



The Cleverness of Mortals

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Irish

Intermediate

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If you live in the city of New York, or if you have ever been in the city of New York for any long time, you know how disheartening, how terrible, and how altogether unreasonable the climate can be at times. But you also know how heavenly it can be on an autumn day, when the sky and the air and the water are all in a good humor. To see and to feel the best of it, you must be down in the Narrows, or somewhere near there. The fierce heat has gone out of the air, but there is a gentle warmth left in it. All the shores near you are turning from green to brown and yellow, with here and there a dash of red. The sun makes every sail in the bay a gleaming spot of white. Far up the bay you see just an end of the city, with the tall buildings standing so close that it looks like one great castle, built all over a hill that slopes steeply down to the water on both sides. The Bridge looks like a spider's web, spun across to the other shore. Beyond it all the hills look purple, through the thin mist. If, instead of having seen all this often, you saw it for the first time—if you were coming from a far country, where you had always been poor—if you had toiled all your life to pay your rent, never expecting to do more—then perhaps you would look, more than anything else, at the giant woman standing before you and holding her torch high into the sky to light the world.

It was on such a day as this that the O'Briens and the Sullivans saw New York first. It was on the same day that the fairies who had left the rath and followed them saw it too. The O'Briens and the Sullivans had left their old home and gone to Queenstown, and the fairies had followed them. Cork and Queenstown had rather alarmed the fairies. They did not like the look of a city. It looked cold and stony and uncomfortable. It did not look like a

good place to dance out of doors at night. They almost wished that they had stayed at home and let the O'Briens and the Sullivans go where they liked without them. Some of them even wanted to go back, but Naggeneen laughed at them, and fairies can stand being laughed at even less than human beings. But they all hoped that when the O'Briens and the Sullivans got wherever they were going, it would not prove to be in a city.

Then the O'Briens and the Sullivans went on board a ship and were stowed away in a place forward, with many other people, which the fairies did not think roomy or airy or pleasant in any way. But they were not obliged to stay in it. They found better places on the ship. Nobody could see them, so they went where they liked. They went out on the bow, where the lookout stood, and watched with him for sails and for tiny puffs of smoke by day and for little glimmers of light by night. They ran about the bridge and swarmed up the rigging. They even danced on the deck, as if they were in a field at home; and the deck was dewy at night, just like the field. They fluttered and whirled in circles around the red light on the one side of the ship and the green light on the other side, and they reminded them of the rubies and the emeralds that had helped to light their own rath.

One day they saw swimming in the water beside the ship an ugly creature, like a man, with a red nose, tangled green hair, green teeth, and fingers with webs between them, like a duck's foot. There was another creature, like a woman, very beautiful, but with green hair, like the man. These were merrows—sea fairies.

"Where are you bound in that ship?" the merrows called to them.

"Where would we be bound at all," the King answered, "but to the States, where the ship's bound?"

"And what are ye goin' there for?" the merrows asked again.

"Sure," said Naggeneen, "it's followin' the O'Briens and the Sullivans we are, and it's the long way they're takin' us."

"Could you tell us what the States is like at all?" asked the King. "Is it like Cork?"

"There's parts of them," said the man merrow, "that's more like Cork than Cork itself, and there's other parts of them that's no more like Cork than the sea here is like Cork Harbor."

"But are there no places there," the King asked again, "like the country parts of Ireland, with the fields and the bogs and all?"

"I can't tell you that," the merrow answered. "We've never been far on the land. Deep down under the sea it's

the same way it is under the sea about Ireland. There's the land at the bottom, with the sand all fine and firm, like a floor, and there's the water above, like a green sky, and there are the shells and the sea-flowers, and there are the weeds that wave around you and over you, like red and green and purple curtains to your house, and it's all as cool and as neat as any of the sea-places around Ireland. And if you like to go up to get the warmth of the sun or the light of the stars, there's white sand where you can lie at your ease, and there's great rocks where you can sit and look out over the sea and get the fresh breeze. And that's all we know of it; we've not been away from the sea."

And after a week of voyaging through the sea—after going on and on for so long and so far that both fairies and mortals began to think that they must soon fall over the edge of the earth—the ship suddenly stood up straight, instead of rolling and pitching about, and a little later they saw the giant woman before them, holding up her torch, and beyond her they saw the city. And then it was only a bit of a while longer till they came close to the city.

"Look at it!" cried the King to all the fairies, who were crowded at the bow; "it's like the country, after all! Look at all the grass and the trees! But it has an iron chain all around it. I don't like the look of that." All fairies hate iron. They more than hate it; they simply cannot endure it. To touch any iron at all would hurt a fairy more than it would hurt you to touch it when it was red hot.

"But it's only a small place, anyway," said Naggeneen. "Look at the houses beyond there! There was nothing like them in Cork! And do you mind them strings of coaches, running along up in the air?"

"I was takin' note of them," said the King; "sure it's the strange country!"

The fairies all followed the O'Briens and the Sullivans. They were resolved not to lose sight of their only friends, in a land like this. They found that the O'Briens and the Sullivans were quickly taken to a big round house, in the very bit of a place like the country that they had first seen. The fairies did not like the inside of the big round house, so the King left a few to watch the O'Briens and the Sullivans, and to bring word if they made any important move, and the rest went out and found pleasanter places on the grass and under the trees. They had managed to get into the Battery Park without touching any of the horrible iron chains that were around it. They would have been a very sorry-looking company, if anybody could have seen them.

"I don't like it at all," the King said, "and nothing would please me better than to be at home again. If they're going to live in that big round house, I dunno what we'll do. We want to be near to them, and yet this is no

place for us. We could stand it a little while, maybe. The grass is fine and smooth for dancing, but these lights, like suns, that they have all around on the tops of the poles, are terrible. Do they want no night at all here? And then what a noise there is! It's nothing but rattle and roar all day, and then the boats do be screeching around all night."

"Have no fear," said the Queen. "The O'Briens would never live in a place like this. They'll soon be out of it, and then we'll follow them and find a better place near where they go."

It proved that the Queen was right. Before long there came an alarm from those who had been left to watch, that the O'Briens and the Sullivans were coming out. In a moment more they came, and the whole tribe followed them. Old Mrs. O'Brien, who never forgot anything that was worth remembering, had not forgotten to write to some old friends who had come to America years before, that she and her son and his wife and their neighbors were coming. These old friends had found tenements for them, and soon they were in new homes. There was enough of Mrs. O'Brien's money to keep them for a little while, and they hoped that before it was gone, John and Peter would find work and would be getting more money.

The fairies followed them, filled with more and more wonder. For miles they followed, and then for more miles. It was not that the distance troubled them. They could have gone a hundred times as far without thinking of being tired. But they could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw these never-ending stone roads and these never-ending rows of stone and brick houses, all built so that they touched one another. They could not understand how people could live so close together, nor why they should want to do it, if they could. Perhaps you have never thought of it, but it is really true that the ways of mortals are just as wonderful to fairies as the ways of fairies are to mortals.

Indeed, the place where they found themselves at last was not a pleasant one for fairies. It was two places, in fact, but they were so much alike that there was nothing to choose between them. A tenement had been found for the O'Briens, up many flights of stairs, in a house with many other tenements. There was barely enough room in it for them to live, though it was better, in that respect, than their old cabin in Ireland. The stairs and the passage were far from clean, and they led down to a street that was just as far from clean.

It was hard all over with square stones, which had sunk, in places, and made hollows, which were filled with muddy water. Lean cats scuttled about here and there, and ran away, if anybody came near them, as if they expected to have stones thrown at them, and then, when the danger seemed past, they rummaged in the ash-

barrels for scraps of meat or fish or bread. The people who lived in the houses sat on the doorsteps and on the curb-stones, and chattered and laughed and quarrelled and slept. The sun shone into the street, but it could not shine between the houses. A breeze blew up from the East River, which was not far away, but the air was none too fresh, for all that. The place that had been found for the Sullivans was in another street, not far away. It was much the same, as I have said, but it was even smaller, for there were only two of the Sullivans, and they could get on with less space.

The fairies were fairly terrified at all this. And was it any wonder? The poor little Good People! They had been used to a beautiful, bright hall, to green, fresh grass to dance on in the quiet, misty moonlight, and to cool shade for the day. What could they do in such a place as this? They remembered how the King of All Ireland had told them that they did not know whether the place where they were going was a place fit for them to live in.

The first thing that the King did was to send some of the fairies in all directions to see if they could spy out any place where the whole tribe could live in a decent and comfortable manner. The street, he was sure, would never do. Of course, if the Fairy King wanted a rock or a hill to open and let him into it, it would open, and he could live in it, if he chose, just as he used to in his own old rath. And no mortal who might happen to be about would know that anything unusual was happening. And just so the street would open for him, if he wanted it to. But before he had decided to try it he saw a place where some men had opened it, and that was quite enough for him. If you have ever seen a New York street opened, you know what it was like; if you have not, it is of no use to try to tell you.

But the messengers whom the King had sent in all directions were scarcely gone when those who had started toward the west were back with joyful news. "We have found a beautiful place," they said. "It's only a bit of a way from here, and if we live there we'll not be far from the O'Briens. Ye never saw grass smoother in your life, though it's not quite so green, maybe, as it is at home. And then there's tall trees of all kinds, and there's bushes that'll have flowers on them, belike, in the right time of the year. And there's smooth roads and walks, and there's hills and great rocks, that we could live inside of as easy as in a rath itself. It's a much quieter place than here, too, and the air is better, though it's so near. It's not wide toward the west, but off to the south it reaches as far as we can see, like a forest."

The King left a guard to watch, lest the O'Briens should like the place as little as himself and should leave it and be lost, and then he hurried with the rest to see the new country that had been discovered. If you know New York very well indeed, you have guessed already that it was the north end of Central Park which the fairies had

found. But you may know New York pretty well and not know, as a good many people who live in it do not, that there is any north end to Central Park, still less that it is far prettier than the south end.

After all the distressing streets and houses that he had seen, the King was delighted with it. He found a big rock, which was the base of a hill, and at the top of it stood a queer little square stone house. Back in this hill, he declared, behind the rock and under the stone house, would be as pleasant a place to live as ever the rath was. He made the rock open, and he and all the fairies with him went in, although the policemen and the men and women in carriages and on horses and on bicycles and on foot who were all about, did not see that the rock looked at all different.

“A fine place for us it will make,” said the King; “we couldn’t be asking for a better. Get to work now, all of you. Hollow out the inside of the hill, only leave pillars to hold up the roof, and go and find gold for the floor and silver for the walls, and you can have every other pillar gold and every other one silver, after you get the rest done, and take down the rock that you left. And then find diamonds and rubies and emeralds to light it with.”

No, I am not going to explain to you how the fairies did all this. I shall not tell you how they got the rock out nor what they did with it after they got it out. I will tell you all that there is any need of your knowing about it, and that is that in a very short time it was all done; that the new fairy palace was as much larger and finer and better than any fairy palace in Ireland ever was as we Americans intend that everything here shall be larger and finer and better than anything anywhere else. And it was all done before the most of the messengers who had been sent in other directions got back to tell what they had found.

These fairies went straight to where the O’Briens lived, and there the fairies who had been left on guard told them where to find the King, and asked them to say to him that they were tired of their duty and they wished that he could send somebody else to take their places.

The fairies were not much surprised when they found the King and all the tribe settled in a new palace, as comfortably as if they had never moved. The building of a palace in a night is no more to a fairy than it is to a New York man to come back after he has been out of town for a month and find a house twenty stories high in a place where there was a hole in the ground when he went away.

“What’s the use at all to be tellin’ Your Majesty what we’ve found in the places we’ve been,” said one of the first who came back, “and you livin’ this minute in the finest palace that was ever dug out of a hill?”

“You may tell us all the same,” said the King.

“Well and good,” said the fairy. “It’s to the south I’ve been. First there’s all this island that we’re on, down to the place with the grass and the iron chain around it. Then there’s the bay, with the ships. Then there’s another island, with hills and trees, and then there’s the sea, and a long shore, all sand, and hundreds of houses, big and little, where people live. And that’s all.”

Another fairy said: “I went farther to the west than this, but not much farther till I came to a great river. Of course I couldn’t be crossin’ the runnin’ water, so I went round the mouth of it and then kept on. The country was all flat for a good way, and bars of iron everywhere, laid two and two, so many of them that I didn’t dare rest anywhere, and there were towns and plenty of people, and then at long last I came to hills.”

I suppose you know, without my telling you, that fairies cannot bear to cross running water, any more than they can bear to touch iron, and that was why this fairy had to go around the mouth of the Hudson River instead of going across it.

Then came another fairy, who had been to the north, and he said: “It beats everything, the lovely country I’ve seen. Never a better did I see anywhere. Hills and woods and mountains, and the trees all yellow and red and green and brown. I went up the big river on this side for a long way, and then I saw great mountains on the other side. So beautiful they looked, I wanted to go to them, only, sure, I couldn’t cross the river. So I went round the head of it and came down back to the mountains. And there I found that they were full of fairies already. But they seemed to be Dutch, and it’s little English they could talk, let alone Irish. Still we got along, and they gave me some mighty fine drink that they had. And they said that we could come there, the whole tribe, and welcome kindly, and I’d say it was a good place to go, only it’s farther off than this from them we want to be near.”

“We’ll stay where we are,” said the King. “It’s as well that we know what’s all around us, but here we’ll be more to ourselves, as many people as there are, for I’m thinkin’ there’s no fairies but us here.”

Then slowly out of the crowd of fairies one came forward and said: “Your Majesty, could I be saying something that’s breakin’ my heart? It’s hard for me to say and it’ll maybe be harder for you to hear; but it’s on my mind and I can’t get it off my mind. Will you forgive me if I say it?”

And the King answered: “It’s much that’s bad and a little that’s good we’ve heard since we left our own home.

But it's best that we know all there is to know, bad or good. Say what you have to say."

"It's not far I've been," said the fairy; "only around here in the city that's all about us; but many things I've seen, and wonderful things. Ah, Your Majesty, don't blame me for what I'm saying, but what's to become of us all and of you yourself, I dunno. We know all about magic; we've known all about it for years—aye, for ages. And we thought that made us better than mortals. We thought they could never do the things we could do; maybe they never can. But oh, Your Majesty, they're doing things as good as we can do, or better. You wouldn't believe what the mortals in this country do, if you wasn't after seein' it. They do things as wonderful as we ourselves, and it's iron, iron, iron everywhere. We can do nothing with iron—we can't touch it—and what will we do at all to be ahead of them, or even up with them?"

"What's all this they do?" said the King.

"You saw yourself," the fairy said, "the coaches that went along up in the air. They go on bridges, miles long, built of iron. And they run on bars of iron. You saw for yourself that they had no horses, and the coach in front that pulls them is all made of iron, and men ride in them, as if it was no harm at all to touch iron. And that's not all. There are other coaches that go in the streets without horses. They have no iron coach in front to pull them. They go in different ways. Sometimes there's an iron rope, that's all the time moving and moving along under the street, and there's a gripping iron under the coach that takes hold on it, and so it's pulled along. And sometimes there's only a little string—not iron, I think, but some other metal—and something just reaches down from the coach and touches it, and that makes it go. I dunno how it is, but it makes it go. And sometimes there's fire comes out of it."

Then another fairy came out of the crowd and stood before the King. "Your Majesty," he said, "I can tell you more than that. I have been about the city, too, and I went into some of the houses. I saw a man talking to a little box on the wall. I came close and I heard that the box was talking to him too. I thought there was a fairy inside it, but I looked inside, and there was nothing there but iron and strange works that I couldn't understand. There were little strings of copper coming out of the box, and then a long string of iron, that led away over the tops of the houses."

The fairy stopped and shivered as he thought of the horrible string of iron. Then he went on: "I followed it and it came into another house, where there was so much iron that I couldn't stay there. But the strings of iron came out of this house and led in all directions. I followed them and I listened everywhere and I found what

they were for, though how they do it all I dunno. And it's this way: Anywhere that there's a box you can talk to them that's in the house where all the iron strings go. And if they like to help you, you can talk to anybody else where there's a box. It may be a mile off or it may be a dozen miles off. Many a time those in the house where all the strings are will not help them that wants to talk, but when they will, it's easy. Yes, Your Majesty, one man talks to another ten miles off, as if he was standing by his side."

"Your Majesty," said another fairy, "you saw yourself the bright lights that were at the place where the grass was, that we came to first, and you've seen thousands more of them since. Do you know that they're not candles, and they're not lamps, and that there's no fire to them at all? There's strings of something, whatever it is, from one of them to another, and the light goes through that, whatever it is."

"There's another thing that they do with strings like that," said still another fairy. "I saw men doing it not far from here. They made a hole in a rock and they put one end of a string in it. Then where the other end was, a man pushed a thing like a sort of handle, and the rock was all burst open, and nobody had touched it."

And another fairy said: "Your Majesty, there are boats all the time going across the rivers—across the running water. Of course we always knew that mortals could cross running water, but these boats go without sails or oars, like the ship that we came here on. To be sure I couldn't go on one, because it was across running water, but I went near one, when it was at the shore, and it was all full of iron, and I got the most awful pains from being near it. It was as bad, almost, as I felt coming here, when I'd get too near the iron sides of the ship."

"And a strange thing it was that I saw too," said another fairy. "I saw people looking into little boxes of wood, so I looked in too. And in one I saw a woman dancing, and in another there were horses running, and in another I saw two men fighting. And it was not a real woman or real horses or real men, but only pictures that moved and did the things that real people and horses would do."

The King listened to all this and then he sat and thought. "What is there in it that I can't do?" he asked. "Do you not all know of the coaches in Ireland that are drawn by horses without heads and driven by coachmen without heads?"

All the fairies looked at one another and nodded and said, "Yes, yes, we know."

But Naggeneen came forward and stood before the throne. Nobody had noticed that he had been listening or that he was there. "And what if those coaches were in Ireland?" he said. "They had horses, though the horses

had no heads. Can you make iron coaches go without any horses at all?"

The King was trying to talk boldly, but he stammered and grew pale at the very thought of having anything to do with an iron coach, and he did not answer. He went on instead: "Can I not send any one of you on a message, as fast as the wind?"

"But can you talk for ten miles," Naggeneen asked, "and will the very voice of you go as fast as the lightning?"

"Why would I want to be doin' that," said the King, "when I can send a messenger as fast as I like?"

"That's not the question," said the cruel Naggeneen; "can you do it?"

"I never tried," said the King. "And can I not light up this palace," he went on, "or any other palace, with diamonds? Can I not make a light so that a man who looks behind him when he is going on a journey or at work in the fields will think his house is on fire and run back?"

"And when he has run back," said Naggeneen, "will he find that his house is on fire? You know that he will not. It's only glamour, and he'll soon be laughing at you. Oh, we can catch a few firebugs in spiders' webs and deceive a boy or a girl that's passing, and maybe make them turn aside and dance with us, but can you put real lights all over the country for miles—lights that will burn on and on and show real things? Our lights are lies themselves and they can no more than lead a silly mortal astray for a time; their lights tell the truth. What else can you do?"

The King had lost the most of his boldness. "They say," he said, "that men can burst open the rock. Can I not do that as well?"

"You can open this rock for us to pass through," said Naggeneen; "and what then? A man can see it open for a moment, if you choose to let him, and the next minute it's all as one as if you had never touched it. And the man thinks that's wonderful, for he doesn't know that you can do it no other way. All glamour again! Can you burst the rock open and leave it open, so that it will always be so, for mortal and for fairy?"

"Why should I want to be doin' that?" said the King.

"For the same reason makes the men want to do it, but you couldn't. And those boats that cross the river, full of iron—can you make them, and can you cross the running water in them?"

The King had no voice to answer. “And the pictures in the boxes,” Naggeneen went on; “can you make pictures dance?”

“Sure,” said the King, “I can make a man think he sees anything I like—a woman dancing or a horse running, or anything.”

“Glamour! Glamour! Glamour!” cried Naggeneen. “You can make him think he sees! Yes, but he does not see. You can no more make a picture dance than you can cross a river!” And Naggeneen turned on his heel and walked off, as if he thought the King a poor creature that was not worth talking to.

The King had no more courage left in him than if he had been talking to the King of All Ireland instead of to Naggeneen. “Naggeneen,” he cried, “come back and tell us something better nor all this. It’s not pleasant you are in your talk, and it’s often you make me angry with you, but after all you’re cleverer than any of us. Tell us what to do. It was not like this where we lived before. There we could do all manner of things that mortals could not, and they were afraid of us.”

“And so here too,” said Naggeneen, “you can do all manner of things that mortals cannot, but they can do as many that you cannot—as many and better.”

“But what are we to do,” the King went on, “to show them that we’re their masters? Sure we’re cleverer than them all out, and we can prove it in some way.”

“King,” said Naggeneen, speaking as boldly as if he were himself a greater king, “you can never prove that you’re cleverer than men, for you’re not cleverer. It was a poor, wasted, weak, and sorrowful country that we came from, and it’s a rich, new, strong, and happy country that we’ve come to. There’s the differ. Clever you are, maybe, and your people, too, and I may be clever in my own way, and we may play our little tricks on mortals, as I did on the Sullivans, if they’re as stupid as them. But mortals can be cleverer than we ever can when they are clever, and they can beat us every time if they know how. And do you know why? Because they have what we have not—because they have souls. I heard a school-master say once that the word ‘mortal’ was made from a word that meant death. And they call mortals that, I’m thinkin’, because they never die. But you will die, King, and all your people, and I. We live on and on for thousands of years, and men come and change and pass away, but at the last day we shall be gone, as a bit of cloud up in the sky is gone when the sun shines on it. That’s why men will always be greater and finer and stronger than us, with all our magic.”

The fairies were all so terrified that they shrank away from Naggeneen and clung together and shook, in their fright, for this fear of living for a long time and then going out like a candle is their greatest fear. There was not a bit of color left in the King’s face now. It was almost with a sob that he spoke again, and there was a kind of beseeching in his tone as he said: “Naggeneen, don’t talk like that to us! We don’t know it! It may be so, but we don’t know it! We’ve tried many a time to find out, but no one that knew would ever tell us! We may have souls! We don’t know that we’ve not! We may be saved!”

“You do know it!” Naggeneen cried. “Why will you try to deceive yourselves? You’ve no soul and I’ve no soul, and there’s no way that we can have them. If there’d been any way, I’d have had one long ago. But we’ll never have them, and mortals will always outwit us, if they half know how. Shall I tell you how one of them outwitted me—a big, lazy, stupid gommoch, with not enough brains to keep his neck safe?”

The fairies were far past caring whether they heard a story or not, but they listened as Naggeneen went on. “I’m after tellin’ you,” he said, “that if there was any way that one of us could be gettin’ a soul, I’d have had one long ago. This was the way I tried it, and a silly mortal outwitted me. Guleesh na Guss Dhu was the name that was on him. I had heard—and I believed it—that if I could get a mortal woman married to me—a woman with a soul—that I would get a soul, too, that way. Well, I was never over-modest in my tastes, you know, and I thought that the daughter of the King of France was about right for me. A beautiful girl she was, with the rose and the lily fighting in her cheeks, and she was eighteen years old. But sure I thought that the differ of a few thousand years in our ages would be nothing to me, and I hoped it would be nothing to her either.

“I was living in a rath and wearing a green jacket then. All the others in the rath promised that they’d help me. The King’s daughter was to be married to the son of the King of another country on November Eve; and you know there’s no better time to steal a girl than the night she’s to be married, and November Eve is a fine time, too, so it was settled that we’d go over to France and steal her on that night. But, as you know, we needed a mortal to help us. How else could we be bringin’ her across from France? If we could put her on a horse behind a man, she’d have flesh and blood to take a grip of, but if she was put up behind one of us, she might as well try to hold to a puff of smoke. You know that.

“We got ready, making sure that we’d find some fool of a mortal ready for us when the time came, and sure enough, when we’d been out for a little look at the country before starting, and were coming back, there sat this same Guleesh na Guss Dhu, between the rath and the gable of his father’s house, that was near by, staring up at the moon, like he’d never seen one before. There was no need to try to catch him or to bring him with us, or the likes of that. All we had to do was to let him hear us as we passed and let him see the door of the rath open, and in he came of himself to see what it was all about. We hadn’t let him see ourselves yet, but he heard us all calling: ‘My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!’ and what did he do but call out after us: ‘My horse and bridle and saddle!’

“There was the beam of a plough lying near, and I changed it into a horse for him, and pleased he was when he saw it standing forninst him, with its bridle of gold and saddle of silver and all. The minute he saw it he jumped on it, and then we let him see all ourselves and our horses, and he nearly fell off again, with the sight of the crowd of us.

“Then I said to him: ‘Are you coming with us to-night, Guleesh?’

“‘I am,’ he said.

“And with that we set off, and we overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us. And we never stopped till we came to the sea. Then every one of us said: ‘Hie over cap! Hie over cap!’ and Guleesh said it after us, and the next second we was all up in the air, and we never stopped till we was in Rome. And why the whole tribe wanted to go by the way of Rome, never a know I know, for it’s not on the way from Ireland to the palace of the King of France at all.

“Then I spoke up to Guleesh and says I: ‘Do you know why we brought you here?’ says I. ‘The daughter of the King of France is to be married this night, and we mean to carry her off, and we need you so that she can sit behind you on the horse, for you are flesh and blood and she’ll have something to hold to. Will you do that for us now?’

“‘I’ll do whatever you say,’ says Guleesh; ‘and where are we now, if you please?’

“‘We’re in Rome,’ says I.

“‘Oh, in Rome is it?’ says Guleesh. ‘Sure, then, I’m glad of that. The priest of our parish lost his place a little while ago, only because they said he drank too much, as if there’ld be any harm in that, and now is the fine time to go to the Pope and get a bull to put him back in his place.’

“‘Ah, we’ve no time for that, Guleesh,’ says I, ‘and we must be gettin’ to the palace of the King of France before we lose any more.’

“‘Not a foot will I go,’ says Guleesh, ‘till I get the bull for the priest. You can go on and leave me here if you like, and you can stop for me when you come back.’

“Well, we had more talk about it, and then one of the others says: ‘Sure, Naggeneen, we can’t go without him and we can’t get him to come with us, so we’ll have to try to get the Pope’s bull for him. Go with him to the Pope and help him all you can, and we’ll wait for you.’

“‘Come with me, then,’ says I, and I took him by the hand, and before he knew how I did it, I had him in the room where the Pope was. The Pope was sitting by himself, reading a book, and he had a tumbler of hot

whiskey, with a little bit of sugar, beside him on the table, all as comfortable as you please. 'Now, Guleesh,' says I, 'ask him for the bull, and tell him that if he won't give it to you, you'll set the house on fire. Then leave the rest to me.'

"So Guleesh walked up to him as bold as you please, and when the Pope saw him he was near scared to death, because he thought that nobody could get into the room where he was. Then Guleesh says to him: 'Don't be afraid, Your Honor; all I want of you is your bull to put our parish priest back in his place, that lost it some time ago, because somebody told lies about him and said that he drank too much. And when I have your bull I'll be leavin' you in peace again.'

"Go on out o' this,' says the Pope; 'where are all my servants?' and he began calling for them, but Guleesh put his back against the door, so that nobody could open it on the other side, and then he began telling the Pope all about the priest, and the Pope had nothing to do but listen.

"And when he was done the Pope refused up and down to give him any pardon for the priest. 'Then,' says Guleesh, 'unless you give it to me at once I'll burn your house.' And with that I began blowing fire out of my mouth all around the room.

"Oh, stop the fire,' cries the Pope, 'and I'll give you the pardon or anything else you ask!'

"So then I stopped the fire, and the Pope sat down and wrote the pardon for the priest, giving him back his old place, and gave it to Guleesh. That second I caught him by the hand and we were off again through the keyhole to where the other fairies were. In another minute we were all on our horses and away again. We overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us till we were at the palace of the King of France. And there my fine boy Guleesh saw sights that he never saw the like of before.

“The place was almost as fine as this of yours here. There were long tables all about it, with everything on them that a body would be wanting to eat and drink, and as fast as any of it was eaten or drunk, there was more put in its place. Then there were hundreds of noblemen and ladies, all in clothes of silk and velvet and gold and silver, and all covered with jewels, till they shone in the light of the gold chandeliers, almost like they’d been chandeliers themselves. And they were talking and laughing and singing and playing, and some of them were dancing—not so well as we dance, of course, when we’ve a mind, but enough to make Guleesh think he was seeing the grandest sight that ever was in the world entirely. And up at one end of the hall was an altar and two bishops, ready to marry the Princess to the King’s son as soon as it would be the right time.

“And which of them all is the Princess?” says Guleesh to me.

“That one there near to ye,” says I, pointing her out.”

Naggeneen stopped in his story and seemed to forget for a moment that he was telling it. “Oh, but she was the beauty of the world!” he went on, speaking so low that the fairies could scarcely hear him. “There was the lily and the rose in her cheeks, and her arms like snow, and her hair like soft gold. Not like the gold that you dig out of the ground for your palace, but gold with life in it. And her eyes were like two big violets with the dew on them. And there stood the others all around her, all merry and happy, and she—

“What is she crying for?” says Guleesh to me. ‘Sure it’s not right that eyes like those would have tears in them.’

“True for you, it’s not, Guleesh,’ said I, ‘and it’s because there’s no love in her heart for the man that she’s to be married to. It’s her father that’s compelling her, for he has some arrangement of the sort with the other King, that’s the father of the young man. And it’s for that,’ I said, ‘that we’re going to carry her off, and it’s the best thing we could be doing for her as well as ourselves.’

“Just that minute the young Prince came and offered her his hand, and away they went in the dance, and the tears in her eyes all the time. And as soon as the dance was over, the King, her father, and the Queen, her mother, came and said that it was time they were married, and the two bishops waiting there all the time. So they led the Prince and the Princess up toward the altar, and she with the rose all gone out of her cheeks and only the lily left. But when they were not more than four yards from the altar I put out my foot before the Princess, and she fell, and then, with a word of a charm, I made her invisible to all but Guleesh and ourselves. Then I made a sign to Guleesh, and he took up the Princess and ran with her out of the hall, and all the rest of

us after them. 'My horse and bridle and saddle!' says every one of us, and the same says Guleesh. He lifted the Princess up behind him on his horse and we were away again. We overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us till we came to the sea. 'Hie over cap!' cried every one of us, and 'Hie over cap!' cried Guleesh, and in a moment we were in Ireland again.

"Another minute and we were close to our own rath, and it was then that all the work of the night was lost. For then what did the fool Guleesh do but take the Princess in his arms and leap down off his horse, and he cried: 'I call you to myself, in the name of—' Oh, now, you little cowards, you've no call to shrink away like that and to try to be hiding in the dark corners! You know I can't say the name that he said. But he said it, and then the enchantment was all gone, and he saw that the horse he'd been riding was nothing but the beam of a plough and that the horse that each of the others had was only an old broom, or maybe a rag weed, or the like of that.

"And you know that there was no getting the Princess away from him after the words that he said. But I came close to her and struck her on the mouth. 'Now, Guleesh,' said I, 'you may keep her if you will, but she'll be dumb forever.' And with that we all disappeared from them.

"But you may be sure I watched them. They stood there together and Guleesh talked to her and tried to make her talk back, but it was of no use at all, and he soon found that she was dumb completely. Then he stood thinking what would he do with her, and at last he took her by the hand and started toward the priest's house. It was getting near day now, and the priest was up by the time they came to the door, and he opened it himself. And when he saw Guleesh and the girl, sure he thought they were come to be married, and he said: 'Ah, Guleesh, isn't it the nice boy ye are, that ye can't wait till a decent hour to be married, but ye must be comin' to me this early? And don't ye know I can't marry ye lawfully anyway, and I put out of my place?'

"Then says Guleesh: 'Sure, father, you can marry me or anybody else you like, for you have your place back again, and here's the Pope's bull for that same. But it's not that I come for, but to ask you to give shelter to this young lady, the daughter of the King of France.'

"And with that he takes the Pope's bull out of his pocket and gives it to the priest, and the priest looked at the writing and the seal and saw that there was no doubt but it was right. And so he made Guleesh and the Princess come in and sit down, while Guleesh told him the whole story, and not a word of it would he have believed only there was the Pope's bull that he couldn't deny, and so at long last he had to believe all that Guleesh told him. And the end of it was that the Princess stayed at the priest's house, for they didn't know how to send her back to

her father's palace, and they had no money, and she couldn't speak to help them. And the priest gave out that she was the daughter of his brother, that lived in another county, and that she was making him a visit. And Guleesh went home and said how he'd been sleeping beside the rath all night."

Naggeneen paused in his story, while all the fairies drew quietly closer to him. "Do you see," he said, "how I was tricked by a fool of a mortal? Oh, she was the beauty of the world, and he took her from me with a word, as easily as you'd steal the butter out of a churn. And that was not all.

"I said to myself that I was not done with my revenge on them yet. She could not speak and it was a sore punishment on the both of them. Yet she stayed on at the priest's house. The priest wrote letters to her father, as I heard, and gave them to merchants who were travelling, but none of them ever reached him. And Guleesh got mighty serious about his soul all at once, so that he had to be at the priest's house every day, and every day he saw the Princess. She could never talk to him, but she learned to make signs that he could understand. And so it went on for a year.

"And then, when it was November Eve again, and we had been out of the rath and were all coming into it again in a great crowd, there sat Guleesh, the same as before. He couldn't see us, but he must have heard us, for you could see that he was listening with all his ears. And I thought now was the fine time to be having the laugh on him. By that time everybody was shouting: 'My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!' and Guleesh shouted as before: 'My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!'

"Now is my chance to be even with him,' thought I, and I said: 'Ah, Guleesh, my boy, is that yourself that's to the fore again? You'll get no horse to-night and you'll play no more tricks on us. How are you getting on with your Princess? Does she talk to you much? Or do you just like to sit and look at her?'

"And when I said that, he looked so pale and so sad that I almost screamed with joy, and I couldn't keep myself from whispering to the man that was next to me: 'And isn't he the stupid omadhaun, not to know that there's an herb growing close to his own door that would give her back her speech if he'd only boil it and give it to her?'

"It's the stupid omadhaun he is,' said the other man.

“Oh, and it was me that was the omadhaun, to be saying it at all. Oh, why couldn’t I hold my jaw? But it was like some spell was on me, and I had to say it. I had to say it! I couldn’t have kept it back if I’d tried. And he heard every word!

“It’s little more there is to tell. The next morning, as soon as there was light, there was Guleesh searching for any herb that was strange to him around the door. And it was not long till he found it. Then he boiled it, and he drank some of it himself, to see whether it might be poison, and it put him into a deep sleep. And when he woke he went to the priest’s house and told the whole story and gave the Princess some of the drink, and then she went to sleep and did not wake till the next day. And when she woke she had her speech back.

“Ah, well, by this time they was both in love with each other, and all that I did for myself or against them had only helped them. But it was not long before the Princess was saying that she must be off to her father, and nothing that the priest and Guleesh could do would make her stay. So the priest took the jewels that she had on her when Guleesh first brought her, and he sold them and gave her the money, and she took it and paid her way back to France.

“And after that great grief and melancholy came over Guleesh, and nothing would do him but he must start off for France to find the Princess again. Start off he did, and that was the last that I ever saw of him, only I heard that he found the Princess at her father’s court and that at long last they were married.”

There was nothing strange in the last that Naggeneen had told—nothing more strange, I mean, than that a peasant boy should marry the daughter of the King of France—but his voice, before he had ended, was so low and so full of grief that all the other fairies kept very still to listen, and when he had told his story none of them spoke for a little while. At last the King said: “How long was all this ago, Naggeneen?”

“Many years,” Naggeneen answered; “I couldn’t be counting how many.”

“Then what is it to you now?” said the King. “Sure they’re both dead long ago, and here are you as sound as ever.”

“Yes,” Naggeneen cried, “as sound as ever and as sound as I’ll ever be. They’re not dead. They had souls. They’re alive now, and when what they call ‘the Last Day’ comes, they’ll live still, forever. And then I shall go out, like a shadow when the light falls on it. There’s no more of me that can last than a shadow. And you will go out that way, too, and all of us. It was not her that I wanted so much. It was the soul that I thought I’d get, and her

married to me. That was it. And a stupid mortal had tricked me twice. It was then I left the rath. It was then I could bear to look at nobody, man or fairy. Then I put on the red jacket and went by myself. After a time I was a lepracaun, and a cluricaun, and nothing at all, as it suited me, and sometimes I lived in a rath with others, as I have in yours, and other times I went by myself. But I never forgot how I was tricked by a mortal, and I've never forgot how I missed getting a soul when I was near to it.

"You've never liked me; you've always thought me sour and harsh and cruel. Do you see why now? Since that time I've always hated all men, because of the one that tricked me; and I've always hated all women, because of the one I lost; and I've always hated all fairies, because they are all as weak and helpless and pitiful as myself. I hate myself and I hate all of you, because there's no good for any of us in all the world forever."

"Naggeneen," said the King, "we've never been too fond of you, it's true, but maybe we'd have liked you better if you'd told us this before. But you're cleverer than all of us. Tell us what we'll do now, so that these mortals won't be getting the better of us all out."

"What'll you do?" Naggeneen answered; "there's nothing you can do. They'll outwit you, whatever you do."

"But there must be some way. Tell us what to do, Naggeneen," the King pleaded.

"I'll tell you what to do, then," said Naggeneen; "send out your people and let them learn the ways of men. Let them learn to make the iron coaches that go up in the air; let them learn to make the coaches that go on the ground, with the iron ropes; let them learn to talk miles away through iron strings; let them learn to make the bright lights that you see; let them learn to open the rock so that it will not close again; let them learn to cross running water in boats full of iron; let them learn to handle iron and do what they like with it, as if it were only gold, and then, maybe, they'll be able to do all the things that men do."

The fairies were simply cowering away from the King and Naggeneen and shivering and squealing with fright at the talk of handling iron and crossing running water. "Ah, Naggeneen," said the King, "you know we can't do all that. Tell us what we'll do at all."

"There's nothing that you can do," said Naggeneen. "There's only one thing I know you can try, and I think that'll do no good either."

"But what is it?" said the King. "We'll try it, anyway."

“It’s not the time to try it yet,” Naggeneen answered. “When the time comes I’ll tell you.”

“Then, Naggeneen,” said the King, “give us a tune out of the fiddle.”

And Naggeneen took the fiddle and played. But there was no merriment in it now. It was only the breath of sorrow and loss and disappointment that breathed from the shivering strings. The fairies did not dance; they only stood and listened, pale and still. In a few moments the King gave the sign for Naggeneen to stop, and in a minute more the lights were out and the whole palace was as quiet as the hill, before any palace was there.

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