

Aince

Aince thir wis a wifie fae a peedie piece. Her haem wis right bonnie an her fock wis right fine, ach, but puir an wearit an fantan forby. The crops wisno coman at the wey they did afore, the loch wis giean aff a aafil uncan reek, an thir wisno a wheeshie o birds i' the widd. That wey, the wifie mad ap her mind tae gang awa tae airt oot answers an aid. Sheu teuk tae the lang brakken rodd wi jeust the claes on her back, the geud heid on her shodders, an the peedie bit hopp in her hairt.

Eftir twa week o wakkan, sheu cam tae a muckle toun. The gates an wynds wis pangit wi aa manner o dunderan, an doun ivry street wis lang lines o crames aa hivvy wi breid an maet. The wifie leukit at hid aa, her face aa luntit wi joy, fir sheu wis shuir they wir fuid enof here tae lighten her fock's fantation. Sheu raxt oot a haand tae tak a aiple, but the cramer goldert at her in a tong sheu ceudno understand. Sheu pit doun the aiple an scoukit. Sheu'd hiv tae lairn.

Hid wis mony a week o beggan fir orras an speiran at the fock at cam by, but at lang an at lent sheu cam tae ken the leid o that toun, an fer aa the crammers wis laaghan at the wey sheu spock yet, they teuk tent o her tael. Sheu telt thaim aboot her fantan fock, an they wir saddent an mad a promiese o help.

Wan geudwilly mairchant gied her a poke o speical seeds, at he sayed wid growe i' the coorsest o yird, an he telt her he'd tak a shipment o saalt maet an haiselt fruit tae her fock ivry 'ear, gin they wid jeust send twartree strang younkens tae wark in his fairms. The wifie greed, gied thanks tae the mairchant, an sayed sheu'd send wird tae her fock. But they wir a haep o problems yet, an that wey, aince mair, the wifie teuk tae the lang brakken rodd, her claes a peedie bit tivsy, her shodders a peedie bit puggelt, an her hairt nou fillan wi hopp.

Eftir tree month o wakkan, sheu cam tae a muckle castle. Hids turrents wis taal an faced wi mairble, hids windaes wis mony an barred wi bright airn, an hids waas wis thick an hingit wi claith o gowd. Sheu leukit at hid aa, her face aa luntit wi mazerment, fer sheu wis shuir they wir walth enof here tae lighten her fock's puirtith. Sheu raxt oot a haand tae touch the claith, but a gaird goldert at her in a tong sheu ceudno understand, waffan aboot a muckle swuird. Sheu snappert back an scoukit. Sheu'd hiv tae lairn.

Hid wis mony a month o screengan floors, scuddlan pots, washan uniforms, an speiran at her maisters i' the kitcheens, but at lang an at lent sheu cam tae ken the leid o that castle, an fer aa the offieicals wis laaghan at the wey sheu spock yet, they teuk tent o her tael. She teult thaim aboot her puir fock, an an they wir saddent an mad a promise o help.

Wan geudwilly treisurer gied her a peedie bag o clinkers at he sayed wis a soond investment, an telt her he'd tak gowd tae her fock ivry 'ear, gin they wid jeust pey a curn o interest. The wifie greed, gied thanks tae the treisurer, an sayed sheu'd send wurd tae her fock. But they wir a haep o problems yet, an that wey, aince mair, the wifie teuk tae the lang brakken rodd, her claes notheen but pelters, her shodders crappent anunder her hivvy pack, an her hairt lipperan wi hopp.

Eftir a 'ear o wakkan, sheu cam tae a tour. Hid wis taal as the clouds, as white as snaa, an the wan door at hids buddom wis closst wi a intricate lock an wrote aa ower wi uncan codd. The wifie leukit at hid aa, her face luntit wi possieibility, fer sheu wis shuir they wir wittans enof her tae lighten her fock's weariness. Sheu chappit at the door, an a slot appent tae shaa twa peeliewallie een, an a aald vyce akst a quaistion sheu ceudno understand. Sheu'd hiv tae lairn.

His wis mony a 'ear o fangsan fir fuid, dernan an listenan tae the dairk-robbed scholarts whan they harkit thir answers tae the door, but at lang an at lent sheu cam tae ken the leid o that tour, an fer aa the doorman wis laaghan at the wey sheu spock yet, sheu kent the answer tae his quaistion nou. Ben the tour, sheu fund liebraries an laboratories an skeulreums, an sheu reenged thaim aa fer answers tae her fock's tribbles.

Wan geudwilly scholart haird o her sairch, an wis saddent an mad a promise o help. He gied her a beuk pangit wi designs fer injines tae mak the darg o growan crops less sair, an a beuk pangit wi plans fer organisan communities tae mak the darg o makkan walth mair purposedlike, an a beuk o the grandest sangs o ivry country i' the warld, tae aidify the saal. Her fock widno understand thaim aa, he sayed, but gin they jeust cam tae the tour tae study, they wid lairn suin enof. The wifie greed, gied thanks tae the scholart, an sayed sheu'd tak wurd tae her fock. Nou she teuk tae the land rodd haem, an aalder wumman nou, in a fremmit robb fae a fremmit piece, wi a bowlt back an a hairt notheen but hopp.

Antran, aafil antran, but the ferd haem wis gey shorter as the ferd tae the toun, the castle, the tour. Mebbe hid wis jeust sheu didno notiece the weyght o her pack nou, or the stanes i' the rodd aneath her feet. Whitiver

wey, hid seemt hid wisno but twartree days afore sheu wis i' the ootfields o her awn country.

Whit sheu saa wis ferfil queerie. The fields wis ploued in tidy ranks, an the grain wis growan taal, an ivry styk wis the exack sam as ivry ither. They wirno mony fock on the laand, an grieves in toun-claes wis sittan in hie chairs abeun the fields owersean the wirk. Sheu pluckit twartree grains an chowed, thinkan, bit the taste wis that warshy sheu spittit thaim oot. Sheu stappit tae speir at a fairmer, but he jeust leukit at her, bumbazed, skitteran awa afore a grieve spied him.

The wifie frouned, an stekkit on, the weyght o her hairt no aafil like the weyght o hopp. Hid wisno but twartree oors afore sheu wis at the first hooses o her village.

Whit sheu saa wis ferfil, ferfil queerie. The gress wis feeskit on the ruifs, the windaes wis clarty, an they wir waas aa unmendit bruckalaetion. She saa fock, een doun, cartan hivvy bags tae the biggeen at wis aince the village haa, tha wan biggeen at wis keepit ap, hids aald stanes glentan i' the sun. She saa a offiecial i' the uniform o the castle, coontan muckle haeps o clinkers. Sheu stappit tae speir at a gruiop o fock, but whan they spock, bouan laa tae the grund, sheu ceudno understaand thir wirds. They imsed awa, giean thir bags tae the offiecial, at scrievit on a peedie bit paper an gied hid tae thaim.

The wifie frouned, an driltit, on, the weyght o her hairt no ava the weyght o hopp. Hid wisno but twartree meenits afore sheu wis at the skeul, the piece sheu'd lairned the sangs an weys o her fock.

Whit sheu saa wis ferfil, ferfil, ferfil queerie. A chiel in a scholart's robb like hers wis at the front o the reum, waffan about a staff, an chantan a poyem. Sheu kent the wirds fae the tour, but the bairns, sat at desks five by five, haed brous snortt in confuision. Whan tha scholart paused, thay chantit the line o the poem back tae him in wan vyce. If een o thaim mad a mistak, the scholart laughed a ill laugh an dinged his staff on the fluir. That bairn reidied an ettled aince mair, the wirds thick on her tong.

The wifie turnt an left ithoot askan a quaistion, the weyght in her hairt horrid far fae the weyght o hopp. Sheu teuk twatree stappies furder an sat by the loch. Hid's watter his grim an suckie an hid haed the reek o daeth. The trees aside the loch wis bare an sielent. The wifie appent her pack an leukit in.

The seeds sheu wis been gien i' the toun wis jeust coom in thir poke. Sheu tuimit hid, an the stoor driftit ootower the loch.

The clinkers sheu wis been gien i' the castle wis roostit thegither intae wan baal o maitel. Sheu fired it awa as far as she ceud, an the loch gluppit hid doun.

The ink i' the beuks she wis been gien i' the tour wis slaurit ower the pages, thir wirds awa, makkan nae sense ava. Sheu rived oot the paper, gaithered ryss fae the wid, an chappit the wan stane on the tither til they wir a fire.

Thir sheu bided, aside the loch, leukan intil the fire, an raxan intil her memory. Sheu ettled tae mynd on a sang sheu'd kent whan sheu wis peedie, a sang fer pouan tatties fae the grund. Sheu'd tint the wirds, but piece an piece the melody cam, an sheu mad new wirds tae fit hid. Mibbe hid wisno ferly the sam melody fae whan sheu wis peedie, mibbe hid his aa fankelt wi sangs fae the tour, mibbe the wirds an the melody wirno closs freends, but somtheen i' the sang eikit ap her hairt.

The sun an the meun trackit ilk ither atwart the lift, an the wifie sang, an her sang wis lood an fierdy gittan, an bytimes een o the fock o her piece cam tae listen, giean a peedie bit scan fir strenth or claith fir waarmth, an gin sheu's no deid she's singan yet.

Harry Josephine Giles