

They took the gallows from the slack,
 They set it in the glen,
 They hanged the proud sheriff on that,
 Released their own three men.

The Blue-Hose Faerie

I

The carlin sits in her Clachdhu bower
 Spinning the hodden wool.
 A hundred year she has bided here,
 Loyal to the Sisterhood's rule.

Her een are like the emeraud stone,
 Her hose are midnight blue;
 Long syne her thinning locks have greyed,
 And her teeth are unco' few.

By day she roams on Beinn a'Chrulaiste
 Or climbs the Buchal's height;
 At eve she sits at Clachdhu's hearth
 And toils by candlelight.

"Too lang I've dwelt alane," quoth she
 "Bereft of mate and friend:
 "Wir blae-hose faerie law forbends
 "All truck wi' mortal men.

"But gin some weel-faured lad came by,"
 The carlin archly said,
 "I'd risk those tweed-clad tairges' wrath
 "And tak' him tae ma bed."

She hadna' sat an hour, an hour,
 An hour but barely one,
 When ringing footfall fast approached
 The cot wherein she spun.

It is a goodly company,
 Sir Brian in the van;
 They number fully half a score,
 Among them Lady Anne.

"Too dark by far," declares Sir Brian,
"The moor to venture ower;
"Unlatch the door, we'll pass the night
"Within this humble bower."

The carlin shrinks to shadowy nook,
Quite hid from mortal's view,
As through the portal Brian strides,
With stately retinue.

His axe is honed to sharpest edge,
A spike adorns the end,
While bandolier and sling hold up
His nuts and little friend.

"Heap high the fire," Sir Brian says,
"Break out the claret wine!
"Give fairest Anne the pride of place,
"And sit we down to dine."

Right deep the draughts of blude-red wine,
Right loud the roundelay;
And all the while the carlin spies
From curtained privacy.

As when Grimalkin stalks her prey
Or Scylla lies in wait,
So now the hidden hag eyes Brian,
And scorns his comely mate.

At last to couch and palliasse,
The company retire;
The candles are all blown out
And dully glows the fire.

The Lady Anne in chamber close
Combs out her golden locks.
A luscious dress she gently draws
From out her travelling-box.

"The morrow's night I'll grace the ball
"In distant Embra town;
"On Brian's arm, with careless charm,
"And modish silken gown."

II

Now all are sunk in deepest sleep,
 And some indeed are snoring;
 The carlin, only, lies awake,
 On mortal's beauty poring.

At length the waukrife witch steals o'er
 Till Brian's couch is near.
 She kneels beside his darkened form
 And breathes intil his ear:

"My hair is like the raven's plume,
 "My breest like Bidean's snaw;
 "And though they're hid 'neath flannel drawers
 "My pins are strang and braw.

"Amang wir blae-hose faerie clan,
 "Nae bonnier fay ye'll see;
 "So cleave to me," the carlin pleads,
 "My bidie-in to be.

"By day we'll sclim up Rannoch Wall,
 "Or dander through the heather;
 "At nicht kick aff wir clarty boots
 "And lie a-bed thegither."

"Good quine", says Brian, half asleep,
 "I know not who thou art,
 "And though thine invitation's kind,
 "It moveth not mine heart.

"In tower and bower, on ben and glen,
 "With Anne I'll take my pleasure;
 "Indeed next night at Colwyn's ball
 "We've pledged to tread a measure."

The spurnèd night-hag hirples off -
 A curse she scarce can smother:
 "If Brian willna' lie wi' me
 "He'll dance not wi' another!"

III

Now the sun is up on Rannoch Moor,
And Brian has risen betimes;
He is out with his men a-chasing the stag,
Up Sròn na Crèise he climbs.

And Anne has mounted her dapple-grey steed
To ride to Fort William town,
The aim of her spree some *bijouterie*
To set off that elegant gown.

Andrew alone declines to join
The morning's expedition.
(A gentle scholar he, renowned
For arcane erudition.)

As from the cottage door he sallies
The carlin grasps his arm:
"Shrink na' away, good sir" quoth she,
"No need for sic alarm!

"You seem a richt guid-willie chiel,
"Who'd no' rejeck a woman;
"Pray tak' this key and hap it deep,
"Ayont the sicht o' human."

Now Andrew is under the Carlin's spell,
And deep he delves in the loam.
Through clod and sod and bog-pine root
He thrusts the shovel home.

With fearful toil great mounds of soil
He turns at every spit;
Till, fully half a fathom deep,
Yawns the abysmal pit.

Obedient to the hag's command
He now inters the key,
And spades the earth so deftly back
That there's no trace to see.

IV

Now Anne has returned to Clachdhu bower,
 With costly silver bangle;
 And Brian is back with his hunting pack,
 His helm at a jaunty angle.

"Alack," cries Anne, "this door is locked,
 "And simply will not open!
 "Within's my gown all flounced to wear
 "Tonight, as we was hopin'."

While Brian unracks his keen-edged axe,
 And smites the oaken planks,
 His men with crowbar, pick and pry
 Assail the building's flanks.

But strength against such rude assault
 Had been the dames' priority:
 'Twere equal task to part the shanks
 Of that blue-hosed sorority!

Suspicion falls on Andrew now:
 "Hunt down the missing caitiff!
 "Scour all the hills 'twixt Achnacon
 "And far-flung Kinlochetive!"

They seek him on the Blackmount heights
 Where Clach Leathad's snowfield glisters,
 And (knowing he's prey to women's wiles)
 Among Glen Coe's Three Sisters.

With horse and hound they comb the ground
 Nor find him anywhere,
 Until at last the fleeing sage
 Is seized on Beinn a'Bheithir.

Behold now Andrew brought in chains
 Before the company.
 "If aught thou know'st," pleads Lady Anne,
 "I prithee find the key!"

Again he is moved by damsel's plea,
 Once more he delves in the loam:
 Through sod and clod and ancient root
 He thrusts the spaddle home.

The sun stands near the zenith yet,
 When deep beneath the ground
 Scribe Andrew gives a muffled cry,
 For lo! that key is found.

Forlorn no more they ope the door,
 And Anne reclaims her dress;
 Then, quitting Clachdhu's faerie bower,
 They swiftly southward press.

V

Now Anne has pardoned Andrew quite,
 For he's showing such contrition
 (Though his claim he fell for a witch's spell
 Is heard with some derision).

To bear a grudge when the end is well
 Would seem a trifle petty,
 For in town she's belle of the grand *soirée*
 In costume *décolleté*.

But the carlin sits in her Clachdhu bower,
 Stirring the eldritch brew.
 Her een are like the emeraud stone,
 Her stockings deepest blue.

The Dowie Houms of Yarrow

Late at e'en, drinking the wine,
 Or early in a mornin',
 They set a combat them between
 To fight it in the dawnin'.

"O stay at hame, my noble lord!
 "O stay at hame, my marrow!
 "My cruel brother will you betray,
 On the dowie houms o' Yarrow."

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