



Heart of Rory Connolly

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Magic, Retold Fairy Tales, Romance

Once in Ireland there lived Rory Connolly and, to be honest, he was not the most pleasant person in the world. Rory never smiled and never took part in get-togethers, never told anyone a kind word and would only frown and sigh.

-Oh Rory, – kindly told him off his neighbor Bidy O’Shee, - that’s not how you should live. Isn’t there anything, anything at all that would make you happy?

And Rory just glanced at her through the fence and murmured:

– Why would I be happy, if I may ask? The sky is as usual and the grass is all the same every day.

– But Rory, – would not give up Bidy, - just look at how bright and clear the sky is today! How the grass is so soft and fresh! How wonderfully the lark is singing!

– All the same day after day, – murmured Rory back. - Why do you people make such a fuss about ordinary things!

Rory himself did not stand out from the crowd at all and he looked as dull as was his talking. He always wore some plain-colored clothes, had either ashy or blond hair and on his clothes there were always dust and dirt.

– Oh Rory, - shook her head Bidy while looking at him, - you do need someone to look after you.

– I myself can do that, - replied he, - don’t teach me how I should live.

Rory earned his living by doing all sorts of work: whether anyone needed water from the well or to plow up a garden, that was his sort of job. He was also handy with the instruments and was even considered a good worker: even though he always kept silent and gloomy he did his job very well. From time to time when the farmer gave Rory his earnings, he’d say:

– Hey Rory, smile at least once, would you?

But Rory would take his pay without a word, nod and leave at a brisk walk.

However, despite such unattractive and forgettable appearance, there was one peculiarity that Rory had: everywhere he went he carried a biddle with him. It was an old and shabby biddle, which seemed quite heavy because any time Rory lifted it, he grunted and streams of sweat ran across his face.

Many people asked him: hey Rory, what's there in your biddle? And Rory just gave a shrug, lifted his biddle and went on his way.

One day Rory, as usual, took some rest after work and was sitting by the fence right in front of the pasture. Tabby cows and fluffy sheep were wandering across the grass and clever and loyal shepherd dog was lying nearby with its tongue out from the heat.

Rory just closed his eyes when he heard a gravel voice right beside his ear:

– Say what, son, would you have a drop of water for an old shepherd? The sun's too hot today, isn't it?

Rory turned around and saw that right in front of him was standing a shepherd: in patched but tidy cloth, with bushy beard and moustache and with devil in his eyes.

Without a word Rory handed him a flask and an old man took a sip with great pleasure. He then screwed it up, sighed with content and handed the flask back.

– Thanks a lot, boy. And why are you so dull? Such a wonderful day today.

Of course, Rory did not reply but the old man all of a sudden sat next to him, looked into the distance and said dreamily:

– Mountains, that's what you need. Right now get up and head to the mountains. Otherwise,- and he nodded in the direction of a biddle,- it will bring you great trouble. If I were you, I would not hesitate.

And after those words the shepherd lay on the grass, closed his eyes and smiled. And Rory suddenly felt he could not even say a word. Before this talk happened he did not even think of the mountains but now he felt sudden and acute urge to visit them, feel the rocks under the feet and breathe fresh air, full of smell of wild herbs and pine needles. His legs tingled as if they could not wait to hit the road and then a totally unbelievable thing happened – Rory turned back to the old man and asked:

– For how long do I have to go?

– Not long if you know what you are looking for,- the man replied and dozed off again.

Then, out of hand, Rory stood up, glanced at the village and stepped on the narrow path that, in curls, led right

to the sharp mountain peaks.

It seemed as eternity when Rory finally reached the mountains and started to climb them. And that's what was strange: with every step his biddle seemed lighter and lighter until Rory stopped to feel its weight at all. "This is weird", he thought but continued walking.

So Rory strolled on and on across the canons, waterfall slopes and paths but did not feel tired at all. Quite the opposite, each of his steps seemed to give more strength to him. It was as if he was absorbing everything around him: rough mountain rocks, refreshing and almost icy air.

But human body tends to get tired after some time and by the evening Rory felt that he needed some rest. He entered some cave and lay on the bare floor, smiling blissfully. Never before he has felt so satisfied.

Suddenly he heard a loud noise right in front of the entrance and it resembled a thunderstruck. Given a good fright, Rory jumped out of skin and immediately clasped to his heart the most precious thing he had his old biddle. He sat there, trembling with his whole body, and listened carefully to what was happening outside. And the noise kept getting louder until everything went silent and all of a sudden, right in front of Rory a huge and ugly face a mountain giant appeared!

– There it is! – growled the giant and passed its hand into the cave, with fingers splayed and scraping the walls of the cave in an attempt to catch Rory. And Rory tried to avoid them while keeping the biddle tight.

– You silly human! – growled the giant again and it was so loud that the cave all shook and the gemstone chips fell off the ceiling. - Give it to me now!

And then the giant finally caught Rory and, holding him by the jacket, dragged him out of the cave and gave him such a good shake that Rory sneezed for a dozen times.

And while he was busy sneezing, he let go the precious biddle, which the giant immediately picked up and gently took out a stone heart of rare beauty out of it.

– I do remember you, - grumbled the giant as he put Rory on the ground, – your Dad took you as a little child to the mountains, found my heart and took it with him. He gave it to you as a gift. What a fool he was! But I am not a fool either so I took your heart in exchange, while you two were sleeping right under that rock. But, since you brought my loss back, take yours because I don't take what does not belong to me.

And with this words the giant carefully reached out his big stone palm to Rory and in the middle of it there was something glowing brightly and the giant put it right in Rory's hand.

As soon as Rory touched it and put in his chest, happiness never seen before ran across his whole body in a

shooting flow. As if he was reborn, he greedily inhaled fresh air, watched the patterns of moss on the rocks and listened to the cheerful voice of the stream.

– Well buddy, take care,- hummed the giant and waved at him.- No offense. You were little, like a pebble. Found the loss and that's good enough. Farewell, Rory.

And the giant seemed to dissolve in the mountain range and Rory just stood there with his eyes wide open. This time the road took him twice less time and Rory felt as if he was flying instead of walking. Everything seemed new to him: the singing of the birds far in the sky, the smell of flowers in the field and laughter of people on his way. And he also heard the voices behind his back:

– Is it our Rory?

– Rory Connolli smiling? Is that a miracle?

– Look at him, it's Rory indeed!

And Rory was just happy, nodding and smiling to everyone. Such a deal – to get back his own, alive, loving heart back!

Upon approaching the house he saw Bidy being busy in her yard and with no hesitation he picked a bouquet of flowers and headed straight to her.

– Rory?- she stood up and for the first time ever he saw how beautiful her brown hair is and how lovely her eyes are.- Rory and smiling? Did elves replace you?

– You can say so, dear Bidy, you can say that I was reborn,- replied Rory and placed flowers in her warm and tender hand.- And this is why I invite you to celebrate it with me.

Of course, Bidy agreed and the day was completely wonderful, as all the days that followed. And as for the giant – what happened to him? He got his heart and went back to something that all rock giants do when they feel happy – he felt asleep and dreamt of the emerald grass, clear water and heap clouds, trapped in the cusps.

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