

They both turned to leave but Ailis stopped and turned her head. "Then, until next we meet, Da," she said.

The old shaggy god smiled, this time better, more genuine. "Until next we meet, daughter." He raised his hand in farewell. As they disappeared, he sighed. He looked around his lonely tree hall and hoped they both would come back some day.



HILL OF TARA, TEAMHAIR NA RÍ

By Timothy Mather

I started as the seat of the Tuatha DeDannan. Nuada gave me to Lugh of the long arm, master of all tasks, slayer of Balor, Lord of Light. Teamhair na Rí is my name, Tea daughter of Lugh is namesake. I am known as the Hill of the Kings, I have seen 142 Kings ascend and rule from my high seat. Come drink the ale of Medb, marry the Maid before you can be king. I am home to the Lia Fail, the Stone of Destiny. It is I who chooses those worthy to rule.

The Lia Fail sang only once more, after a rage filled blow from the sword of the Hound of Ulster, when the stone rejected his master, Conchobar mac Nessa.

Conn of the Hundred Battles, was the last king chosen by the voice of Lia Fail.

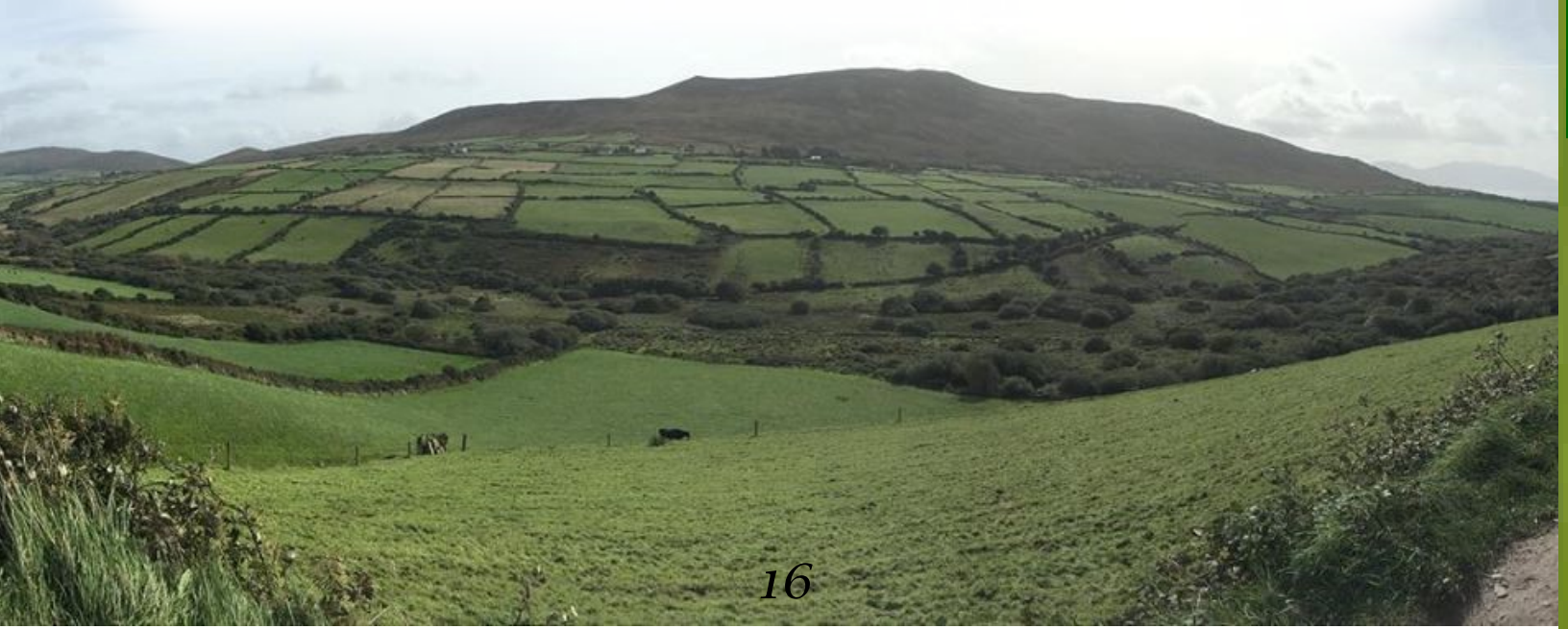
I was outcast from my family, but later returned; only I passionately kissed the hag who was sovereignty of Eire. It was she who declared me High King and my descendants for 600 years. During my rein, I held hostages from all of Ireland and Britain too, I am Nial, of the nine hostages.

I was born of a king and a blacksmiths daughter. I was raised by a she-wolf and her cubs were my companions. My judgment was deemed impeccable. My Brehon laws are the basis for all civilized rule. It is I who rebuilt Tara, to its former glory. I am Cormaic Mac Airt.

Here at Tara, I, Fionn MacChmhal, in order to gain entry to the Fianna, the greatest fighting force in Eire, was tasked with defending Tara from the fire breathing beast Ailill on Samhain night. I defeated the beast sent from the Tuatha De Danann and became one of the greatest heroes of the Irish sagas. It is I who was responsible for the lighting of the Samhain fires commemorating my feat.

I am the daughter of Cormaic Mac Airt. There is a large barrow at Tara erected in my honor called Rath Grainne. I was betrothed to the great hero Fionn MacChmhal but fled with my true love Diarmuid. Fionn gave chase and our saga lasted over sixteen years, until Fionn's temper cooled and his wisdom restored his friendship with Diarmuid.

I am a place that is not a place. I am a time that is not a time. I am the sacred dwelling of the Tuatha dé Danann. Through me you may gain entrance to the otherworld. I am the dwelling place of the history of the people of Hibernia. Come to me and learn the mystical and historical wisdom of the three queens of Ireland, Banba, Fodla, and Eiru.





Dumha na nGiall
Mound of the Hostages

Lia Fáil
Stone of Destiny

Forradh
King's Seat

Teach Chormaic
Cormac's House

Ráith na Riogh
Fort of the Kings

Beware the Fairy Folk

By Carolina Hobot (alias Lila Tulip)

“Disturbing the Fairy Folk is always a dangerous business and leaves a person changed. A little girl soon finds this out when wandering into her father’s forbidden field one day, and years later as an adult she learns that the Tylwyth Teg keep their word.”

Our tale begins in the Land of the Dragon, otherwise known as Wales, on a small farm some years ago. Across the rolling valleys and green fields dotted with sheep, sprinkled with flowers and crossed by bubbling streams, there was a girl playing on her father’s farm.

The summer was hot and the grass tickled her knees as she rolled about playing with the farm cats. One, a big fluffy lad – a house pet and not a mouser – swiped playfully at her nose. Giggling and shrieking in pretend fright the girl gave up the game knowing her kitty had had enough. Sure enough, Dafydd rose, stretched and swaggered off, his tail flicking in the contented manner of a cat who knew he was in charge and well-loved. Unwilling to return quite yet, the girl decided to explore a nearby field. It would be empty as her father had taken the sheep further out today. He always left this particular field empty at this time of the year, warning his children away from the pasture for three days and nights. The girl did not understand why and, when questioned, her father simply muttered something about a...tithes?

However, the curiosity of children is great and in the bloom of youth their courage is high and unchecked by the concerns of adults. Perhaps, if her father had not guarded the old tales so carefully, leery of being mocked for foolish fancies, his daughter would never have wandered off? And so, the girl scampered off to discover the reason for her father’s actions. Off she ran, down a lane of tall trees, their lofty boughs leaning over the path and offering shade against the bright sun.

The smell of earth, of growing grass and the wonderful scent of flowers filled her being as she neared her destination. Panting softly, the girl slowed and stopped at the end of the lane. Turning to her right she approached the stile in the hedge when she suddenly became aware of a most enchanting music accompanied by many voices singing.

Wondering who could be in the field playing such beautiful music and singing in such jolly voices, the girl climbed onto the stile and froze. There, in the field, was a flat-topped circle of grass and frolicking nearby were fair folk dancing. Their bright clothing, gay shining eyes and merry voices were a splendour to behold. The odd-looking people were smaller than the adults in her life, yet even as a child, she understood that these dancers were adults and not children. Fascinated, the girl climbed over the stile and stood a few paces into the field, peering at them.

Once in the field, she monetarily luxuriated in the green grass tickling her ankles while enjoying being surrounded by her favourite flowers: yellow buttercups and white daisies. Yet these were brief distractions and the scene in front of her seized her attention once more. As the unearthly chords wound about her the girl stood as still as a statue,

desperately listening in an attempt to understand what the music and words meant and who these people were. Gradually the girl fell into the song, her soul swept along by the tale these people were weaving. Before her eyes, danced images of an unknown land: water that gushed along a twisting riverbed and glistened in a bright sun. A deep blue sky stretched above, while the grass was greener and more vibrant than in her father's fields. She glimpsed stern mountains capped with snow which raced by as the music and singing swelled then plummeted, becoming deep and solemn. Down she tumbled into dark caves, dragged by the powerful currents of the song.

“Aggh!” The deep night of the caves exploded as she entered a cavern full of crystal formations that caught on unseen light sources and sparkled, dazzling her. The girl blinked, but otherwise her body was silent and unmoving in her father's field, even as she somehow travelled further in this distant land, with the bewitching music and singing of the dancers.

Then, as voices buoyed her up a long shaft and into a meadow the singing and music abruptly stopped. The girl staggered, as if released from an enchantment. Blinking once more to clear her vision she saw that the strange, fair folk had paused in their dancing and now one of the dancers was gazing at her.

In that awful moment she realised these dancers were not human, for the face staring curiously at her was too beautiful and too alien for any human face.



The...person...offered her a wide smile and spoke in beguiling voice. "Come join us little girl! You have seen our land in a waking dream, surely you would like to see it in the flesh?" The girl trembled for while the voice was pleasant and, indeed, charming beyond compare, her senses were alert to danger. There was a spark in those gleaming eyes and a twist to those red lips that encouraged mistrust.

"My parents will be expecting me," she whispered, surprised to be able to speak.

The fair man smiled. "This is your father's field then? You are the farmer's daughter?" The girl nodded meekly. The fair man scrutinised her closely then laughed. His laughter was fairer than anything in the world! Indeed, the girl nearly came closer, but with a last shred of strength and preservation, instead pressed her feet more firmly into the grass.

The fair man tossed his head, hair flowing in a rippling wave.

"Go then child, for your father has always been kind to us. We, therefore, shall be generous today! Yet do not forget us, for next time – if we meet again – we shall take you with us."

Terrified by the promise, the girl gasped a thank you and fled. She did not stop until she reached her mother's kitchen and could cradle Dafydd. The big cat meowed, licked her face and for once remained still, as if sensing her deep fright.

The girl never spoke of her experience and it wasn't until she had thumbed through a book of Welsh fairy tales that she came across the *Tylwyth Teg – The fairy folk*.

She understood her danger then and how close she had come to never seeing her home again. She swore never to walk in her father's field again and to heed her path in the dells and valleys, and to be careful where the other world may touch ours: in the openings of streams, in the deep places: hidden cervices and caves and the crossroads or fairy rings and at high midsummer. The girl held the book close and knew also that care must be taken to never inadvertently invite or anger them.

As soon as possible after reading about the fairy folk, the farmer's daughter pocketed an old horse shoe and kept this piece of cold iron on her at all times.

And so the years passed...

Years tumbled by and the girl grew into a young woman, who moved away from her father's farm. She travelled far, until at last the father's daughter returned to her homeland and chose to dwell in a coastal town. Our tale picks up once more in this coastal town, where the farmer's daughter has chosen to live.

At one time Barry, was the largest coal exporting port in the world. Now quieter, the docks remain busy, not as frantic naturally, but busy all the same. The neighbouring island attracts many to it for various reasons. Whether for the beach and bustling shops fronting it, full of the smell of fish and chips, the sharp cries of children and their parents, or the brightly coloured spinning fans and swimming boards, with the fun fair taking its share of busy town life. Others come for solitude and peace when the children and parents

are gone, walking their pets or simply strolling and admiring the natural beauties of the shore and the green pathways nearby. Now, not quite the place you might expect to see the *Tylwyth Teg*, perhaps? Too industrious and now still too full of people and modernisation? Ah, well, how wrong one would be! For the ways of the fairy folk are beyond human understanding and we should not constrain them to our narrow ideas. Where were we? Ah yes...

Into this town, autumn had crept slowly upon the land, transforming from a blazing hot summer to cool breezes and fresh rain falling. Upon this fateful day the sea was grey and placid under a slate coloured sky.

Standing on the edge of the beach, shoes sinking slightly in the sand and observing the little ripples as the waves met the shore, is Delyth Thomas, the young girl of our tale fully grown. She had come to the beach for peace after a restless night. Strange dreams had plagued her, of a midsummer day and the singing dancing fair folk. Delyth shivered as she gazed at the impassive sea. Ever since childhood she had been so cautious, heeding every advice in the old fairy tales and now it was all for naught! She had seen the *Tylwyth Teg* twice in her life and the third time was close at hand. Once she had stumbled upon them as a child and a second time two days ago...

Believing herself safe in a town full of steel and iron, Delyth had agreed to take a walk with her friend on the Island, strolling up the slope next to the beach, over the grass and amid the trees, (risky but surely safe so close to a busy tourist destination?).

They had walked some distance and were returning when her friend needed to rest. Pausing, the duo sat until, oddly restless, Delyth had risen and walked further on. She had desired to go to the edge to overlook the sea, but as she walked by a huddle of trees, she heard music and a voice singing.

Seldom had any human heard this type of music or heard such a voice. Frozen in fright, Delyth groped for the cold iron in her pocket. Seizing it, she glanced about, the breeze cold on her face. There! A few yards away, in-between the trees was a figure perched on a stone and playing what appeared to be a violin.

He seemed tall and fair and he glanced up as she foolishly continued to watch instead of fleeing. It was not the same man as from her childhood but another. He shone with an inner light and his eyes were as bright as that fair folk in her childhood. He put down his violin and spoke. His voice was beautiful and serious.



“A child of ours is hurt and we cannot free him. You have the sight and can see us. Will you not help us?” Delyth remembered the promise of the fair man in her youth. The *Tylwyth Teg* do not forget yet...how could she leave a child in danger? Revulsion at the mere thought of leaving a child to suffer rose within her breast and Delyth pushed aside her fear of her own fate. *What would be would be. The misstep of youth must be paid at some point.*

Inhaling deeply Delyth pulled the horse shoe out of her pocket and dropped it on the ground. “Yes, I will. Where is the child?” The fairy man grinned and there was wonder in his eyes. “This way, most courageous of humans!”

“Decent I hope. Courageous I think not.”

“As you wish.” He darted over and seemed to grow in size until he was taller than her. His warm hand clutched her arm and as he did the world opened around them. Delyth gasped as she saw through the trees into another place: the Brecon Beacons!

The fair man drew her forth and, in a moment, they were standing on the steep side of one of the mountains. Delyth breathed in fresh frosty air and gazed about in awe.

“There are many pathways if only one would look,” remarked her companion as he began walking. Delyth nodded and followed.

He led her to a tangled bush and crying out in distress Delyth ran forward to the child lying still and quiet. Two fair women were kneeling beside him, eyes wet with anguish and anger.

The man waved them back as they reached for her. Delyth ignored them and smiled comfortingly at the child.

“Do not move, love, I will have this cruel wire off you!”

Someone – and Delyth suspected someone who *knew* of the fair folk and meant to entrap one – had callously left a pile of colourful objects: brightly wrapped sweets, building bricks and fake precious stones. Under them Delyth could see was iron that had been carefully concealed until the objects above had been disturbed. Iron nails, iron horse shoes and worse, wire which threaded through the fake precious stones. The child had been lured close and when picking up the stones had become panicked, and in its panic entangled itself in the wire.

The fair folk could not help their child and so had sought help. How they had found her Delyth did not know or care. Terrified for the child whose features were drawn in pain and washed a deathly white pallor, Delyth hoped the perpetrator was caught by the *Tylwyth Teg*.

Carefully she began to unwind the iron from the child’s hands. The child whimpered and blinked grey-blue eyes full of torment at her. Delyth smiled in reassurance and began to whisper all sorts of things about her childhood, especially about her beloved cat Dafydd. The child actually relaxed a little at her tales, allowing her to more easily pluck the cord away.

The damage was bad, deep red welts criss-crossing the delicate tiny hands. Finally, however, the horrid thing was undone and Delyth put it to one side. On impulse she hugged the whimpering child before gently passing the little one to the two quiet women. One fair lady looked at her with a searching gaze then nodded in gratitude.

Delyth just bowed her head in return and gathered all the rubbish, filling her pockets so they could be destroyed safely. The fair lady observed her actions as a ring appeared beside them. The child she had saved was now in the arms of the other fair lady. He waved at her happily even though the deathly pallor lingered. Then the child and mother (was it his mother?) stepped into the circle and vanished. The remaining fair lady exchanged one final glance with Delyth, which indicated that Delyth had impressed her and been deemed acceptable. Then she too, was gone.

The tall fair man laughed merrily and silently led her away back down the steep incline. Once they had reached their arrival point, the fair man opened the pathway again and before long they were stepping amid the trees in Barry.

Dazed, Delyth sat down on the ground, uncaring of how cold it was until the man spoke.

“Thank you for your help. You must go now however, as humans catch ill so easily. We shall meet again.” Delyth recalled her childhood and said nothing beyond, “You’re welcome, safe journey home.” The man grinned and then he vanished.

Delyth returned to her friend and discovered only a few minutes had passed. She did not answer her friend’s questions on where she had been and instead suggested they go home. So they had, where Delyth had disposed of her stolen treasures.

Now, two days later she stood waiting by the sea. Her dreams had led her here and Delyth knew her time was up. The *Tylwyth Teg* do not forget and it was past time for them to fulfil their promise.

So, she waited, observing the quiet lapping of the waves at her feet and the grey sky overhead. The salt air was refreshing. It was a peaceful picture, but Delyth couldn’t enjoy the peace.

“You did not forget us, nor did you stay away when we needed help,” said her companion who had just appeared beside her. Delyth turned to meet his gaze, which was full of the joy and solemn nature of the fairy folk.

He continued, “I have come to take you away. Are you ready?”

Delyth picked up her bag. “Yes, I am. My parents and brothers have a letter and will not mourn me. I am ready.” The fair man did not smile, appreciating her truthful and serious reply, but simply took her hand.

“Then follow me.” Delyth did as bid and walked into the circle, reappearing into their world of unspoilt beauty. In the distance she espied distant mountains and she gripped her companion’s hand tighter and laughed merrily, for there were buttercups and daisies here in this strange land.

**A GIFT OF THISTLE:
A REFLECTION OF WILLIAM WALLACE
FROM "BRAVEHEART"**

BY AVELLINA BALESTRI



Mirron, come back...come back to me, before the lights behind my eyes are put out. You stood at the graveside with me before, in the years of my youth, and have kept your post there, always at the edge, always there to catch me when I fell, there to remind me what I was living for, with you gift of thistle, the harsh beauty ripped from the heart of our land. Stand with me now as this heart is ripped from me. I must be brave now, must be brave to the end of my heart's beating, for everything that made us free.

Mirron, I remember the day I returned home from my many journeys, and there was great play among the men, rowdy and rough, and you were there, your eyes merry, and your laugh light as the fae. Never had I seen my land so very alive as on that day, and I knew how good it was to be home. You were real and I wanted to feel real again, after living the life of a fatherless wanderer. I knew you could make me feel real. You could bring back the smile that had forsaken me so many years before, and that no amount of travel had been able to restore.

Mirron, I remember riding over the moors with you, your arms around my waist, and the thumping of the horse's hooves against the earth, and the thumping of our hearts as one...even as my own heart is about to be stilled, I will always remember the sound. It was our drum, beating for the war that was bound to come. Our journey was bound up in the land's agony, and we could

not long resist the pull of her sorrows. She, like the whirlpool off the northern isles, was pulling us toward her heart. And yet I hoped the twine of a faithful maiden's hair may yet save me from such a fate.



Mirron, I remember the marriage in the glen, our hands bound, the priest murmuring the words in our own tongue, and we vowed to love one another, and no other, for as long as the both of us should live. But you knew even then it would be longer; our love would know no death, but be timeless as the mist, weaving through the night, as our bodies and souls were interwoven in that night, as man and wife. And I promised I'd never let you go, that we would be lovers for all eternity. Little did I know how close eternity would be...

Mirron, I remember the knife...my God, my God, I remember the man who would have defiled you, but thought to murder you for fighting for your purity. They told me of the sneer on his face when he tore open your throat, and your life's blood gushed forth upon your undefiled body...that body, made from this soil, this land...all that was home to me. Sacred bleeding lady, I saw you, and saw her for the first time, and knew as I kissed your cold, netted lips that I was destined to avenge you both, one and the same.

Mirron, I have fought so hard, until the blood boiled and overflowed, and the rivers courses red, and the cries of battle have worn raw my throat. I have heard the drums beating on our side, on their side, and I remembered our hearts once entwined, but I would not show the pain, though it was alive in my voice every time I screamed the cry to arms. You were here, there, everywhere. I knew you saw me, your eyes still searching for me as they told me your eyes

sought me before they closed forever. You looked for rescue, when there was none to be had, and my soul has been shredded from my own failure.

Mirron, I failed to save you, but I will not fail to save this, your Body in full, the Lady of the Land. They may tear me open, but they will not subjugate her, not rob from her the sovereign right to wield her will. She is you, and you are her, and I cannot stop dreaming of you, yet rarely enough have I glimpsed your face. Oh, lover of sun and shade, come to me in my darkest night and let me rest a while with you. And yet always, you tell me to be vigilant; you tell me to wake. Oh, how hard are the horns of war...



Mirron, when all my dreams have crumbled like dying stars and fallen from heaven in streaks of exploding light over the sea, will you not come to me, even when whole self is emptied of me? Will you not come to me in betrayal, defeat, martyrdom? Though I will take no numbing drought, as Our Lord and Savior would let no wine kiss his lips, will not your own lips be my remedy and cure? I yearn to drink the nectar of your sweetness, as the bee upon the flower, for I feel more dead than alive...

Mirron, remember me now, take me to the Kingdom where you have surely been made a princess. Let me see your form moving through the throng, easing the pain that sears through me, tearing me open with the hope of rending my soul. I will not beg for tyranny's mercy, but cry out for the freedom that lives in the very pulse of every Scottish heart. I will cling to the cloth you gave to me, until my last drop of strength is wrung from me. I will be conscious of my end, and I will be conscious of your coming. I will be conscious of all we have been, and of all that we are, and of all we shall be...

A country of our own. Yes, that's what we shall have, my bonnie lass, my sweetest Mirron, sprig of thistle, warrior's stay, hope of the man who's heart you hold...and I see the future of it, living in your smile, as you come to fetch me home.



SOMETHING OF TIME: A PERSONAL LOOK AT 'NIGHTNOISE' BY KEVIN DERBY

The crooked road that leads from the historic First Coast of Northeast Florida to the ivied walls of a prestigious liberal arts college in Connecticut is broken enough, without Celtic music in the background. But one that detours to the midlands of South Carolina, the concrete towers of Manhattan, the majestic mountains and endless deserts of Nevada, the windy streets of Chicago, the hushed grasslands of Kansas, and then back to Florida to wrap around the gentle Red Hills of Tallahassee is "touched by that dark miracle of chance which makes new magic in a dusty world," even as that music continues to play.

A strange introduction to my favorite Celtic band, but I find I cannot separate its tunes from other aspects of my life. If I call upon the ghost of the favorite writer of my childhood – "O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again" – let it be said, while I am far closer to King Saul than to the Witch of Endor, I must now summon the spirits of the past in my effort to weigh in on the music of 'Nightnoise.'

Twilight comes early when the late autumn and winter hit Connecticut, at least it did when I attended college in Bill Clinton's first term. While my college was more than 1,050 miles away from my family home in North Florida, those late afternoons and early evenings had a knack for making that distance seem even longer. New England, in those seasons, was unfamiliar territory. The shadows of bare trees would entangle themselves on the icy sidewalk and muddy ground. Deep breaths would take substance and ascend into the gray sky. The city, which had seen far better days, seemed deserted. With empty streets, vacant offices and a hockey team playing to a dwindling number of fans. Across the river, on our eastern horizon, stood the "hills beyond," a phrase I lovingly stole from Thomas Wolfe, perhaps a slight nod to his description of his alma mater Chapel Hill as "that magical campus."

Normally our campus was magical, but not in the howling days of winter. Even the hills beyond, so green in April, so golden in October, were barren.

Connecticut contrasted with Florida. While Saint Augustine might be decades older than Jamestown or Plymouth – not that haughty Virginians, or or Baystaters from the people's republic of Massachusetts, were aware of this – Florida seems endlessly new, a fountain of youth for the seniors who head south for the winter on I-75 and I-95. The sun dominates the Sunshine State, with its endless beaches and long summers. The magic kingdom of Florida extends far beyond Walt Disney World.

However, Connecticut in general and my campus in particular, seemed old, especially in winter. Walking past rows of imposing Victorian Gothic buildings and the majestic chapel, reinforced my decision to be a history major. Fueling my desire to write about everything and to consume all the books in the library, in the same way I went through an endless array of pizza, Doritos, Dr. Pepper, coffee, cheeseburgers and Yoo-hoo. I wanted to shove as many words as possible onto the page and cram as much knowledge into my brain and as much junk food into my stomach as I could.

"New" music simply didn't seem to be the appropriate soundtrack to such a setting. I put away the U2, Sting, Iron Maiden, Queensrÿche and Rush CDs that had gotten me through high school. While most of my classmates flocked to hear Dave Matthews, when he played on campus, I simply shrugged it off. Instead, I turned to classical music – Vaughn Williams and Holst, Mozart and Bach – to get me through. Imbibing too much coffee, I would wander through the malls and colossal bookstores, strapping on the headphones to listen

to the free music samples the stores offered, taking in as much as I could.

In those days – were they really a quarter of a century ago? – you couldn't miss the seemingly endless collection of Windham Hill albums in the stores. Windham Hill, which was its own record label at the time, usually offered CDs with striking album covers, quite often with memorable nature photographs. My college roommate had "Windham Hill: The First Ten Years" and I would listen to that double CD set. Trying to pin the music down to a specific genre was near impossible. There were some pieces that contained hints of jazz, while others showed more classical influence. Still other tracks could only be classified as "New Age," a nebulous term applied to too many artists in the 1990s.

Craving something different in a somber collegiate setting, I grasped on to Windham Hill as the likes of guitarist Will Ackerman, one of the founders of the record label, and pianist George Winston drove my mind towards new horizons, much like Wolfe's writings did when I was in high school. Listening to Windham Hill music, my roommate and I ventured away from the campus, spending weekends pursuing the unknown, enjoying quaint towns, taking in old churches, trampling over mountains and hills, fields and forests. The music helped propel me to explore a setting that should have been familiar – I was born not too far from the college and spent my first five years in the area where I still had family – but wasn't.

Instead of keeping me in the dorm, the music spurred me into motion as I made tyrannical demands to my friend, urging him to drive us into the hills, to explore dots on the map and make them real to me. Nightnoise was my favorite Windham Hill artist and, like so many acts signed to that record label, it was an impossible task for a would-be musical cataloger to pin them to a certain genre. Partly jazz, with classical and Celtic thrown in along traces of chamber music and American folk, Nightnoise was impossible to peg, but just as impossible for me to resist. Years later, I found that, like me, the band had one foot in America and the other in Ireland and things made a little more sense. Even so, "Nollaig," a stirring, even uplifting piece, about Christmas of all things, by Nightnoise may have been the most played track of my college years.

After college, I listened less and less to Nightnoise and Windham Hill in general. They simply didn't seem to gel during the long Lent when I was in grad school in South Carolina. Or when I was chasing every horizon, not realizing they were hemmed in by the towering juggernauts that overshadowed Manhattan. There were moments when I yearned to hear Nightnoise, namely in Kansas, of all places. But hearing the music would only upset me, make me yearn for distant memories. Finally, well nestled in my 40s, comfortable and content for the first time in decades, I could return to Nightnoise's music and at last find it as magical as I did in college.

Back in 1984, American violinist Billy Oskay and Irish guitarist Michael O'Domhnaill teamed up on an album entitled "Nightnoise" and would later expand their efforts to form a group under that name. After three and a half decades, this remains a gem of an album as the two musicians blend Celtic music with jazz and even traces of classical and chamber music. The title track, "19 A" and "Menucha" all stand out, but there is not a single misstep on the first album. It holds up remarkably well after three and a half decades.

By 1987, Triona Ní Dhomhnaill, a talented pianist and singer, joined her brother and Oskay. As did flutist Brian Dunning and the four musicians formed Nightnoise. Their first album "Something of Time," showed that the band had some growing pains and this album simply is not as strong as some of their later work. However, there are some fine pieces here, including "Toys Not Ties" and "One for the Lad," a rollicking piece to close the album. Still Nightnoise's distinct sound – a fusion of influences including Celtic folk and New Age – can be found on this album.

Now three decades old, "At the End of the Evening," which Nightnoise released in 1988, remains a fresh and engaging album. "Hugh" is the best-known piece on this album, followed by "Of a Summer Morn." But there are plenty of other great tracks including the upbeat "At the Races," the gentle "Bring Me Back a Song," and the haunting "Snow on High Ground." A personal favorite of mine from this album is "Her Kansas Sun," which is one of the band's hidden gems. Listening to it brings me back to the fall of 2005 when I met a young woman during my short time in the Sunflower State. She's never so alive in my memory as when I hear that song. Triona Ní Dhomhnaill shines when she sings on the lovely title track. While a few pieces are forgettable – particularly "Forgotten Carnival" – there are no bad tracks on the album even as the band was

continuing to gel.

Released in 1990, "Parting Tide," marks the end of an era for Nightnoise. This marks the last album for Oskay, who shines on violin here. Dunning is great as always on flute. Mícheál Ó Domhnaill is in his usual excellent form on guitar in most of the pieces on the album. Triona Ní Dhomhnaill is on keyboard and sings three of the pieces, including the haunting – if somewhat long – "An Irish Carol," "Snow is Lightly Falling," and the charming and inspiring "Island of Hopes and Tears." There are some fine pieces – "A Jig of Sorts" and "The Abbot" in particular stand out on this charming album.

The "Shadow of Time" album, which came out in 1993, captures Nightnoise during a major transition. Fans of the earlier albums might be a little put off as Oskay was replaced by Johnny Cunningham on violin. There are some differences to be sure, but Cunningham generally fills in admirably, though it does lead to a far more Celtic/Irish sound for Nightnoise than past albums especially in pieces like "Silky Flanks."

Dunning simply excels in pieces like "The March Air" and "Night in that Land." Triona Ní Dhomhnaill takes considerably more of the limelight on this album, showing her fine soprano voice in songs like "Shadow of Time" and skill on the keyboards on songs like the title track and "Water Falls." There seems to be something of a consensus among Nightnoise fans that, after Oskay left, the band took on a more Irish sound. That certainly seems to be the case here. However, even with all the transitions, this remains a strong album with "Sauvie Island," "Night in that Land," and the chants of "Mouth Music" ranking as some of the band's more popular outings. This is a great album of relaxing, pleasant and sometimes haunting music.

Released in 1995, "A Different Shore" ranks as one of the best albums Nightnoise ever crafted. The album starts with the stirring "Call of the Child" and the hypnotic "For Eamonn," two of the strongest pieces Nightnoise ever assembled. There are also some gentle pieces here like "Another Wee Niece" and the title track. Rollicking tunes like "Morning in Madrid," "Clouds Go By" and "Mind the Dresser" provide some energy. And Triona Ní Dhomhnaill excels in vocals on "Falling Apples." The haunting "Shuan" closes the album. This is Nightnoise at its peak, a mature sound of musicians who simply gell and know how to work together. Originally recorded in 1995 and 1996, before being released in 1997, "The White Horse Sessions" seemed to hint at a new direction for Nightnoise. There's an energy and passion on this live album that doesn't often come through in the studio sessions. This can be seen right from the start as the band sprints out with "Silky Flanks" and "Jig of Sorts." Even "Shadow of Time" follows suit. As Triona Ní Dhomhnaill excels on vocals though, things slow down with a reflective take on "Shaun."

Nightnoise offered some new material in the middle of this album, including the engaging "Do We" and "Murdo of the Moon" where their Irish folk influences have never been stronger. They also offer a different, slower take on Van Morrison's classic "Moondance" – which listeners might have a hard time recognizing with its change of tempos – while offering a fascinating version of "Hugh" which will engage longtime fans familiar with that song.

The last third of the album opens with Triona Ní Dhomhnaill singing on the beautiful and evocative "Heartwood." The album ends some of the band's most popular songs including a solid take on "The Cricket's Wicket." The melancholy and lovely "Night In That Land" follows and the band has never sounded better than they do here as they revisit that classic. The album ends with an energetic "At the Races."

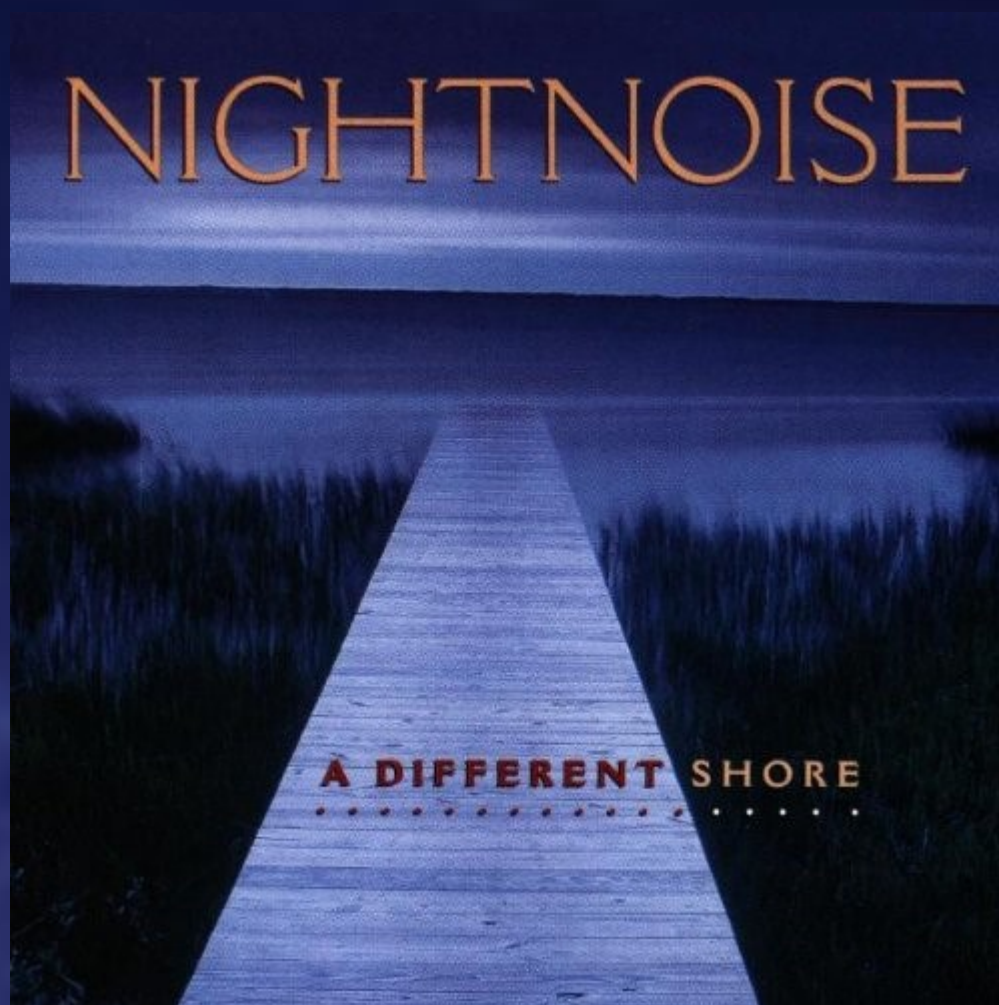
As their contract with Windham Hill ended with this album, Nightnoise seemed poised to focus more on traditional Irish music, instead of their trademark blending of other genres. However, this was the last album the band made. It's unfortunate to say the least, but Nightnoise offered seven albums most of which, including this one, are excellent. Unlike too many bands, Nightnoise went out on top as this album clearly indicates.

Still, it took the band more than a half decade to officially call it quits. Cunningham left in 1997 after the "The White Horse Sessions" and was replaced by John Fitzpatrick. While the band didn't produce any new albums, they produced a wealth of Christmas songs, often in connection with Windham Hill's popular "A Winter's Solstice" and "Celtic Christmas" series. Their original pieces like "Nollaig," "Bring Me Back a Song," and "No Room at the Inn" as well as their takes on traditional tunes like "The Wexford Carol," "The

Sussex Carol," "The Flight Into Egypt," and "The Holly and the Ivy" ensured Nightnoise was a part of many people's holidays.

The band officially called it quits in 2003. Right after that, Johnny Cunningham died of a heart attack in December 2003 at the age of 46. Two and a half years later, Mícheál Ó Domhnaill died from a fall at his home in Dublin. He was 54.

While Nightnoise has been off the stage for a decade and it's been more than two decades since their last album, their music remains as fresh and inspiring as it was when it was first released. The term "Celtic music" has grown almost as nebulous as the phrase "New Age music." But if you are looking for some of the best Celtic inspired music out there, Nightnoise is sure to deliver.



The Discussion

By Donna Ferguson Dudley

A Fairy maid and Leprechaun were sitting, and discussing,
What gave the greatest joy, to life, and soon, they got to fussing.

For Leprechauns, to gold, acquire, their main reason, to be.

For Fairy maids, to live their lives, in beauty, fancy-free.

The Leprechaun said, "Oh, my gold, I love to see it gleam!"

The Fairy Maid rebutted, "Oh, how boring, that does seem!"

The Leprechaun insisted, that a rainbow, bright and bold,
Should prove, it was a wondrous thing, his kettle full, of gold!

The Fairy laughed, and said, "Poor you, to ever miss the point!"

At this, the silly Leprechaun felt his nose out of joint!

The Fairy Maid said, "Listen well, true beauty's to be found,

In flowers and in rainbows, too, and every lovely sound!

But slave, to some old pot, of gold, to ever worried, be,
That someone just might come, along, and take it all, from me,

No, that is not the way I'd choose, to spend a single day!"

The Leprechaun, though unconvinced, went trudging, on his way.

Back, to his hidden pot, of gold, to count his clinking hoard.

The Fairy Maid decided, they could not come, to accord.

And so, she went her merry way, enjoying each delight,

While Leprechaun sat, with his gold, just counting, through the night.

Twin Mischief

By Beth Amos

It was the sunlight that woke me, or at least what passed for sunlight in Undercity.

In reality, what had woken me was more like the sallow amber glow from the cast-iron gas streetlight that hung from its rusty chain just outside of my bedroom skylight. We lived in the constant shadow of Altéga, called "The Immortal City of Altéga" by those of the "gifted" classes whose families hadn't spent the last eight or so fairly uncomfortable generations scraping out a meagre existence beneath the vast shadow cast by its floating, oh-so-majestic, several thousand ton bulk.

Yes, with all of that rock floating fifteen or so meters above your head, natural sunlight was in pitifully short supply. The little that did manage to shine beneath the rim of the floating city above only did so for a few short hours a day when the sun was in the right position in the sky. Even then, its rays only covered a small strip of land at the very perimeter of Undercity.



This fortunate area was, by necessity, comprised solely of poor quality fruit and vegetable allotments which yearly tried, and inevitably failed, to provide food for the SUB families who tended them, and the inner-city residents who lived their whole lives solely by gas and candlelight.

SUBs, or sub-magical beings, were a section of the supernatural community who, although innately magical by birth, had minimal to zero actual usable powers. Trust me, this was definitely not a title of our own choosing, but rather one used – to great effect – to create a crystal-clear divide between us and the magically 'gifted' world floating above our heads.

The title also came with its own neat little set of rules and restrictions, including the one dictating that no SUB was to be allowed to build or farm outside of the shadow cast by Altéga.

Unfair...totally! But then we wouldn't want the gifted on high in their gilded towers to suffer the supreme insult of an interrupted view of the countryside surrounding the city...especially not by lowly creatures such as ourselves.

Okay so bitter ranting aside, the SUB community itself was one of warmth, friendship, and love, which in my opinion beats gilded cages and loveless political alliances, hands down.



For the young ones like myself, who had spent their entire lives in the Undercity, we didn't really know any different. Passes to Altéga were incredibly rare, so most of us (black market traders aside) had only visited the Immortal City once, on the morning of our fifth birthday, in order to be officially registered on the Census of Supernatural Beings.

Stretching with a loud jaw-cracking yawn, I threw back the covers and sat up. Swinging my legs off the bed, I winced a little as my bare toes came into contact with the cold floor. Stuffing my feet into my well-worn wool slippers, I shuffled out the door and down the narrow flight of stairs to the small family bathroom that I shared with my parents and eight raucous siblings. As the eldest child, I at least got the luxury of a loft room all to myself up in the eaves of the house, which when you have eight younger siblings was a solid must-have. Sadly, the house in which we lived only had room for one bathroom. A fact that meant I wasn't altogether surprised when I tried the door handle and found it firmly locked.

“Are you going to be long?” I called, pulling my heavy dressing gown tighter to ward off the early morning chill that was still in the air.



Nothing. Raising my hand, I knocked on the door, but the only response was a low sound of badly muffled giggling coming from inside.

“Farlan, Brodie...I know you are in there, open the door. I have to get ready for work or I'll be late to open the shop.” Putting my ear to the door, I heard what sounded very much like a scuffle, followed by a pained squeak before Farlan's high-pitched voice piped up from the other side of the door, confirming my previous suspicions.

“Ah will ainlie open th' door if ye promise ye willnae be aff tellin Mom about Brodie's hair.”

I rolled my eyes skyward and sighed deeply. Eight-year-old Farlan fancied himself a budding scientist and was continually getting himself into trouble with his fantastic concoctions and wild experiments. Brody, his twin brother and partner in crime, had the unfortunate habit of being the test subject of said experiments with a range of rather colourful outcomes.

“Okay, fine, just let me in and I'll see if there is anything to be done before Mom gets back from Mrs. Delfries.”



There was another whispered exchange and then the old brass key finally turned and the door opened up a crack. One bright green eye appeared in the opening, scanning to make sure the coast was clear before the door was whipped open and I was yanked through it, into the room beyond. The door closed and with a snick the lock was firmly back in place, leaving the three of us standing in total darkness.

“Farlan, it might be easier for me to help Brodie if I could actually see him,” I said as patiently as I was able to manage at 6:00 am whilst standing in the freezing cold in my nightwear. I stubbed my toe on the heavy oak dresser, cursing under my breath as I attempted to find the light cord.

“Ye hae tae actually say 'I promise' foremaist or it daesn't coont!”

His tone was desperate now, and I felt a flicker of worry spark to life. It must be really serious this time, as normally the twins just accepted their punishments with a cheeky smile and went right back to terrorising the family two minutes later.

“Brodie, are you hurt?” I asked the darkened room, not knowing exactly where to direct my question in the pitch black.

“Na a'm a'richt, Penny. Bit Mom is aff tae hae a fit whin she sees me if ye cannae help.” His words were muffled but he sounded alright and my worry faded again.

With another resigned sigh, I turned to where I thought Farlan had been standing. “Fine. I promise that I won't tell Mom. Now, can you turn the blessed light on so I can actually see what mess you have made of your brother this time?”

From his silence, I could tell he was carefully weighing the truth of my words, but then a moment later the light popped on, blinding us all for a second or two before revealing a small form draped head to foot in a large, fluffy white bath towel.

“Brodie. I'm assuming that your nefarious brother hasn't turned you into a bath towel, so let's have that off of you and take a look at the damage.”

Farlan smothered a giggle from just behind my shoulder, and I heard Brodie give a long-resigned sigh.





He raised the towel a couple of inches, exposing a small pair of brown, fur-covered feet.

“Brodie, whilst the expectation is thrilling, I really do have to get ready for work now, so let's speed things up a bit, shall we?”

“Dae ye promise nae tae laugh, Penny?” Brodie whined plaintively.

“I promise I'll skelp your behind for you if you make me any later for work!” My voice was stern, but I had to fight a small smile all the same.



The towel finally began to lift again, exposing brown furry legs to match the feet, and as the towel rose higher, I was instantly glad that I hadn't actually promised not to laugh. From the knobby knees up, my embarrassed-looking little brother was bright blue!



At this point, I should probably explain that my family and I are a little different from most other families, even in the Undercity. When I was very small, Muira and Tavish McBryde found me on their front porch with only a wicker basket and a worn blue blanket. There was no indication at all of who had left me there, why, or where I had come from – not even a note with my name on it.

Fortunately for me, being the kind-hearted people that they are, the McBrydes without a moment's hesitation took me into their home and decided to raise me as one of their own.

That day, twenty-eight years ago, I got a new name – “Hapenny”, or Penny for short, named for the most treasured of their possessions – and became their first child, as this was several years before the first of my younger siblings arrived on the scene.

Muira and Tavish, or Mom and Dad as I had always called them, were broonies, an innately magical people whose clans mostly hail from Scotland or Ireland. Broonies are small in stature with soft brown fur covering most of their bodies, large noses, pointed ears, and an almost magical affinity for housework and metalsmithing. They are also an incredibly long-lived race with individuals often spanning several human generations or more in a single lifetime. Dad always told us in bedtime stories and around the cooking fire that his family line were descended from Broonie kings and that his family had, at one point in time, sat at the feet of the Goddess Brigid of the Celtic peoples as her loyal servants and trusted advisors.





How much of this tale was true, I could never be sure, as broonies are also incredibly fond of a good yarn when the moment calls for it. It is safe to say, though, that my adoptive family has deep roots that stretch very far back into history and that this is something they are inordinately proud of and happy to talk about at length.

“Descended from Broonie kings, huh,” I muttered to myself as I took in the bedraggled-looking, fluffy blue creature in front of me.

My comment immediately sent Farlan off into peals of raucous laughter and he merrily rolled around the floor for a moment or two, before his brother snarled and dived on top of him and yet another scuffle ensued.

Wading into the middle, I tried my best to separate them. “Argh! Brodie, did you just bite me?! Right, that’s enough from the both of you!” I grabbed a still giggling Farlan from the midst of the wild tangle of flailing furry limbs, unlocked the bathroom door, and pushed him out into the corridor, shutting and locking it again before he could push his way back inside for round two.

I turned to Brodie with a scowl on my face, but at the sight of his watering eyes, I felt my expression soften. Walking over, I patted him on his furry blue head. “It’s alright, Brodie...really. I’m sure a little salt, lemon and water, and a couple of baths will have you back to your normal handsome self in no time at all.”

He smiled at that, brushing a hand over his face, and bounced to his feet. “Weel, let’s git about it, then. Farlan ‘n’ ay are gauen huntin fer gudgeon ower at th’ Marl Hole wi’ th’ Fitzwilliam twins. An ah dinnae want tae be late!”

Even though I spent every day with them, the sheer changeability of broonies never failed to amaze me. Like many of the innately magical, their emotions could turn on the head of a pin, one second elated, the next furious.

It definitely made for entertaining family gatherings, that was for sure!

Life of Lives

By Hannah Vincent

(Lyrics from *The Celts* by Enya)

*Hi-ri, Hi-ro, Hi-ri.
Hoireann is O, ha hi, ra ha, ra ho ra.
Hoireann is O, ha hi, ra ha, ra ha ra.
Hi-ri, Hi-ra, Hi-ri.*


I am not Irish, not by a long shot; therefore, I'm not a descendant of a Celtic tribe who spoke the melodious Gaelic language. Part of me wishes I was whenever I hear a verse in Gaelic...there's something about it that mesmerizes and captures your attention. A picture is created in my mind, that of a girl-woman who longs for simplicity yet greatness, not mediocrity but meaning...

*Saol na saol,
Tús go deireadh.
Tá muid beo
Go deo.*

I imagine myself running through a limitless and lush forest, birdsong following me with every step I take...my feet are bare, no sandals or shoes restricting the feel of the moist earth beneath me. Grass tickles my toes as I run and twirl without a care in the world on my shoulders. My heart pounds as it sends blood coursing through my veins and my breath fuels my muscles to keep pushing farther and farther into the vastness. The skirt of my long dress has a tendency to tangle around my legs, but if I run fast enough it can't snare them. Instead of hindering me, it flows with me, whispering above the ground and creating a sense of delicacy amidst the wildness of my run.

*Saol na saol,
Tús go deireadh.
Tá muid beo
Go deo.*

My arms swing, I stretch my fingers to catch the breeze and send energy out the tips. I barely miss tripping over a gnarled root that's pushed its way above ground, but I'm able to leap over it in the nick of time. My hair sways back and forth, its length reaching the small of my back, unfettered from the confines of the braid I plaited earlier. A smile reaches my lips as pure joy and adrenaline flood me as I partake in the mystery and grandeur of life. My eyes dart side to side, watching the wildlife teeming around me. Squirrels are startled from their scavenging by my presence, bushy tails twitching and little paws lifted. Rabbits scurry into a mixture of shrubs

A misty mountain landscape with a stone tower on the right and a valley in the center. The scene is atmospheric, with soft light filtering through the fog. The foreground is a lush green slope, while the background shows rugged, rocky peaks partially obscured by mist. A stone tower with a crenelated top stands prominently on the right side of the image.

and weeds. A doe and her fawn lift up their heads and their ears flicker as they sense my approach. They soon bound away as well, skittish and fearful I am a hunter on the prowl.

*Hi-ri, Hi-ra, Hi-ri,
Hoireann is O, ho hi, ra ha, ra ha ra.*

Not quite...I am on the prowl, but for a different reason. I hunt for the thrill of the run, the urge to see how fast I can go, and the dizzying sense of *life*. I dig deep inside and see how much further I can go, how much more I can appreciate life, and if I can widen my eyes any more to take in the beautiful picture created right in front of us, day by day. As I break from the tree line, I continue up the slight incline and suddenly dig my heels into the ground, my skirt swirling to a stop as I gaze out over the ledge of the cliff, inches away from plummeting into sheer nothingness.

This is how to live – exploring, never settling for less, striving for greatness and meaning. We are called to make choices that benefit not only ourselves but others as well, to open our arms and have the courage to step out of ourselves and embrace the joy, pain, sorrow, and love that life offers. As I gaze out onto the horizon, I realize we are meant to be a part of something greater than ourselves. It is the miraculous reality of *life* – given from the Creator.

EDINBURGH AND THE STATELY PALACE OF HOLYROODHOUSE

By Wesley Hutchins

Of all of Britain's cities, perhaps Edinburgh has the most picturesque views – from Calton Hill to Edinburgh Castle and Arthur's Seat. Any of those places presents an opportunity to take in panoramic vistas, so as to include the two other high points and the city below with much history visibly contained within it.

That history begins with early human settlements in the area through the Bronze and Iron ages which eventually became home to a Brittonic Celtic tribe known as the Gododdin. The Gododdin, by the 7th Century AD, had built the hill fort of *Din Eidyn* or *Etin* and, therefore, provided the basis for what would become the name of the city. Upon being attacked by King Oswald of Northumbria in 638, the fortress and much of the Lothian region around it along the Firth of Forth was absorbed into the Anglian kingdom for the next three centuries. In 950, it was captured by the Kingdom of Alba in the reign of King Indulf. About two-hundred years later in 1125, David I of Scotland, granted Edinburgh its royal burgh charter; it gradually gained status as Scotland's capital city and James III described it, in the 15th Century, as “the principal burgh of our kingdom.”



The city became the center for the Scottish Reformation and the religious conflicts of the 17th Century, which helped to lead to the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. And also, to the downfall of the House of Stuart with the execution of Charles I, whose father James VI had succeeded to the English throne in 1603, as James I. He, therefore, became the first man to rule all Britain in a personal union known as the Union of the Crowns, in which England and Scotland remained separate kingdoms. Scottish support for restoring Charles II (the son of Charles I) resulted in the occupation of Edinburgh by the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell.

Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Edinburgh continued to be the capital of an independent Scotland, until the Acts of Union was passed by the English and Scottish parliaments in 1707. This act united England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain and triggered the merging of the two parliaments into the British Parliament in London.

Throughout the 18th Century, it continued to prosper and became an increasingly important banking center, though it remained densely populated and crowded, due to staying largely within its medieval boundaries.

Following the defeat of the Jacobite armies of Bonnie Prince Charlie, which had occupied it during the Rising of 1745, the city embarked to stimulate economic activity and affirm its loyalty to the Union, and to the Hanoverian monarch George III. This resulted in the development of the New Town to the north – which



DUGALD STEWART
BORN NOVEMBER 22, 1753
DIED JUNE 11, 1828

included elegant Georgian and neoclassical architecture and extensive planning (and was put on display for George IV during his historic visit in 1822).

This change, along with the city being at the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment and home to intellectuals, such as Adam Smith and David Hume, gained Edinburgh the nickname, “Athens of the North.” Among the lasting impacts of the Enlightenment, was the Encyclopædia Britannica, designed in Edinburgh by Colin Macfarquhar and Andrew Bell.

Through the 19th and early 20th centuries, Edinburgh continued to grow within the county of Midlothian (also known as *Edinburghshire* for its county town) and it was granted city status by Queen Victoria in 1889. Compared to other urban areas of the United Kingdom, it industrialized little and was overtaken by Glasgow as Scotland’s largest city, and the second city of the British Empire. Nonetheless, it still had some industry in the form of printing, brewing, distilling, engineering, and rubber works. The central area in the New Town developed into a significant center for business activity and shopping, while the Old Town was given a Victorian make-over and further improvements.

In the latter half of the 20th Century, the city went through a decline with the loss of some traditional industry. But it has undergone several regeneration projects, as well as taken other steps into the present, to solidify its position as the UK’s second-largest financial and administrative center, after London.

Today, the city is also the seat of the devolved Scottish Parliament, which was established in 1999 with some exclusive areas of responsibility for domestic policies affecting the people of Scotland within the United Kingdom.

With a population of 492,000, Edinburgh is Scotland’s second-largest city and the seventh-largest city in the UK. It is home several internationally-recognized landmarks and institutions, many of which are located



in the Old Town and New Town sections, which together have been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

It is also a center for education, law, arts and sciences, medicine, and engineering, as well as cultural attractions, such as the Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Still further, it's various historic sites also help to make the city the UK's second-biggest tourist destination, after London. Among these historic sites, is the Palace of Holyroodhouse (or Holyrood Palace), which has its origins in the 12th Century, when David I of Scotland established Holyrood Abbey on the present site. The abbey guesthouse became the foundation for the royal residence which, from the 16th Century forward, had become the principal residence for Scottish monarchs, and subsequently British monarchs, when carrying out official duties and activities in Scotland. This includes Queen Elizabeth II, who moves her court there for one week in the summer, known as Holyrood Week.

Located opposite of Edinburgh Castle at the foot of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh's Old Town, the building is set in a quadrangle arrangement. The exterior of the palace, as it is known today, was largely built in the Baroque style of Sir William Bruce between 1671 and 1678, following the restoration of Charles II. The northwest tower was built over a hundred years earlier by James V. But Bruce provided for a matching tower to the southwest and the two were linked together within the overall plans, which blended the palace into an overall coherent design, especially with regard to its front façade.

Inside, the palace presents some of the most stately and well-appointed rooms in Britain. They reflect the tastes of successive monarchs over the centuries, with a rich variety of interior styles, artwork, and other furnishings. In terms of rooms still in use today by the Queen and other members of the Royal Family, there are the State Apartments, which include the Throne Room – used for receptions and ceremonies such as the installation of new Knights and Ladies of the Order of the Thistle, the highest order of chivalry in Scotland and second-highest in the UK. There's also the Royal Dining Room and the Morning Drawing Room, where the Queen receives the First Minister of Scotland and other dignitaries, including foreign ones, for private audiences.

On the other side of the building, to the north, is the Great Galley. This is the largest room in the palace and is most notable as the place where the Queen carries out investitures for Scots bestowed with knighthoods and other honours, as well as other banquets and ceremonies. Within this room are portraits of Scottish monarchs, including both legendary and real ones. Indeed, there are many more portraits of monarchs and other royals up to the present day, throughout the building. Of particular interest are the portraits of both the deposed and defeated Stuarts, such as Bonnie Prince Charlie, along with those of their Hanoverian cousins, who emerged triumphant in the struggle for power during the 18th Century. Emblematic of the complicated and extraordinary history of the UK.

That history is seen in the form of the chambers and apartments of kings and queens from long ago. Among them, is the suite of rooms designed for Charles II, including the King's Bedchamber, which – per the tastes of the Merry Monarch – is the most lavishly decorated room of the palace. It boasts richly carved woodwork and plastering, along with tapestries and the luxurious State Bed. In addition, there is the King's Ante-Chamber, Wardrobe, and Closet. From here, the rooms are connected, via the Great Gallery, to the northwest tower. This is where the apartments of Mary, Queen of Scots and her husband Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley are located. These historic areas are among the least changed since Queen Mary's time. Because of that, they give a sense of the tumultuous events which enveloped her short reign.

The first floor features the Darnley rooms, which are linked, via a spiral stair, to the identical set of rooms occupied by Mary, including her Outer Chamber, where she received visitors, and which now features a collection of Stuart and Jacobite artifacts.



A portrait of Queen Victoria atop the fireplace presiding over the Dining Room, which also contains a portrait of Bonnie Prince Charlie (between the second and third windows).

This leads to her Inner Chamber, said to be the most famous bedroom in Scotland. Many of the paintings and other features date from Mary's time and earlier, including the oak ceiling which bear the monograms *MR* and *IR* for her parents, Mary of Guise (Maria Regina) and James V (Jacobus Rex). Other items, such as the Flemish tapestries, are more recent, but still add to the mystique of this room and the infamous woman who occupied it.

Elsewhere in the palace complex is Holyrood Abbey, which is attached to the palace, but has been a ruin since 1768 when its roof collapsed. It still stands as a beautiful piece of Medieval architecture. The forecourt features a fountain, installed by Queen Victoria (which emulates a similar one at Linlithgow Palace), as well as a nearby statue of her son, Edward VII. This statue was unveiled by his son, George V, who brought the palace into the 20th Century by overseeing extensive improvements during his reign. Improvements such as the installation of central heating and electric lighting.

In addition, the Queen's Gallery is located to the west of the palace and exhibits works from the Royal Collection. Next door to it, in the Mews Courtyard, is the Café at the Palace, which serves mostly light meals and – so quintessentially British – tea in the afternoons. The palace gift shop is also nearby to collect mementos. Furthermore, there are the overall grounds and gardens of the palace – where the Queen hosts garden parties – which expand into the vaster Holyrood Park (aka Queen's Park) This includes Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, whose peaks contain some of the best views of the area.

Back at the palace, audio tours are available via a device which allows visitors to listen to commentary on Holyroodhouse, and on the people who have lived there, as they make their way through the building. Admission is available for different levels of access to the palace and its surrounding areas, and in this year until October 16th, it includes access to a special exhibit in honor of the Queen's 90th birthday. The exhibit is



Above: Ruins of the Augustinian Holyrood Abbey.

Below: Holyrood Palace and grounds viewed from Arthur's Seat.



entitled *‘Fashioning a Reign: 90 Years of Style from The Queen’s Wardrobe.’* For larger groups, bookings are available for both private and personally guided tours by Scottish Blue Badge Guides. And there are special accommodations and features for school groups, children, and those with disabilities (except for Queen Mary’s apartments, which unfortunately cannot be accessed by wheelchairs).

Holyroodhouse is open year-round, save for Christmas and Boxing Day. However, it is still a working palace, so one ought to be mindful of any comings and goings by the Queen, other members of the Royal Family, and still others who are allowed use of the building – such as the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Such visits may affect the palace’s availability to visitors. Even in such circumstances, however, it would be fascinating to witness the palace being used for its stated purpose in the service of its Queen.

Indeed, Holyroodhouse is royal treasure of Scotland and of the whole United Kingdom, easily on par with Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. It is a must see for anyone visiting the country and, in particular, it can serve as a foundation for touring and getting to know the great city of Edinburgh.

Spectacular panoramic image of Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth from Salisbury Crags. At left in the distance is Edinburgh Castle and the spire of the Hub, while the Nelson Monument stands tall atop Calton Hill just off



the Center. Below it to the right are the Scottish Parliament and Holyrood Palace.

Ankou

By Ruth Asch



“Ankou, is the name given to a messenger of death, in Brittany. Each area has its own, who comes to fetch the souls of those called away. He wears a long cloak and a broad brimmed hat and sometimes carries a scythe. He rides a horse, or drives a cart in which to transport souls. A new Ankou takes on the role each year. It is the last man to die in the parish the year before.”

Extracts from a diary found by a river in Brittany...

20th January

You have gone and there are times when, in between the endless aching, I still cannot believe it. I do not know how to reach you with a letter now, and I do not know how to forget to talk to you. So, from now on, this diary is the place where I will write to you, my darling.

22nd January

It plays through my head, over and over, broken into pieces like a play rehearsed out of order. I want to scream “Stop!” - go back and change things. Tell them never to do that evening again, to replace it with another, which I will forget.

Why did I persuade you to accept my father’s invitation to see in New Year? Why did I think he would be reasonable, or that you might like each other, when you really talked?

Because you are alike. And now I know that is why you could not. Two hot tempers, two men of pride with hearts of gold. Two men who are passionate, and blind. But why did you have to leave? Could you not have stayed for me and played it down, just once? I know you could not. He was too rude, too closed, too final... but you should have waited for me in some sheltered spot nearby. I expected to begin a new life with the new year... to run away at dawn and find you, leave with you, begin over again... How could I know you would be hurt upon the road? The devil wielded the tree which struck you, stirred the storm which attacked you... I CANNOT BEAR IT!

31st January

Did they give you a new hat, or do you wear your old slouch? I imagine your handsome face shadowed by its broad brim, smudged with dirt after a long day. Skin, pale beneath your weathered bronze. Those brown eyes luring me in, like pools, deep and beautiful. I see you and I can feel myself being drawn into your arms, the brush of coarse, damp cloth, the warm strength underneath. Why were you not warm and strong enough to resist the storm when you lay injured on that road? Now I suppose, you must have a fine new black cloak... the horrible irony of it!





8th March

“Ah, this one’s a nasty Ankou!” old Marie said to me in the village, shaking her head at the baby twins’ death. I’ve heard that phrase a thousand times before. But she peered at me with those milky, half-blind eyes as though I knew something. I do not like her. What does she know of you?

9th April

“I’m sorry, my dear, for your family’s troubles. One after another, this year! At least the strong and lovely are preserved.” I could have spat in her face for the cruelty of her words... Did you do it?! DO you have a say now, in who lives and who dies? Or are you just a henchman? Either way, it is despicable... it is betrayal... it is too close... too close to home. My uncle was the one who advised my father not to let me marry you. Did you know that? Do you care about his wife and six children? I cannot trust you anymore... and yet you’re the only person I ever completely trusted before.

25th April

Martin smiled at me today. I smiled back.
Please forgive me. I cannot.

13th May

Today, for once, I felt free.

18th June

Sun, bright on white lace, used to mean my head-dress laid out on a Sunday morning, and the pride of how pretty it was on my dark hair; or the girls, all gathered with a spring in the step and a nudge in the elbow, glancing at the men; or then the glow down within, biding, till I could slip away for the leisured afternoon with you, beside the river where the rocks are - wondering what they were used for by the Korrigan who carved their twisted shapes... and when you would kiss me and make everything shine!

Now, the sight sickens me. I think of the Sunday scene I ran past to find you lying, your best clothes soaked in mud, by the roadside. I watch the pile of spume trapped in a curved corner of the river, like a lace cap, abandoned, spinning and spinning, slowly becoming tainted by dull air and time – the useless turning on itself of an old maid's mind.



15th August

You have come for other members of my family. When are you coming for me?

28th September

Wherever you are these days... do you remember those autumn afternoons, when the air is soft and sheeny, like that grey silk shawl Brigitte's sailor brought her from the East? They are my favourite, more than the gorgeous summer shine, or frosted winter. I love the rich and mournful colours and quiet atmosphere. If I could come to you now – would I find peace? And would I see any colour?

21st October

Granny passed away so peacefully. She always liked you, and you her, I think? Did you talk upon the way? Remember me to her, Dearest, please... I will miss her so much. I have grown used to the thought of death now, or this most expected one would be the worst of all...

3rd November

I notice, whenever we visit my fishing cousins on the coast, how the inside of their Church is wooden like a ship, and think how it must be a comfort to feel closer to their loved men out at sea. I sit up at night now, and lean far out the window into cold and dark, trying to feel where you are... It is a dreadful thought, to imagine being you - but better than that you should be only a body in a grave, or a spirit far away...

27th December

There was a dance tonight at the hall. I did not go, but stood by the grey church wall, picturing the painting within - of Death drawing his victims so elegantly towards their end... and imagining you, thinner as you must now be, in your hooded cape, extending to me your hand. How I long to dance La Danse Macabre with you!
And if you are not there? All the more reason to want death.

28th December

In case I cannot say it to you in person, when I try to find you... I must write this now:
It was my fault. I cannot bear to think it, but if I had not joined the argument it would not have grown so heated, and you never would have left. If I'd heeded my instinct that the journey was not safe, and followed you, I would have brought you help, before it was too late. If I had not been a coward, had been surer of my own feelings — less angry at your temper — I would have gone with you and we would be together now. It is too late... but I am sorry. Know I have been tortured by this ever since...

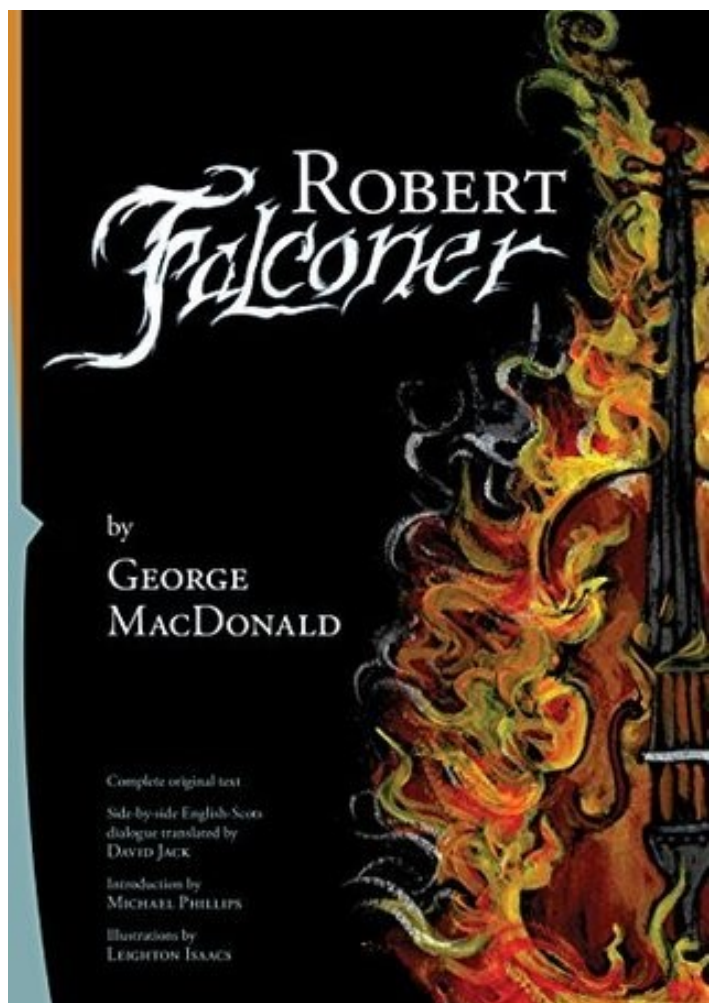
30th December

I am not certain now, whether after everything, I will recognize you. Nor do I recognize myself. It is too late to turn back – I have decided. And you know that I do not change my mind. Do not bring your cart to my father's door. I will meet you where we always did – at the river. I am coming to you... my Ankou.

"Two days after this diary was picked up, washed up on the river-bank, the body of a young woman, Blanche Mollinou, was recovered."

ROBERT FALCONER: TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

BY DAVID JACK



Scotland to do so.

Ever since that first reading, I have always considered 'Robert Falconer' to be as much a "double story" as MacDonald's classic fairy-tale 'The Wise Woman.' It revolves around a twin-search by the hero: one after his prodigal earthly father, whom he barely remembers having seen, the other, in pursuit of a Heavenly Father through the densest of theological fogs, engendered by the well-meaning religious instruction of his Calvinist grannie.

All this, of course, is to anticipate, and I will add nothing more, except to say that the odyssey left me spellbound, and that here I found the essence of MacDonald's spiritual vision encapsulated in a soaring work of fiction (soaring like the notes of Robert's cherished violin): namely that "Fatherhood is at the great world's core."

The translation itself has been a labour of love, not least because of the strong personal connection I feel to the story. If, as I hope, 'Robert Falconer' becomes the first of many MacDonald novels I have the privilege of translating, then, for me, there is no better starting place.

The parallel Scots-English text offered here was not the original idea for this edition: we had at first envisioned a conventional rendering from the former tongue to the latter, which would have nearly dispensed with the Scots altogether. The retention of the odd Scots turn of phrase, and a very occasional word from the "mother-tongue" were to have been the sole concessions, since accessibility was to be the prime focus: however, the total exclusion of the language employed by MacDonald himself, the North East Doric of his homeland, always seemed too great a sacrifice to be contentedly borne, and the two-column side-by-side Scots/English format of this edition has been the happy result. Such an approach has enabled me to make the translated portions of the dialogue (the right-hand column) more unambiguously English. Though a keen observer may still note a certain quaintness in the syntactical arrangement, common to Scots and older English, which I believe will not interfere with ease of reading, even for those completely unacquainted with Broad Scots. The reader will notice that whilst the Scots and English dialogue has been split into left-hand/right-hand columns, the portions of dialogue which were written originally in English have sometimes been

Before offering any remarks about the specific task of translating 'Robert Falconer,' or indeed about the reasons for undertaking such a task, I cannot forego the opportunity of commenting upon the merits of the book itself, and the special place it has in my own affections.

About a decade has passed since I bought a copy of the novel in Aberdeen, the city where George MacDonald studied for his first degree, and in which certain key portions of the story are set. It was my first taste of MacDonald, beyond the frequent quotations offered in the works of C.S. Lewis, who famously called the Huntly author his "master."

Much like Lewis' own initial experience of reading MacDonald, I felt that, in embarking upon this fictional journey with Robert, the story's hero, I was crossing "a great frontier," though I did not have to journey into fairy-land, nor even leave

added to both columns (if they occur in the midst of dialogue in Scots).

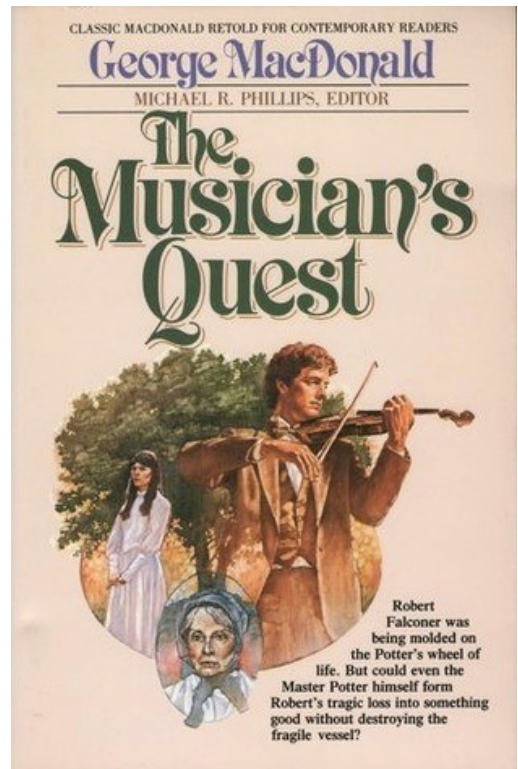
I have taken advantage of the parallel text by selecting English words or phrases which at least bear some resemblance to their Scots counterparts whenever this approach has been consistent with the flow of the dialogue. In this way, I have afforded any reader who wishes to follow the translation process the opportunity to do so in something approximating a step-by-step manner, by comparing the left and right columns. This being understood, I have not carried the point too far, and certain Scots words, which have no direct English equivalent, I have taken the liberty of translating variously throughout the novel, depending on context. This an exclamation like "Hoots!" I have rendered several times as "Heavens!" in English, while on at least one occasion I have chosen "My!" and once or twice have omitted any translation at all, none seeming to fit the English as "Hoots!" fits the Scots. Likewise, with the suggestive "Och Hone!" (and "ohone") favoured by Mrs. Falconer: the more literal translation, "Alas!", I have reserved for occasions of true pathos, but have again settled upon "My!" when the occasion suggested a milder English word. Another oft-repeated phrase from the lips of Robert's grannie is "Noo, be douce": literally, "Now, be sober." Unlike the former examples, the word "douce" lends itself to relatively unproblematic translation, and although, like most words, its meaning can be subject to nuances ('sensible' might work as well as 'sober' in a given sentence), I have chosen uniformity in my approach here (at least when Mrs. Falconer is addressing the boys), since sobriety is such a hallmark of her life and religious outlook. When another character is speaking, or when Mrs. Falconer is instructing Betty rather than her young charges, I have selected alternative English words, such as the aforementioned "sensible" to reflect the Scots "douce" or "dooce."

Now I come to the reasons for offering this new edition in the first place, and I believe I may speak on behalf of my partners in the project in identifying at least three: the first, as mentioned already, is simply ease of understanding, since the majority of readers will not be native Scots, or Scots-speakers (the character of Eric Ericson will show that the distinction is a necessary one.) Second-and of course this objective overlaps with and may be facilitated by the first - there is the hope of bringing MacDonald to a wider audience.

C.S. Lewis lamented the fact that insufficient attention had been paid, even by those who enjoyed his own books, to the man he credited with so much of their inspiration, and even went so far as to compile an anthology of MacDonald quotes to redress the oversight. Third, there is the book's message.

While there are a host of reasons to recommend both 'Robert Falconer' and its author, the latter saw his place in the world principally as a communicator of truth, and whether from the pulpit, or in the pages of any of his various novels, poems, or sermons, that is what he remained.

If spiritual realities be communicable through creative gifts, then MacDonald, unique talented storyteller and mythmaker as he was, was ideally fitted to convey them. The content of his message I leave the reader to discover for himself, but that he will find a great deal of entertainment, as well as instruction, along the way I have little doubt; and, indeed, if he is able to refrain from both laughter and tears in their proper places, it will not be for want of occasion. The artwork of Leighton Isaacs, illustrator of this edition, would enrich any novel, but I have come to associate it closely with the words of MacDonald, and am delighted that such is the case here. It is therefore with an enthusiasm to match the most expectant reader that I look forward to sampling 'Robert Falconer' afresh and, fancifully imagining that the whole story might assume musical form, I take the advice of the fiddling cobbler Dooble Sanny to "pit my sowl in my lugs an' hearken!" ("put my soul in my ears and hearken!")



Robert Falconer has also been published under the title *The Musician's Quest*

A CHALICE WELL MEDITATION

BY BENJAMIN BAUM

Come into silence.

Breathe slowly and steadily.

Feel your body and the room around you dissolving.

This is a journey to another place, perhaps another world.

You find yourself in a field in Somerset England.

Around you are short but plentiful apple trees.

You may hear the sound of small birds and noise of cattle and sheep.

The grass is short and acts like a green blanket before you.

As you walk through the orchard you notice a small hooded figure.

The figure carries a bow and is in a hurry.

They urge you to follow and you begin moving faster through the orchards.

Your guide takes you in view of the temple to the Sun.

Glastonbury Tor stands astride the horizon, tall and magnificent.

This tower and hill are dedicated to St. Michael.

Michael the Archangel of the Sun, "Who is like God" protecting this Holy land.

Nearby is Wearyall Hill where Joseph of Arimathea thrust his staff into the

ground, from which grew the Glastonbury Thorn

*Your guide takes you deeper into Glastonbury and you find yourself at a temple
of the Moon.*

Here you find yourself entering Chalice Well.

*Before you the large fountain of iron-rich spring water pours forth from the
ground, spilling forth in a waterfall.*

You notice how the water seems clear and red all at once.

Your guide has vanished but as you look, a new figure has appeared.

*This is a tall slender woman. She wears a dark-blue, long skirt.
She is very beautiful and you are quite mesmerized.
She ushers you to follow her. And as you follow her through overhanging ivy.
You notice the stone path beneath your feet and the small rivers that cut into the
side of the walkway.*

*The woman has taken you to a Well.
It is an ancient stone well and consists of a lid and a construction of stones
made into a circle.
The woman beckons you forward until you find you are next to the well.
From the well, you notice red and white roses grow around the edges.
You feel the urge to jump down the well
As you look down, a pillar of light pours forth from below and bursts out of the
well.*

*You jump down the well and find yourself falling.
Falling deeper and deeper into the earth.
It is dark at first, but as you fall forever deeper into the well, you find the light
getting even brighter.
Shining above and around you as you fall.
You then find yourself on a beach.
The sandy beach is covered in shells of various sizes.
The sky above is a strange color and in the distance a bright red sun shines in the
sky.*

*Behind you is the beach.
Before you is the ocean.
To your left is a tall cliff.
To your right you suddenly notice a large metal fire pit on the beach.*



A small salamander climbs amongst the metal feet of the fire pit.

Suddenly, before you, sits a tall bearded man.

His beard is red and wild.

Atop his head is a crown.

The crown forms the shapes of burning flames.

His robes are long, flowing and red.

In one hand he carries a large staff.

You notice that two dragons are carved into his chair.

The King offers his hand outstretched.

A flame forms on his hand.

Within the flame is a gift for you.

You may take the gift if you like without fear of burning your hands.

*When you are ready slowly find yourself coming back to your everyday
awareness.*

Perhaps not forgetting what you may have seen, learned or witnessed.

Knowing you may come back to this place in meditation and dreams.

Finding the True King

Amanda Pizzolatto

Merida glanced around the corner before glancing back at the two men, the dragon, and other woman with her.

“We’re clear for now, but we need to make this quick,” she whispered.

Hiccup nodded as he glanced at Toothless. “You know what to do, bud?”

Toothless gave a little garble as he nodded.

“Are you sure about this, Hiccup?” asked Taran.

“We have to get you to the sword. There is no way Viggo is the rightful heir to the throne.”

“But what makes you think I could be king?” Taran whispered back as they stealthily walked through the mostly quiet city. Merida raised her hand as she neared another corner. The group stopped and waited with baited breath as she glanced around the corner before motioning them to follow.

“Well, for one thing, you were the only person of eligible age who hasn’t tried pulling the sword out of the stone,” began Hiccup.

“Fair point,” mumbled Taran.

“And for another,” said Eilonwy, “Dallben was pretty insistent on you trying to pull the sword.”

“But he always got that funny look on his face whenever we asked him why,” muttered Merida as she led them to another corner. She quickly checked her surroundings before motioning them forward. “I’m beginning to think he knows Taran is the rightful heir, but swore not to say anything.”

“At least not until Taran has proved that he is the rightful heir,” said Hiccup. “I think Dallben hasn’t wanted to say a word because he’s afraid Viggo would send his army after Taran and kill him before he’s able to rally his allies.”

“I don’t even know who my allies are,” blurted Taran. He glanced at Merida, Hiccup, and Toothless as they came to another corner. “Except for you, of course.”

“Prince Gwydion also pledges his allegiance,” said a gruff voice from behind them. The group turned and yelped. Merida and Eilonwy strung their bows, Toothless took a defensive position in the front, while Hiccup unsheathed his

Character Origins:

Disney/Pixar's Brave:

Merida (a princess of Scots)

Fergus (Merida's father)

Elinor (Merida's mother)

Scots

How to Train Your Dragon Franchise:

Hiccup (a Viking chief)

Toothless (Hiccup's dragon)

Eret (an ally)

Viggo (an enemy)

Drago (an enemy)

dragons (allies)

dragon riders (allies)

Vikings

Viggo's army

Prydain Chronicles:

Taran (an assistant pig herder)

Eilonwy (a princess)

Coll (a farmer)

Gwydion (prince & son of Don)

Dallben (an aged enchanter)

Fflewddur Flam (wanderer and ruler of a small area)

Sons of Don (the ruling house of Prydain)

Horned King (an enemy)

Black Cauldron (an magical item used to reanimate the dead).

sword. Taran just stared in shock at the figure before a smile of relief spread across his face as another figure entered the pale moonlight.

“Coll!”

“Keep it down, Taran. Yes, I am here. Dallben sent me with Prince Gwydion to let you know he can be trusted. He is a dear friend of ours.”

“And I will only ever serve the rightful king of Prydain,” said Gwydion with a bow. “Dallben and Coll have suspected it was you for some time now.”

“But, Dallben wasn’t sure?” Hiccup asked hesitantly. They had begun to relax and lowered their weapons just a bit, there was still the matter of Viggo’s men roaming the city looking for them, primarily for Toothless and Taran.

Coll shook his head. “Not quite. He had a strong suspicion and many clues to point to that, but Dallben doesn’t like jumping to conclusions without all the evidence. Pulling the sword would prove once and for all that you are the true king of Prydain.”

“B-but, I don’t know how to be king.”

Coll chuckled softly. “You have a prince, two princesses, and a chief here who can teach you, if there’s anything wanting.”

Merida let out a little giggle. “And I’m sure my mother would be more than happy to teach you the fineries of court life.”

Eilonwy rolled her eyes. “Oh please, count me out of that one.”

“Oh don’t worry, I think you and I have learned everything. It’s the guys’ turn now,” said Merida with a grin.

Taran shot a glance at Hiccup. “That doesn’t sound good.”

“Yes, but, in order to do that, we must get you to the sword. Come on,” whispered Coll as he and Gwydion took the lead. The group continued to weave around the buildings to get closer to the churchyard, where the sword of the king was imbedded in a stone. They barely saw any of Viggo’s men until they got closer to the churchyard. Even then there were only three men visible.

“Something’s not right,” muttered Hiccup. “Viggo wouldn’t leave this small of a guard by the sword.”

Merida glanced at him. “Trap?”

“Most likely.”

“Now what?” whispered Eilonwy as the group huddled.

Merida cocked her head and gave a soft grin. “Spring the trap?” She glanced at Coll and Gwydion. “They probably don’t know you’re here.”

Hiccup nodded thoughtfully. “Right, Viggo probably figured that we would come for the sword, but he, I hope, doesn’t know about you being here.”

“But if he has figured out that we’re here?” asked Gwydion as he raised his eyebrow.

Hiccup bit his lip before replying with, “Then we’re done for. Unless . . .” They watched Hiccup intently as he thought really hard on the problem. Hiccup knew Viggo was smart, very smart. He had figured out Hiccup’s plan long before it could come to fruition and had changed his own plan to counter and win. It unnerved Hiccup every time. “We should proceed as if Coll and Gwydion aren’t here.”

“Wait, what?” whispered Taran harshly.

“We have to, it’s our only chance. If Viggo can figure out my plans before the plan’s complete, then he’ll know we have back-up and will send his men after them.”

“But, though we know that we have back-up,” said Merida, “we just won’t know what they’re going to do.”

Hiccup let out a sigh. “Doesn’t matter. Viggo will still outsmart us, and outnumber us.”

“Then if there’s a chance any of us can take, we should take it. We have to keep him guessing,” said Merida. Toothless nodded in agreement.

Hiccup pursed his lips before replying with, “I don’t know, he’s much better organized than we are, much better at planning.” He let out a sigh as he ran his hand through his auburn locks. “Viggo is just . . . better at this.”

“Well, he’s certainly not better at being king,” mumbled Eilonwy.

“If only he didn’t put that genius mind of his to evil, I could really use someone like him as an advisor,” remarked Taran.

“Speaking of advice,” said Gwydion, “if you don’t mind, I have a bit.” Everyone went silent as they glanced at Gwydion expectantly. “Perhaps we should focus less on Viggo’s brilliant mind and come up with an even more brilliant plan.”

Hiccup nodded, though his face was still grim. He couldn’t help but worry about Viggo getting the best of them. “Yes, you’re right.”

“Except I can’t think of anything besides us going in there, springing the trap, and you guys coming around to bust us out,” whispered Merida.

“That sounds like the best one so far,” muttered Eilonwy.

Hiccup sighed. “That’s the only one so far. I can’t think of anything. Anyone else have any brilliant ideas?”

“Sorry, my mind’s a blank,” remarked Taran. Gwydion and Coll shook their heads. They had nothing too.

“What is going on?” asked Merida. “You two are the ones who usually have the ideas,” she told Hiccup and Taran.

Taran shrugged. “I have no clue.”

Hiccup’s eyes widened. “Unless . . . unless Viggo has some spell.”

Taran’s eyes widened in turn. “The Black Cauldron!” he blurted.

Eilonwy gasped. “That’s right. He has it!”

Gwydion gritted his teeth. “This will be harder than I thought. But now I know.”

“Know what?” asked Taran.

“Why the Horned King is moving, and where he is going.”

“Wh-what?” the young adults asked, nearly choking on the word.

Coll nodded sadly. “Which means time is of the essence. Taran, we must get you crowned as soon as possible.”

“Why didn’t you tell us this earlier?” asked Hiccup, furious at being withheld some pretty important information. He was also rather upset that Viggo clearly had the upper hand, again.

“We did not know the Black Cauldron was here,” stated Gwydion matter-of-factly. “But now that we do, or, at least, I do, we must act quickly. The five of you must get out there now. Take down as many guards as you can, give Taran a clear path to the sword.”

“But what about you?” asked Eilonwy.

“We will try to come up with a better plan. Hopefully there will be enough time to do so.”

“I wouldn’t count on it though,” muttered Hiccup.

Coll patted his shoulder reassuringly. “We will make do with what we get. Just concentrate on getting Taran to that sword.”

Hiccup grumbled. “Fine. Come on. Taran, Toothless, stay close.”

Taran eyed him. “I can fight, you know.”

Coll shook his head. “We know you can, Taran, but we can’t risk you getting killed.”

“But you can risk their lives?”

“Listen . . .”

“No, you listen, they’re my friends. I’m going to have their backs.”

Hiccup settled it. “Fine, but you have to be extremely careful, understand? You do need to get that sword.”

“I know.”

“Alright, let’s do this . . . barely-thought out plan.”

Merida shrugged. “Maybe it’s what will take Viggo off guard.”

Hiccup sighed. “I hope.”

The group made their way quietly towards the guard, Coll and Gwydion watching them from the shadows. Merida and Eilonwy drew their bows, each aiming at a guard. Hiccup tapped Toothless and indicated that he was to aim for the third guard. Toothless nodded and set his sights on the third guard.

“Hiccup, Hiccup, Hiccup,” came a voice to their right.

The group’s heads swiveled, there stood Viggo and several more men. Hiccup counted them and his spirits sank. It was practically an army. What could Coll and Gwydion come up with to defeat them?

“Viggo,” muttered Hiccup.

“Rather out of character for you to try and kill anyone,” remarked Viggo nonchalantly as he pulled out a dagger from his belt and fiddled a bit with it.

“Rather out of character for you to be wrong about what I was thinking,” remarked Hiccup coolly, relaxing quite a bit. Maybe things could work out. He hadn’t wanted Toothless to kill the guy, and he knew both Merida and Eilonwy were aiming for arms.



“Really?” asked Viggo, his eyebrow arching. “But I was right that you would try to get that scrawny little brat to lay claim to a sword that is so imbedded in that stupid stone that no one can get it out.”

“Just no one you would like to be king of Prydain,” remarked Hiccup. “Like you, for instance. Why do you want to be king of Prydain?”

Viggo burst out laughing. “Has that question been burning you up this whole time?”

“No, seriously, why do you want to be king?” Hiccup asked again. “I didn’t think you were the type who wanted this.”

“Oh, that’s rich coming from the boy who didn’t want to take his rightful place before his father died,” quipped Viggo. He grinned when Hiccup grimaced, he hit a very sensitive spot.

But Hiccup quickly composed himself. Now wasn’t the time to think about his father, that could wait. Right now, Taran was of greater importance. A sudden thought sprang into his head, maybe he can stall Viggo long enough for Taran to sneak to the sword! Create a distraction, something! He knew, continue with the line of questioning, another idea would come in time. Or Viggo could provide an opening. Either way, Hiccup needed to be ready. And he hoped Taran could see the opportunity, and take it.

“You still haven’t answered my question, Viggo. Why do you want to be king? Or are you just stalling to come up with a valid reason?”

Viggo’s eyes flashed. Hiccup had to control the urge to smirk, he was getting somewhere.

“I don’t have to answer to you, Hiccup, but since we’re both pursuers of knowledge . . .”

Merida scoffed. “That’s debatable,” she muttered under her breath. Both Hiccup and Viggo shot her looks, Viggo was becoming more infuriated, but Hiccup signaled to her to let him handle this. She turned up her nose at Viggo, but she nodded at Hiccup.

“Sorry about that Viggo. As you were saying, we’re both pursuers of knowledge . . .”

Hiccup noticed Viggo let out a breath to calm himself down. What was it about Merida that could get on the Viking’s nerves so easily? Was it because she was Scottish? Was it because she could easily defeat Viggo . . . in a fair fight? Was it because she had such a queenly presence that it dwarfed Viggo’s own



presence? It could in fact be all of the above, but whatever the reason, Hiccup tucked that information away for later use. If he needed to, he'd ask Merida to rile up Viggo. It might be what they end up needing.

"Anyway, as I was saying, Prydain has a doorway to the realm of magic."

That's when it clicked in Hiccup's mind what Viggo was really after and his eyes widened. "And the dragons."

Viggo flashed a malicious grin. "You got it, Hiccup."

"Merida was right, that was debatable . . ."

"Wait, what?" asked Viggo. The grin was still on his face, but his eyebrow arched.

Hiccup glared at him. "You're not pursuing knowledge like I am. You're just too focused on capturing, enslaving, and controlling your own dragons."

"Just like Drago?"

"Just like . . . wait, how do you know Drago?"

Viggo's grin got larger. "Because we're working together, my dear fellow. Since you, a chief's son, now a chief, has defeated us with your army of dragons, it really only made sense that one of us became king and started our own army."

Hiccup's eyes widened. "You're not the one trying to become king, Drago is!"

"That's right, I'm just his loyal general and head dragon catcher, since you stole his best one."

"Eret joined our side because he realized how wrong Drago is," blurted Hiccup, defending his friend. Not only that, Eret now had Stoick's dragon, he had double reason to protect his good name.

"Or was it the pretty face of one named Astrid?" taunted Viggo.

Hiccup gulped, that still hurt, but the instant Merida placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder, he calmed down. Yes, he and Astrid had broken up, and it hurt, but it was for the best. Now he had Merida, and he was just as worried about her as he had been about Astrid. Which was very little since both women were very capable fighters. Merida was just feistier. And a bit of a surprise at times. No, concentrate Hiccup, need to stall Viggo long enough. If only he could tell Taran to get the sword or give him a hint!

"It, it may have helped," muttered Hiccup. "But he really did come to realize that Drago is wrong. But it's no use telling you that. You're practically cut from the same cloth as Drago."

"I'll take that as a compliment," stated Viggo with a mock bow.

"Keep it, it's the most you'll get from me," quipped Hiccup. "Or any one of us."

Merida gave a quick nod, followed by Toothless. But those two were the only two in his line of vision, both Eilonwy and Taran were behind them. They probably also agreed, but he didn't want to draw any more attention to them than he had to. Viggo and his men hadn't advanced, and Taran and Eilonwy together could take out the three guards fairly easily. Taran could sneak past them if their attention was so focused on the argument between Hiccup and Drago. At least Hiccup was buying time for Coll and Gwydion to do something.

"Whatever, I don't need compliments from you."

"Sure about that?" said Hiccup, becoming amused. "But you like compliments."

Viggo opened his mouth to reply, but closed it and looked hard at Hiccup. "You're stalling for time, aren't you."

“To keep from meeting Drago again, yes,” Hiccup quickly replied. He couldn’t panic, not now, Taran needed him the most now.

Viggo’s eyes scanned Hiccup’s face. “That might be part of it, but I don’t think that’s it.” He glanced around, and gave out a yelp. “Stop him!” Everyone glanced to where he was pointing, Taran’s hands were on the sword. Hiccup cheered internally, Taran took the opportunity!

“Pull it!” screamed Eilonwy. “Quick!”

Taran’s fingers tightened around the hilt, and with one quick pull, the sword came out of the stone.

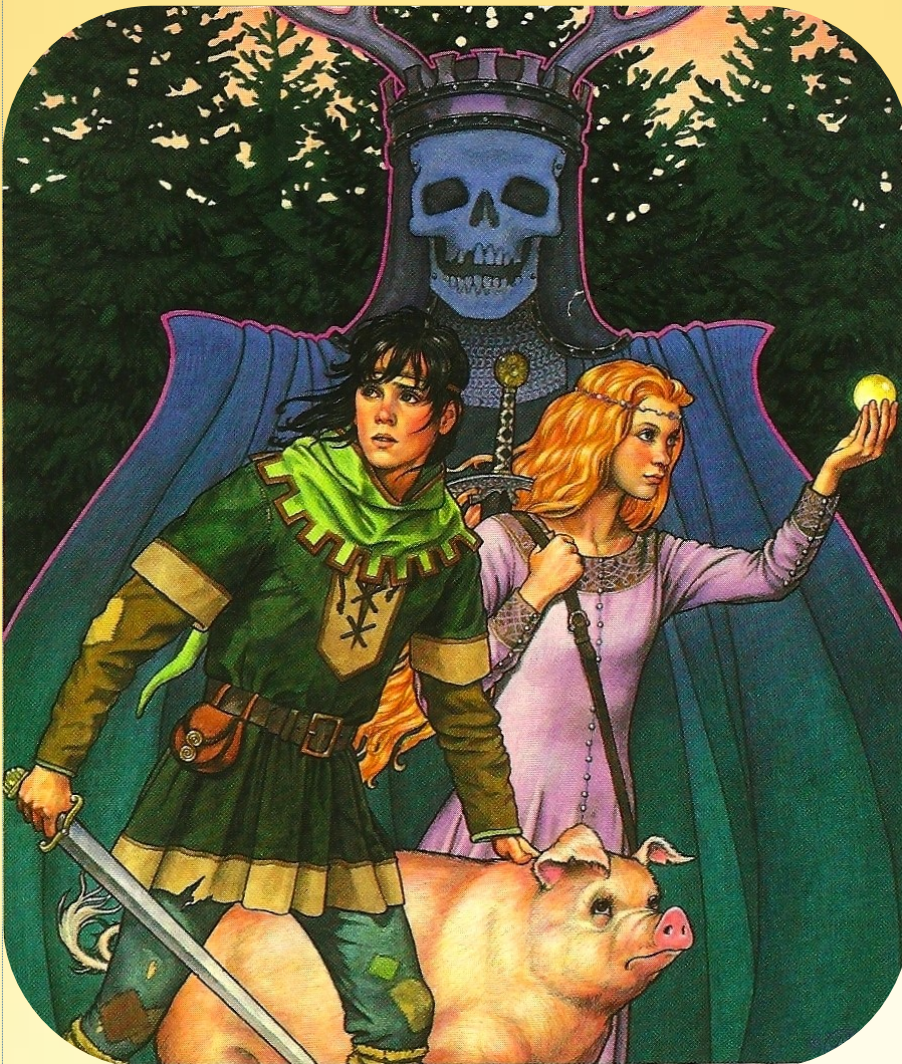
“Yes!” whooped Hiccup. He glanced at Viggo and saw the archers. “Taran, get down! Merida! Toothless! Eilonwy!”

Merida and Toothless quickly turned their attention to the archers and began firing. Toothless’s fireballs scorched half a dozen bows, the men were running away. Merida and Eilonwy stopped three arms each. Taran took the opportunity to get down from the stone and began battling the three guards.

“Charge!” shouted Viggo.

Hiccup ignited his sword and met the onslaught with Toothless at his side. Merida let loose some more arrows before switching to her sword and fighting off several more men. She blocked an attack on Hiccup and Toothless. Toothless returned the favor quickly. Eilonwy kept up with the support from her arrows.

Viggo made his way towards Hiccup, and the two got locked in battle.



“You would have been great at our sides, Hiccup!” said Viggo. “Too bad you had to join their side.”

“I joined their side because it’s the right thing to do!” replied Hiccup as he blocked Viggo’s sword.

“And you care far too deeply for them,” muttered Viggo menacingly as he jabbed at Hiccup. Hiccup gulped as he blocked the blow, he knew where this was going. There were just too many. “How weak,” continued Viggo. “You could have been stronger.”

“That’s what allies and friends are for!” came a shout. The battle paused as everyone tried to figure out where the person was as several dragons swooped in and their riders plunged into battle.

“Shouldn’t have left without us, Hiccup!” shouted Eret.

Hiccup’s mouth dropped. “But, how...”

“Long live King Taran!” Coll and Gwydion came around the corner with a squad of men.

“Fflewddur?” exclaimed Taran as the bard came around the corner, followed by King Fergus.

The bard shrugged. “Hey, if your friend Hiccup can accept the kingship he’s been dreading, so can I.” He nodded at Hiccup before shooting a quick glance at the harp he was carrying.

Hiccup grinned. “Let’s do this!” With the extra forces, they were able to subdue Viggo’s men, but Viggo had long since vanished. Hiccup figured it had been at the arrival of the dragon riders, for he hadn’t seen him since.

A couple of weeks later, the group had scoured the kingdom of Prydain, ridding the country of Viggo’s men. But neither Viggo, nor Drago could be found, and Hiccup began to wonder if Viggo was telling the truth about Drago. But all thought of that was pushed aside as the coronation of Taran as rightful king of Prydain was just around the corner. With Merida and Hiccup speaking for their respective country and island, Berk and Scotland became formal allies with Prydain, along with Fflewddur’s country, which had been renamed Fflam in his absence, and the Sons of Don. Their first project was to elect a guard for the portal to the magical realm, and it was decided that it would comprise of Scots, Prydish, Berkians, Fflams, and dragons, and their base of operations would be at Dallben’s farm.

After everything had finally calmed down, Merida, Hiccup, Taran, and Eilonwy met in Taran’s palace garden.

“I can’t ever thank you enough for all that you’ve done for me, and all of Prydain.”

“You’d do the same for us, right?” asked Merida with an arched eyebrow.

Taran chuckled. “Without a doubt. I am glad we are friends.”

“And we are too,” remarked Dallben as he, Coll, and Prince Gwydion walked into the garden.

“Well, I’m glad you approve,” quipped Taran with a mischievous glint in his eyes. Dallben chuckled.

Hiccup glanced at Coll and Gwydion. “You know, I keep meaning to ask, but everything that’s been going on, I haven’t had a chance. How did you two gather everyone?”

Coll and Gwydion glanced at each other before turning back to Hiccup with a grin. Gwydion replied, “The Sons of Don were already on their way, as for the others . . .”

Coll chuckled. “You can thank Eret and Fflewddur for them.”

“Fflewddur?” the four exclaimed.

Fflewddur’s head popped around the corner. “Yes? Did you call?”

“You gathered everyone to help us?” asked Taran.

Fflewddur grinned sheepishly. “Yes, I did. You four are my friends, I didn’t want anything bad to happen to any of you.”

“Aw, Fflewddur, that’s so sweet of you,” said Eilonwy as she gave him a big hug.

Taran nodded. “I understand the feeling.”

“Good. If you’ll excuse us, your majesties, we shall be on our way,” said Dallben with a bow. They waved to the four as they continued on their walk through the garden.

Taran glanced at Merida and Hiccup as Eilonwy rejoined him. “I know your people need you back home, but, we were wondering if you could stay till the end of the week?”

“Mmm, I think they can manage without us for a few more days,” replied Merida as she tucked her arm around Hiccup’s. “What do you think?”

Hiccup shrugged. “I guess so. Why?”

Taran glanced at Eilonwy with a smile as they clasped hands. “We’re going to announce our engagement.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful!” exclaimed Merida as she hugged them.

“Congratulations,” said Hiccup as he shook Taran’s hand.

“Thank you. We’d like to go over some wedding details with you as well, we’d like you to be there as witnesses.”

Hiccup chuckled. “If you don’t mind half of Scotland and all of Berk coming with us.”

“Oh, um, there might be room?”

Eilonwy chuckled. “I’m sure we can manage, don’t worry.” She kissed Taran’s cheek before turning to Merida. “And I could really use your mother’s opinion on a few things.”

Merida scoffed. “You can keep her.”

“Merida!” blurted Hiccup as he nudged her.

Merida snickered. “I’m kidding, you silly fish, don’t worry. We need my mom back in Scotland, you know.” She turned to Eilonwy. “Let me talk it over with my parents first, but I’m sure it’ll be a yes.”

“Wonderful! Now all we need to do is plan your wedding!” blurted Eilonwy.

Merida and Hiccup looked at her in shock before glancing at each other with blushes.

“Eilonwy! Give them some time! My goodness,” blurted Taran.

Merida chuckled. “Don’t worry, you’ll be the first to know when it happens.”

“We’d better,” said Eilonwy as she placed her hands on her hips, “or I’ll plan it for you.”

Taran groaned before glancing at Hiccup. Hiccup shrugged. “Hey, we like strong women, we shouldn’t exactly be surprised.”

Taran rolled his eyes, but he agreed. “True.”

The four continued their walk in the garden, Eilonwy and Taran holding hands and Merida and Hiccup holding hands, while conversation continued on the topic of marriage. It was a greatly appreciated moment of peace after such a storm, but they knew deep down that the next one wasn’t far off.



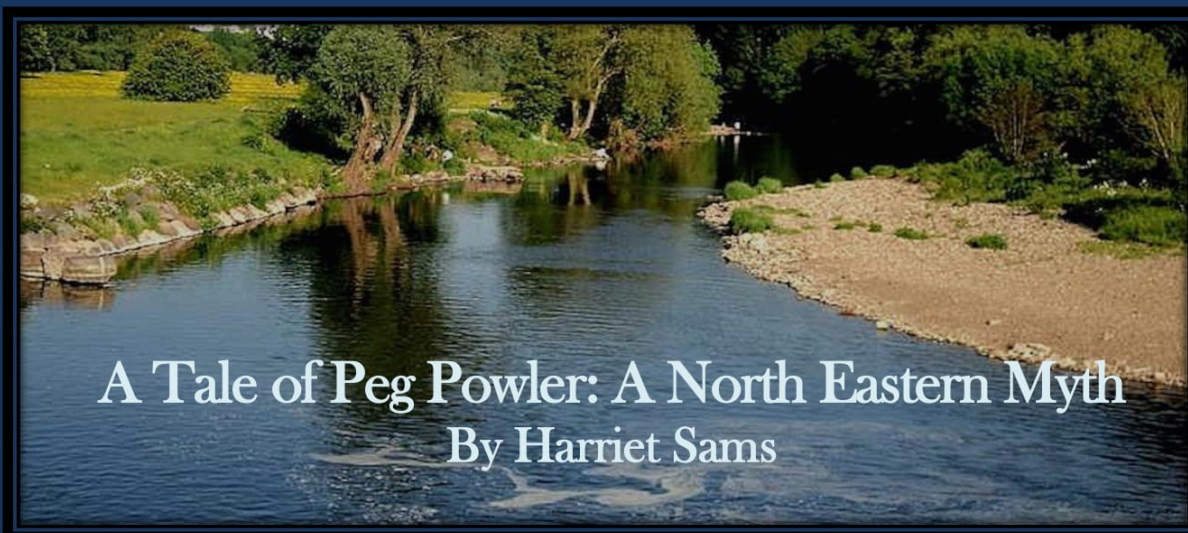
TRIBUTE TO AN IRISH GENTLEMAN

By Joseph Richard Ravitts

In the nineteenth century, just before the scope of conflicts grew horrid,
An Irishman who did not want war, chose to be helpful, not morbid.
This Irish gentleman, Charles Parnell, decided the word “politician”
Did not have to mean “a demon from Hell” - for Mister Parnell was a Christian.

In those days, British authority meant the bayonet and the truncheon;
Parnell, however, worked patiently, for freedom without destruction.
His real-world career, heroic yet sane, was as worthy as mythical swordsmen;
More people should read about his campaign for Parnell was one of the Lord’s men.





A Tale of Peg Powler: A North Eastern Myth By Harriet Sams

Young men had begun to spend more time than was usual down by the river. Mothers would tut, looking out, hands on hips, across the fields in search of their boys. Sometimes, even husbands, who had plenty to keep them busy what with the animals and the milking, would slope off. Hours they'd be gone sometimes. When they'd return, there would be an air of stillness, of secrecy about them. They'd be sheepish to the remonstrations of their wives and mothers. This hadn't gone unnoticed by the womenfolk.

"I'm telling you, if that lad of mine goes off once more, I'm going to follow him and throw him in myself," said Nell.

It started so long ago, nobody can really say if the river ever existed before Peg Powler lived there. Perhaps it had? Or perhaps they'd been born in the same moment? Everyone knew that the Tees had tendencies towards violence and unpredictability. Everyone knew that, in these moments, Peg would peer up from under the surface and grab you, pulling you under into the swirling, murky green depths. And everyone also knew that if she did so, you'd never be seen alive again.

Too many little innocents had been lost this way. Found days later downstream, floating gently in a pool of tintured grief.

Peg Powler was a monster. She existed always, but came viciously awake when the river raged in spate. She loved the rain, causing foams and mists in small cataracts of energized, rushing water. Her hair was green and lank, wafting like weeds in the currents. Her eyes were bright and red, never ceasing in their search for one whose feet she could reach. Her arms were long and her grip could clasp and never let go. She loved to be terrifying, because that was all she knew how to be. She loved to live in a terrifying river, yet she didn't know how to be gentle and life giving.

Peg had no love for the river in the summertime, when it was filled with ducklings and sprat, warm at the edges and beneficent. So, she hid in these times, in dark pools, under massive rocks, waiting for the river to roar once again.

Peg would watch and wait. Perhaps it was the coming of the rains on the river that awoke her? But somehow, she knew just when the river would rise. Something would stir her from her treacherous waiting and Peg would begin frenziedly washing. Wash, wash, washing her filthy garments, causing her suds to pop, in white foam mountains swirled round and round by the eddying waters. Sure enough, after the suds would appear, the great Tees would arise in a wall of water to

take the sleepy valley by surprise in its gushing, tumbling rage. This was Peg's moment, to grab and drown those poor unsuspecting children, who played so sweetly in the warmed water.

But why were the boys being so drawn to this treachery? Why? When their loving mothers had told Peg Powler's dark doings in terrified whispers to them. *Keep safe! Keep away! Learn the moods of the river, Peg Powler will surely get you and I cannot bear to find you lifeless, my dear child.*

The new day dawned and Nell found that the cows had not been milked. Her good son, Jack, had sloped off again to the river. Snorting in frustration, she turned swiftly down the hill in pursuit, muttering unkindnesses under her breath.

The river cut its way through limestone terrain that held rich farming land. The riverbanks were deeply wooded. An occasional cow would break through the undergrowth to drink, otters played unhindered, and the kingfishers darted about. The Tees was a rich and beautiful being and Nell had grown up all her life in its care. She loved it like a Grandmother. Yet she had no love for Peg Powler, that Hag.

Suddenly, Nell spied her Jack. He was standing transfixed, looking at a large rock in the river's swiftest flow. He had taken off his boots and was standing ankle-deep in the shallows. Nell followed his gaze and there, half on the rock and half immersed in the current, was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen.

Her long hair was dark and flowing, her eyes were the deepest amber and her bare breasts were like glossy, creamy suds, glistening wet and soft. The woman was looking directly at Jack and smiling. Nell watched as they gazed at each other, so absorbed they didn't notice her. She quietly walked away, without being seen, but she was shaken. Shaken and filled with a fear that she could not name.

That night, Nell decided to talk to her son about what she had seen and to warn him that her heart had felt a danger, that this woman was not a good one. Yet, one thing led to another that night and she didn't find the time to speak up. The clouds had started to mass and that meant rain was coming. Much had to be done before it fell and she was needed on the farm. Long hours they all worked and when she finally fell asleep, she had no mind left for worry, and no mind to speak.

Rain fell that night. Warm, welcome, autumn rain, which washed the land and ripened the apples. Nell was awoken by it drumming on her window as the dawn broke. Suddenly, she remembered her warning and quickly got out of bed to wake her son.

"There's no need, Pet, he's already out," her husband said to her. Panic and terror swept through her like a burning flame. Turning away, she ran towards her greatest fear, sobbing *no, no, no, not my baby, not him.*

She could hear it long before she saw it. Where yesterday there was a gentle flow, now the Mighty Tees was white, spitting, frothing like an enraged snake. It roared and cascaded, barely contained within its banks. Of her son there was no sign.

Nell looked deep into the waters and was sure she could see two red eyes, glinting like molten rocks, barely beneath the surface. Long strong fingers reaching towards her. She quickly retreated from the river's edge, and ran back to her farm.

Jack never came home...

Lament at Mabon

By Rachel Schmidt

Once I knew the language of trees
How each rustling of their leaves
Could mean so much—if only one knew how to listen.
Once I had so much definition in just that one thing:
That I could see their faces and
Read their leafy lips as they blew in the autumn breezes.
And now it seems so foreign...
Have I been so long in this land of fluorescence and brick?
Have I been gone so long that I have forgotten
How sweet the melodies of the forest can be?
Now it fills my heart not with understanding
But with a melancholy longing
For that which once felt so familiar to me, no—
That which still feels familiar—
But only the familiarity of a dream
As though in the very throes of sleeping wonder
I've been wrested from it by mundane duty.
Ephemeral on the edges of my consciousness:
Like flickering of faery light,
And distant horns of hunters that roam the evening skies.
In my heart, with each pulsing of the blood that flows through my veins,
I feel it... an echo.
An echo of something deeper—and much more profound and yet:
In my waking consciousness, I cannot quite put finger on that which I have lived
before.
The melody haunts my eardrums and yet I cannot quite put to fingertips—
Or lips—the profound tune that catches in the wind and then is gone.
Faintly, my mind's eye remembers beauty which no photograph, no drawing—
No painstaking sketch could ever come close to imagining.
On the tip of my tongue, the faintest taste of something... something...
Always searching for that which I cannot in waking consciousness grasp.
With each falling leaf,
With each howl on the wind that seems to pierce my very soul...
I want to remember
I want to wake up

Back in the place where trees spoke and moonlight bled between the branches on
inky nights...

There were nights when I would run
From phantom figures in the trees,
Where I swear I heard the hoof-beats harrying me along dirt paths...
There were nights, long ago, that seemed to go on forever,
Where the cold dark eyes of a vampire
Haunted me in my sleep,
Where deep and sorrowful melodies pulled me into a sense of ecstasy.
There were nights when I could hear the goddess calling me in the mists,
Her silver light a comfort,
A crow to show me the way...
And yet, now...

I cannot feel more than mere glimmers of what had once been
There was a time when I had tasted of Cerridwen's cauldron—
When I could see the way energy moved through the land—
So apparent to my sight, that I felt one with them.
And now...

I am so trapped in that webbing of wire and artificial light
That I find myself balking at the very notion of sitting in my own yard past sunset.
And yet

Here I am on the verge of dusk,
Staring, trembling, into the forest—
As if on this night of all nights
Something will come to me that will wake me from this madness
On this grassy marshland hill,
Perhaps I'll find a wonder—or a wound...
Like blessed Pwyll, of Dyfed before me,
Perhaps *my* lady in white will come riding by to take me back to that place of
understanding,
That place of oneness...
Perhaps the dark hunter will blow his horn
And carry me upon his steed and into the western winds.
Or perhaps,
I will have sat here, my heart broken open,
Only to return again tomorrow
To that endless drudgery of everyday life...

Seven Wild Sisters: Celtic Faeries on American Soil

By T.K. Wilson



*Sing to the pretty girl,
Take her by the hand,
Else, she'll go
With the Apple Tree Man!
Singing, pour me a cider,
Like I never had me one!
Pour me a cider,
Give everybody some!-
Charles De Lint*

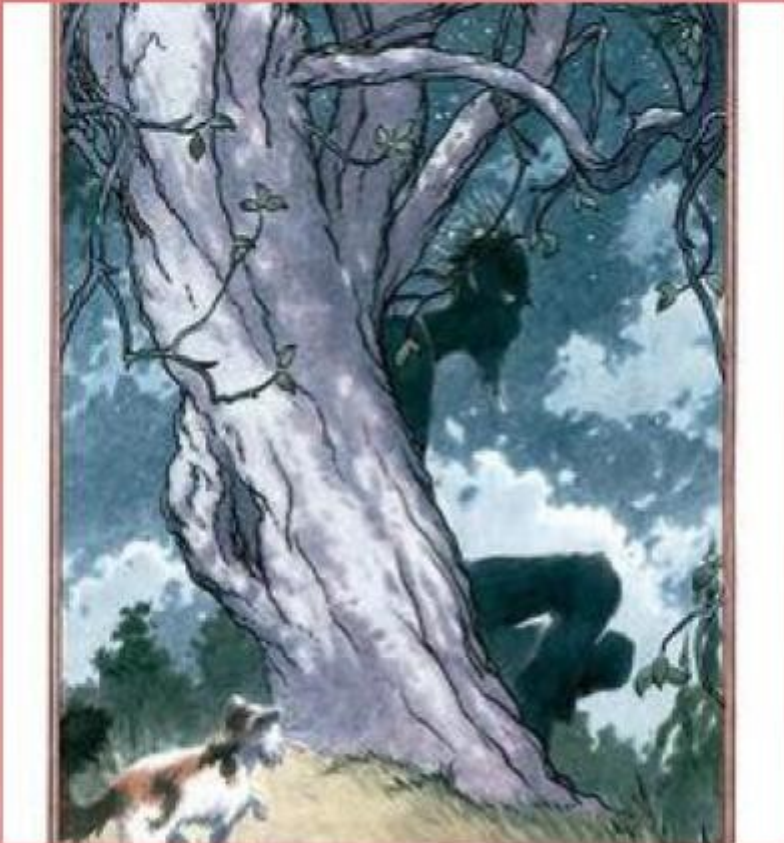
Don't ask Lily Kindred if there are faeries living in her hills. She knows there are. When a young woman called Sarah-Jane Dillard comes to her farm to find out about the mysterious spinster, Lily takes her under her wing. She teaches Sarah about the faeries, how to treat them, and how to keep herself, and her six other sisters, out of reach of the more dangerous ones. But when a wounded Ginseng faerie comes to Sarah, and Sarah out of compassion helps him, the Dillard girls and Lily are dragged into a dangerous feud... and the faeries are out for blood.



The faeries in *Seven Wild Sisters* are *not* Tinkerbell. They closely resemble their European counterparts, they are unpredictable, and some, like the antagonistic bee fairies, can be dangerous. This version of the faeries is unfamiliar to Americans, but they are not uncommon in the Celtic nations from which so many Americans originally come.

The only truly trustworthy faerie is the Apple Tree Man, a steadying force and descendant of the Celtic Green Man. The Green Man is the guardian of the forest and wild places, known to look after humans more than other faeries. Apple Tree Man is not literally a descendant of the Green Man, but he fulfills the same function in the story. He is both wise and clever, using his skill to get the girls out of danger. Like the Green Man, Apple Tree Man is a solitary faerie, preferring the company of a select few, to that of the faerie courts. He doesn't like the airs they put on, nor their silly feuds. He's a simple man, who loves simple things, his books, his cider... and Lily.

The Apple Tree Man goes out on a limb (pun totally intended) for the Dillard girls and Lily, in getting himself involved in the feud between the Bees and the Ginseng at all. He does this out of love for Lily, and is truly an honorable being. It is clear that he loves Lily enough to stay away from her, as he is nigh-immortal and cannot watch her age and die in her world, or watch her pine for home in his. In the end, Lily decides that she had enough of his games and chooses to stay with him.



Unlike Apple Tree Man, the Bee Faerie Queen is highly unstable. Much like the Queen of Hearts, or more accurately, Queen Mab of the unseelie faeries, she is cruel and capricious. She screams and pouts when she doesn't get her way, even killing her own people when they dare question her. And disowning her own daughters when they marry into the Ginseng Faerie royal family. She is ultimately made to pay for her crimes, as the longstanding feud comes to an end.

Sarah-Jane and her sisters love each other and stand together when faced with the dangerous Bee Faeries, demonstrating that love is stronger than hatred.

The feud started when all of the Bee Faerie princesses ran away with the Ginseng princes, trying to bring their courts together. It doesn't work as well as they'd hoped.

There is some violence involved in this faerie feud, starting with one of the Ginseng men getting filled with bee-arrows. There is also some blood and threats of death toward the girls. Additionally, the book describes a bit of the folk magic involved with thanking the faeries for letting humans take from their realm. Sarah briefly also discusses her discomfort with God's omniscience. Also, one of the older sister's hijinks involves running away with a boy.



All in all, *Seven Wild Sisters* is a great girl-centric adventure story. The details of the world draw you in, making you believe in faeries, so long as the book is open. Rich with story, lovingly illustrated, and crafted with care, Mr. de Lint has made a world full of secrets and adventure. I highly recommend this book to everyone who loves mythology and the land of Faerie!



By Kenneth McIntosh, author of Magic Reversed

The body started to sink.

He squinted through diaphanous layers of crystal to get a better view of it. Was that a rope around its neck, trailing past locks of wetted hair? Yes. The offering to air. Even through distortions in the scrying stone he could discern a red trail from the side of the corpse, darkening the stream's waters. Stab wound, an offering of life force returned to its source.

The oblation to water was obvious; even half-blind, he would have seen the body as it settled into the shallows. Sometimes, the scrying stone showed what was happening now, but distant in location. Other times, it showed the future – either fixed or potential. This time the old man knew with certainty. This is what must happen.

Ordinary people would recoil at the sight of their own body, disfigured by choking, stabbing, and drowning; but not this venerable shaman. Laughter traveled from his lungs to his throat and erupted into the stillness of the cave. Then his words came aloud, “Ho, that is the way, that is the end of this form of me.” He let out another peel of mirth. It was not a bad way to go, a sacrifice to the elements, the way of his ancestors before the religion of the nail-riven God came upon these lands. And he was tired of living.

As a youth, thirst for knowledge had impelled him to travel, study, and adventure. For two-score years he labored as apprentice to an arch-druid of the Picts, absorbing the mysteries gained by countless generations of these shaman-priests. The Order of the Oak-Wise had bestowed on him the bard's torc, the height of honors, but even that did not sate his lust for knowledge. He hired an Irishman, of Fenian lineage, to teach him war-skills until he was unbeatable with sword and buckler.

But then came the day that shattered all he loved. After that, he lived a new cycle of existence – with new names, new powers, and a different kind of prestige. The crags of Hart Fell replaced the halls of human lords, mountain brooks took the place of mead, and wild berries served as nourishment in place of beef. The “chak, chak” of jackdaws grew sweeter to his ears than the conversation of humans. He knew the languages of the winged ones, discerned when predators were near, or food was available – all from the birds' chatter.

The high toned “whoo-oooh” of wolves did not frighten him, but rather kept him abreast of news – whether a lamb's life had ended, or a new pack had arrived from over-hill. Even the susurrations of

pinus spoke to him, revealing the wisdom of vastly long lives, unconcerned with the petty affairs of humanity.

At first, it was only in the dark of mid-winter, when food became scarce and he subsisted only on dried herbs and smoked hare meat, that the pictures began to form for him in the heart of a crystal. Then the pictures came more easily, and finally, a certainty about what was happening, even in lands far distant – places his mortal body had never seen.

He began to hear the other realm – that dimension of reality which so closely overlays the tangible world. Sometimes, he could discern the melodies of the Sidhe and other times the snarls of creatures he'd rather not see.

He discerned changes in the destiny of the cosmos by means of senses that he couldn't even articulate, energies beyond detection by ordinary human organs.

Sometimes humans would overcome their terror of him and climb to the heights, where they would bow before the dark hole of the seer's cave. They brought gifts, in exchange for knowledge. Some were useless to him, like gold coin. Other gifts were far more valuable, like a fresh-slain sheep, or pail of milk. He answered their questions, but things of great import to his fellow humans – the fate of their spouse, future of their crop, or rise or fall of their kingdoms – mattered no more to him now, than the fate of an eagle's hatchlings, or the finding of buried roots by the local sounder of boars.

As the seasons passed in his mountain abode, the distinctions between dimensions vanished in the seer's mind. The elements, insects, birds, four-legged and two-legged mammals were all equal members of the solid world, and the divide between the seen and unseen domains became thinner. All beings and natural objects formed a pattern like Pictish knotwork, an intricate tapestry of being, so clearly discerned that he could sense the places where it might unravel. Since he possessed all this wisdom, was there any new knowledge to gain? He thought not. Grunting slightly, he transmitted power along his fingers into the lucent mineral, and a new scene appeared. Just moments before, the seeing had been from a human point-of-view, but now images appeared through a soaring raptor's eye.

Oft-times he had sent his life force into other beings. He knew how the world looked from the ground-level view of a tiny mouse, could see with the night-eyes of a wild cat, and once had cast his being into the vast space of a whale. The great emotions and wisdom of the leviathan had practically been the seer's undoing. It took him days to fully extricate his awareness from the sea beast.

Now, the crystal revealed a broad landscape covered with forest canopy. He exerted more life-force, and the vision came into sharper focus, disclosing a broad river, and a smaller rivulet flowing into that. Now he could see a hill overlooking the broader tributary, with tiny white dots – sheep, he realized – on its sides. A stone fortress topped the hill.

From a bird-of-prey's point of view, the picture in the crystal zoomed in-and-out again, revealing features of the landscape more closely: the sparkling current of the broad river, water bubbling over rock in the lesser rivulet, the grey stone and hearth smoke of the fortress. He furrowed his brow, raising eyebrows like twin ravens, closing his eyes to plumb the great depths of memory within.

The great forest, sloping hills, the shifting contours of cloud and sunlight, were very familiar...he certainly beheld his native land of Caledonia. And the waterway flowing so delightfully, surely that was the Tweed. Other details required a deeper mining of memory. There were many duns – hill forts of minor kings and chieftains – along the bends of the Tweed and countless places where lesser channels disgorged into the mightier stream. How would he recognize this creek?

He opened his eyes and again focused life force into the crystal, peering at the minute details. Ah! that banner, Three boars atop a hill. The sigil of Galam, ruler over Maenor Glenn, in the Kingdom of Forest Wild. And the rivulet running from fierce chief's lands into the Tweed, he recalled that as well, the Powsail Burn.

He chuckled again, more softly. Not a bad place for his passage to another physical form. Standing, he pulled his overcoat from a ledge. Why keep destiny waiting?



“Mungo! Mungo, you have an important visitor.”

The holy man didn't move or respond. He stood, as he had throughout the afternoon, arms spread wide, sweat pouring down his alb, with face upturned toward a rough stone cross that stood in the center of the monastery.

Somewhere on the periphery of his consciousness he heard the young clerk's voice, but an iron will kept him sealed within his accustomed devotion.

His mind scrolled through the words of the Psalms. He had learned them as a lad, and threescore years later the repetition was almost unconscious. *Come and see what God has done, for He is awesome in his deeds among mortals.*

Sometimes, a phrase of holy writ would stick in his mind, churning over and over, a persistent message from Spirit that had inspired the text and similarly ignited the heart of this abbot.

Come and see what God has done. The words grew louder in the inner silence of his mind, became the sweet voice of the Beloved spoken now, spoken directly. It was a message, a summons. And then, with a sudden burst of insight, he realized that God was calling him out of the trance-state; something was happening in the physical space around him, *now*.

He forced his eyes open and saw his brother monks gathered around silently watching...what? Then he saw the stranger just paces away. The visitor's face was craggy, like cliffs battered by the elements. His long hair was silver, and his scraggly beard reached almost to his waist. The man's clothes—could he even call that clothing? His overcoat and robe were brown as the earth, with bits of feathers and fur attached. Despite his hoary age, the stranger was imposing, a good hand's length taller than most men. Gnarled fingers holding a thick wooden staff, topped with a shimmering amber orb, and atop that sat two bronze dragons, posed as if in combat.

Despite the stranger's outlandish appearance, it was his eyes that drew the holy man's attention. They were grayish, infinitely deep.

Abbot Mungo had spent a lifetime pursuing the most stringent practices of mystical growth and could see deeply into the windows of men's souls, so he realized that this figure before him had traveled far into the sacred realms: even some, he felt with a chill, where no Christian should sojourn.

The nearby clerk stammered, “Your reverence, “This-this is...”

Mungo raised a finger commanding silence. The abbot had long expected this day to come, and sometimes pondered what would he say? What would he do? He had decided to let the Spirit guide

his words when the encounter arrived.

“You are the one called ‘Myrddin,’ the Seer.”

“And you are called Mungo; you are the leader of those who have given allegiance to the Nail Riven God.” The tall man replied with a thick Pictish accent.

The abbot shrugged; “Iossa alone is Lord and Master, I am only a sinful and unworthy servant.”

Myrddin gave a wild chuckle, ending in a cough “You servants of the new religion always put yourselves down.” He strode past the abbot and indicated with hooked finger to follow. He did so. They came to the side of the sloping hill where a grassy henge around the monastery delineated sacred space, then the wizard drew close to Kentigern and spoke quietly, so only the breeze could share their conversation. The scent of the seer’s breath reminded Mungo of heather-covered hills.

“I have foreseen my passing,” Myrddin said.

“All men are as grass,” The abbot replied, quoting from a Psalm.

“Quia omnis caro ut fœnum,” Myrddin affirmed.

Kentigern gasped. “You know Latin!”

“You are surprised? Have they not told you of the Druid ways? They taught us much of Latin, and Greek, along with the languages of the Gaels and English. And we know, as well, portions of sacred writings from other lands.”

“But you are a Pagan!”

“You think that Pagans must be ignorant?” The wizard’s voice had an ominous tone.

“Forgive me, Sir. I mean you no disrespect. But to your point, you have foreseen your own death—and that occasioned your visit?”

The mage paused, his eyes darting back and forth across the sky, and his nostrils smelling the breeze, as if awaiting a sign in the air. Then he pointed toward a distant, tree-covered hill. “Do you know the altar stone, the old one that is there?”

“Yes.”

“Meet me at the stone at this time, in three days. Bring a loaf of your sacred bread, and the cup of wine that you say is blood.”

Kentigern was again surprised. “You wish to partake of the Eucharist? Do you desire to confess Christ before you leave this world?”

“Was not your Iossa also the Logos, the one Greeks say is the All-Soul?”

“He is.”

“Then he is also Neart, the All-Soul of the Oak Wise.”

Kentigern nodded.

The wizard continued, "The people of our land need to believe in something greater than themselves; lacking faith, people perish. Few of us are left now with knowledge of the old ways, and soon that will be lost. When I am gone, the people will seek another source of wisdom." He turned his gaze directly at the Abbot. "You still have much to learn, but you do hold understanding. I will share in the cup and bread with you, so that the people of Caledonia will look to you for illumination after I am gone."

Fedelmed NicCoran pulled the wool of her mantle over her baby's head, where the bairn sucked contentedly at her breast. He was a quiet one, little given to crying throughout the day, but she was minded to keep the drizzle of rain from disturbing him, and she didn't want a sound to disturb the hush which had settled over the gathered crowd.

She glanced up at Coran, her man, beside her. He stood unmoved by the rain, used, as he was, to a lifetime herding cattle in the wind and cold, up and down the hills and glens. While his face was expressionless, she could see that his thoughts dashed to and fro. Like everyone else in this crowd, he was transfixed by this encounter.

Two men sat opposite each other, between them the ancient flat-topped boulder that been called – from before the most aged elders' time – "The Altar." Fedelmed had seen many chickens and, in harder times, sheep, with their entrails strewn across its unyielding surface. Never had she beheld in this place such imposing figures as these men leaning on its rim.

One man was Myrddin. The name alone sent chills down her spine. No one in her village had actually seen the mage – but some had spoken to those that had. There were tales of Myrddin transforming himself into a deer, or a bird of prey. Parents warned their children, "Stop your whining, or the Old Man in the hills will get you!" Young couples wishing to be with child were as likely to whisper his name in invocation, as they were to call on the deities.

There were other things said of the mage, whispered, as if in fear that he could hear their conversation. He had been the chief warrior and druid of a king, but had failed to turn the tide of battle against the hosts of his foes at the battle of Arfdrydd. His three brothers and his liege all had died, and the druid had been forced to slay his own nephew who fought on the enemy side. They said that the shock of it all had driven Myrddin mad, and Fedelmed was unsurprised at that part of the tale, for she had seen stalwart men changed by the horrors of battle.

For years after that, no one saw the druid warrior, and then there were rumors of a hermit – or was he a wood spirit? A being belonging to the gorse and the pines, as much as to mortal humans. Fedelmed had heard tales of how Myrddin the Seer saw everything from afar. She'd wondered if she would ever lay eyes on him and now – just paces away – sat the man of power himself. The other one at the altar was almost as renowned, though more familiar. Twice she'd seen the one called Mungo. Her neighbors and she had been surprised when this priest of the new religion, clad in a white robe, the top of his head shaven, strode into their modest settlement. Only rarely did anyone make the hard climb from the valley up to their remote village.

He spoke with animation that exceeded his grasp of their dialect, but his meaning was clear. He told of one named Iossa, who wielded power greater than all gods, and who could change people's lives like the transforming of a pupa into a butterfly. Mungo's bravery and enthusiasm were infectious, so some villagers came under the priest's spell and went with him to a nearby brook to be magically reborn.

Her man Coran was not one who followed the new god Iossa. Coran was little given to rash movements of any kind. Words came slowly from his lips, but they were wise and well weighed. Folks looked to Coran for life words when needed, and she glowed inwardly that he was her man

and father of the precious one sucking at her breast.

Now Coran, like all those of her village, stared intently at the two holy men leaning toward one another over the blood stone.

Not only village folk were here; two warriors had trekked up, all the way from the valley fortress of Lord Galam. The villagers stood well apart from them, frightened by the sight of their polished helmets and swords.

Then she heard the priest intone, "Hoc est corpus meum," and with these strange sounding words he broke a piece of bread and handed it to the seer. All eyes were fastened on the mage, as he slowly took the bread then chewed it deliberately. His expression was inscrutable.

The little one pulled back from her nipple and Fedelmed patted its back, hoping that not even a burp would disturb the absolute hush of the gathering.

"Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis Mei," Mungo exclaimed, and handed a cup to the seer.

He drained it.

Then Myrddin stood and addressed the crowd. "In past years, you have come to me when you have needed a word, or a healing. I have been a steward of people, as I have been a steward of the fish, fowl, and beasts of this land, until this day." Myrddin set the fingers of his right hand on Mungo's forehead. "Listen now to this man, respect him as your father, for very soon my voice will be stilled."

There were gasps from the onlookers.

"Sir, where are you going?" Fedelmed almost fell over hearing her husband's voice.

The mage turned his gaze – oh, what eyes! Toward her Coran, and then he laughed – a frightening cackle, the like of which she'd never heard.

"I go to visit a windbag of a chieftain in his pile of stones in the valley," Myrddin replied.

The two steel-helmed warriors exchanged glances, then turned and jogged quickly down the hillside.

"I doubt the sage will get a warm reception," Fedelmed whispered to her husband.

The crowd began to move now, and voices were heard above the soft drizzle of rain on the grass. Some – those who had previously converted – came to speak with Mungo. Others – determined to resist the way of the new god – started back to the village.

Coran stood motionless.

Fedelmed rocked her baby and looked intently at her husband's face. "My heart, what do you think of this?"

"The seer is leaving, and he has given us to the hand of this one." He gestured toward the abbot. "We must walk the path of the new god, Iossa."

Fedelmed felt suddenly dizzy at these words. "Our bairn will grow up then in a new kind of world, a strange way of being, that our parents and their parents never saw."

Coran put his arm over her shoulder and with faltering steps they moved toward the altar.



"You worthless piles of offal!" Galam screamed at the trembling men. "He insulted me like that and you let him live? You didn't even take him prisoner? My hounds would serve me better than you two dalcops"

"Bu-bu-but your lordship..." stammered the braver of the two. "He was Myrddin...the great mage...we're certain."

"A worthless old dotard of a man, a crazy fool that lives alone in the hills...and you sons of swine were afraid to touch him?" The chieftain's eyes bulged and he shook with anger. "Breth!" He yelled, and another warrior, clad to his knees in an armored jerkin, ran to his side. "Escort these men to the pit. Let them think overnight of how they've failed their lord. In the morning, have them whipped to death."

The one called Breth whistled and the other guards dashed into the hall, seized the two unfortunate men, and dragged them away.

Galam grunted, then hauled his ponderous frame up a short flight of stairs to settle back onto his throne. He ordered a servant to bring him mead, and – when the request was promptly fulfilled – emptied half of his drinking horn.

Myrddin. Galam had hated that man since the first time he heard of him. He didn't believe in wizardry; didn't believe in anything he couldn't buy, kill, impregnate, or eat. The old skamelar, Myrddin, had been a warrior once, from what Galam had heard. He must have been a coward as well, for he lost a battle and ran like a spineless hare into the forest. And yet...the people feared this bumpkin fortune teller. They went to him for advice and cures, the hedge-born sods. When a person whom others respect speaks ill of the chieftain...something must be done.

He chugged down the rest of the horn and called for another fill of fermented honey. This time, a servant girl came. What was her name? Oh, yes, Iled. Her parents had died, leaving the young woman without land or means; she had come to the fortress for work, and Galam's wife had urged him to take her in. As Iled made her way back to the kitchen the chieftain had a sudden, comforting thought. She was not unpleasant looking; bedding a new servant might make things feel better. He was about to call the girl, when he heard the sound of a horn from outside the hall. Breth ran back in.

"My Lord Galam, a visitor approaches. He is...Myrddin."

Galam spat. "Then he's more of a bampot than I thought he was. Seize him and bring him here." He settled back in his throne, quaffed more mead, and belched.

Soon, the mage stood before him, held tightly between the chieftain's strongest men, but still clutching his staff topped with its oddly glowing stone.

"What sort of salach scarecrow is this?" the Chieftain sneered, a dribble of mead trickling down his beard.

"Is this the way that a great lord shows hospitality?" replied the mage.

"Hospitality? You insulted me in public! I'll have your head on a post!"

The mage chuckled, infuriating the ruler even further, then asked: "Is it not the ancient custom—followed in every hall of this land—that any traveler requesting food and drink should be served, with courtesy, before any question or demand is made of him? Surely the great *Lord Galam* is rich and generous enough to grant a weary traveler a bit of pork and horn of drink?"

The chieftain's lip sneered but he thought to himself, why not? I can watch him squirm at my table, toy with the mouse before I pounce? Galam gestured toward a table, and motioned for his servants to comply with the seer's request.

The guards let go of the mage's arms, but stood close behind when he sat.

Servers headed for the table, and Galam spied Iled among them. He was in no mood, now, to delay gratification. "You! Girl!" He motioned toward her. She came and bowed.

He grabbed her arm roughly and stood to pull her out of the hall.

"My Lord, what are you...?" And then she realized, screamed and tried to pull away. He slapped her and she spat in his face. The hall went silent.

Galam froze for a moment, shocked at this open act of defiance, then yanked a dagger from his belt.

"YOU WILL NOT!" A voice like thunder declared, as a blinding flash of light exploded in the hall and Myrddin's staff struck the knife from Galam's hand.

"Run, girl – run far and start your life anew" Myrddin shouted at Iled. She did not hesitate.

Galam staggered backward, tripped over a stair and crashed onto the floor. Myrddin spun, glared at the cowering courtiers and guards, and strode back out of the fortress.

But Galam's anger quickly overcame his shock. He pulled himself up the stairs and onto his chair then called for Breth, who appeared before the throne, though a bit more slowly than before.

"After him! Slay him." Breth hesitated. "Did you not hear? How dare you delay? He'll get away."

The warrior still balked. "Uh...my Lord...his staff, his powers..."

Galam rethought the command. "The three assassins are they in residence?"

"They are."

“The old fool drank from the cup of the Nail Riven God, did he not, today?”

“He did, my Lord.”

“So he despises the gods. Well then, tell the assassins to make a sacrifice of him – the elements will have revenge for his betrayal, though the offering is but an old crow.”

Stunted oaks lined the footpath from the fortress to the riverside. Myrddin walked slowly, savoring his surroundings. The moist breeze tousled his hair as he paused to listen to a robin sing and watched a leaf spiral down from a tree. After walking a score of paces, the path came abreast of a lesser creek, the Pwsail. It was a happy rivulet, he thought, with perfectly clear water lapping over brown and reddish stones. A heron flapped lazily along the course of the burn. He waved at it, and the bird veered off its course, circling once around him in recognition.

His mystical senses connected the sounds and sights of the forest, the consciousness of creatures nearby, and the distant sound of a harp, echoing from the other realm. It was all in harmony, aligned with the great song of the All Soul.

Myrddin felt wonderfully light and free.

The path came out of forest onto a riverside field where the Pwsail flowed into the Tweed. At the place where the rivers met he stood still, feeling the peace of the tall grass, the peace of the rushing river, and the peace of the cooling wind...

The assassins crept up behind him noiselessly, but he sensed their every footfall and turned when they were almost upon him. One was stocky and held a noose, the one in the middle was slight and carried a double-edged sword, and the third man, a tall one, wrung his hands together—these were obviously his weapon of choice.

They drew back when the mage faced them, then glanced at one another and, as one, stepped forward.

“So, we have a hangman, a swordsman, and one to push me beneath the waters – the triple death is it?” They stepped closer, and one nodded slightly.

“I thank you for this service, I’ve been waiting a long time for the day of my passing.” Myrddin could see the swordsman’s face twitching, as if a question were almost on his lips. “You have something to say, before that blade finds its mark?”

The man blurted out, “How do you die, as Pagan or Christian? Will you be in Tir-na-nog, or the Christian’s heaven?”

The seer chuckled. “Your concern is practical – you wonder if the elements will accept this sacrifice you make of me. Know then that I have always served Neart, the Great One who inhabits all living things, as the druids taught me years ago. Yet, I believe that I have unknowingly served Iossa as well. Does that confuse you? Perhaps you should exchange the study of murder for philosophy?”

They set upon him. He was only dimly aware of the pain of choking, the sword sliding through his ribs, and the sudden cold of the river. His life force had already flown.

The body started to sink.

About This Magazine

Fellowship and Fairydust Magazine is a publication of Fellowship & Fairydust Publications. F&F is an online literary blog and magazine that aims to inspire faith and creativity and explore the arts through a spiritual lens. F&F came into being when the blog and online magazine The Fellowship of the King merged with the online magazine Ink and Fairydust in January 2017. To learn more, visit fellowshipandfairydust.com.

Copyrights

All articles and artwork belong to their respective creators and may not be copied without permission. Any copyright infringements are purely accidental. The works mentioned within this magazine are owned and copyrighted by their respective publishers and studios and are used here for entertainment purposes.

There's More Where This Came From!

Did you like what you saw here? There's more where that came from! Plus, these are only a fraction of the many fandoms we cover! To learn more, visit fellowshipandfairydust.com and follow us on Facebook at Fellowship & Fairydust Publications and on Twitter @FandFMagazine.

Graphic Designers

Avellina Balestri, Sarah Levesque, Amanda Pizzolatto,
Ian Wilson, T.K. Wilson

Image Citation

Pictures not otherwise cited are from the personal collections of the graphic designers.

Table of Contents: Decorations by Dawn Cramer

Editor's Note: Autumn Silk by Dawn Cramer

The Men that God Made Mad: Sword: crownforge.net/2016/06/12/late-republic-gladius-hispaniensis;
Runrig photo by Runrig

Ireland: deviantart.com/rgdart/art/Ireland-Path-279122287

Grandfather: Image by Ian Wilson

Hill of Tara: Photo by Chantal Tamburino, map from purrfectpuzzles.com/hilloftara/

Beware the Fairy Folk: Background: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/le:Oberon,_Titania_and_Puck_with_Fairies_Dancing._William_Blake._c.1786.jpg ; Violin: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:German,_maple_Violin.JPG

A Gift of Thistle: All images from the movie Braveheart, owned by Paramount Pictures & 20th Century Fox

Something of Time: A Personal Look at Nightnoise: amazon.com/Different-Shore-Nightnoise/dp/B000000NKT

The Discussion: Photo by Laura Ayres

Twin Mischief: n/a

Life of Lives: maxpixel.net/Moss-Dark-Forest-Moist-Close-Trees-Ireland-Wet-3718 and wallpaper-house.com/group/irish-iphone-wallpaper/index.php

Edinburgh and the Stately Palace of Holyroodhouse: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Palace_of_Holyroodhouse_2.jpg, Pixabay, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holyrood_Palace_Dining_Room.jpg, Flickr, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holyrood_Palace_gnu1742.jpg & Wikimedia Commons

Ankou: All images from Pexels.com

Robert Falconer: Translator's Preface: (both images) goodreads.com/book/show/349552.The_Musician_s_Quest

A Chalace Well Meditation: 8owls.co.uk/chalice-well/chalice-well-2 , sfu.ca/~truax/chalice.html and celticmystery.co.uk/chalice-well

Finding the True King: Illustration from the cover of The Book of Three, Dell/Yearling printing, found at themarysue.com/prydain-disney-movies/ ; Hiccup & Toothless, Drago: Dreamworks' How to Train Your Dragon; Merida: Disney/Pixar Brave

Tribute to an Irish Gentleman: britannica.com/biography/Charles-Stewart-Parnell

A Tale of Peg Prowler: scientificearthconscientious6.wordpress.com/2012/06/30/733urban-rivers-throughout-england-and-wales-have-improved-dramatically-in-water-quality-and-wildlife-over-the-last-20-years

Lament at Mabon: themoonschool.org/archives/1475 and thoughtco.com/mabon-ritual-to-honor-the-dark-mother-2562295

Seven Wild Sisters: The Celtic Descendants of Appalachia: All pictures by Charles Vess

Passing: cyprus-mail.com/2016/10/27/giant-celtic-cross-growing-irish-forest-one-foresters-handiwork-video ; indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=29146 ; blurryphotos.org/episode-31-merlin ; al-bagamefishing.com/our-packages/salmon-river-tweed

Upcoming Issue: adventuresofilnicki.com/spend-the-night-in-the-sahara-desert/

Join us for our next issue...

Passage of Light:

Tales & Traditions from the Middle East

From scriptures to folklore to current perspectives
and beyond, we want it all!

We're looking for

Facts & fanfiction,

original fiction & poetry,

movie & book reviews,

artwork & more!



ALL SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY
DECEMBER 4TH 2018

Please email final submissions to CampionsBrag@aol