

Nevermas:
a longpoem

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

Master of Arts

by Karen Clavelle

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**NEVERMAS:
A LONGPOEM**

BY

KAREN CLAVELLE

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
MASTER OF ARTS**

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ABSTRACT

Nevermas: A Long Poem in the tradition of 20th century Canadian long poem is a heteroglossic narrative concerned with the creation of a speaking subject through a polyphony of disparate voices which stem from an ancestral past, artifact, folk narratives, and contemporary voices. In the first half of the poem the authoritative voice which initially creates Mairi Òg as a stable construct gradually slips towards Nevermas, a time that never comes. In her quest for knowledge of her own ancestral past Mairi moves towards an other Mairi, who emerges out of the interaction of persuasive voices via dialogic micro-narratives created by a chorus (a collage) of appropriated voices, “real,” found, and imaginary.

The theoretical framework for *Nevermas* arises from the influence of polyphony on the long poems of David Arnason, Michael Ondaatje and Robert Kroetsch, and from the Bakhtinian explication of Menippean satire which, among other things, promotes the understanding of a carnivalized view of the world. In that carnivalized world, replacement of the old with the new, resistance to endings and, consequently, myriad beginnings, doublings, repetitions and inversions all work towards the re-alignment of self. For Mairi, this re-alignment, brought about by means of the interaction of the authoritative and persuasive voices legitimately and optimistically allows resistance to closure as it waits for Nevermas.

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for my family

Martinmas

Candlemas

Whitsun

Lammas

Nevermas

lean gu dlüth ri cliü do shinnsre
let us follow in the brave paths of our ancestors

Martinmas

*Use barley for bannock on Martinmas eve
If the day's foul the summer will leave
But if the day's fair, fair warm it will stay
And t'will be dry weather till Martinmas Day*

I mis-remember you. I see your image in a photograph
 and I know it's you, but it's not you. You aren't there. You
 don't speak. But you do. Your hair is tidy. Swept up for the
 photo, severe. No tendrils escape to soften your edges. The
 camera didn't "take" your picture. You didn't give it. It's the
 eyes which most trouble me. I can't read them. You give
 nothing. You aren't in love. That would show. I have a photo
 of a friend who gave himself to me. I can see it in the picture.
 He is playing with me. He was then, too. He hid among the
 rocks that day and played, and suddenly the photo becomes
 the memory. I'm holding memory, a single moment of
 impromptu affection. It makes me smile. But your picture is
 different from my memory. I see you moving: scraping corn
 from the cob, lacing your boots, picking Saskatoon in the
 bush, putting firewood in your deep, black apron, pushing your
 hand under the downy chicken's belly for a warm egg. How
 old were you? I had a picture taken once, for me. It's very

This I give thee

becoming.

The wild geese are leaving now. Thousands have flown over our house. Duncan and I walked down by the duck pond, just a little pond in the park, and the geese were there, so many of them on the pond that you could hardly see the water. And the noise, it was like a hall full of people all talking at once and then all of a sudden it was quiet, just a stray voice here and there. And the sound of a guitar. You could hear the leaves letting go of the trees, falling, rolling on the grass. It hasn't rained yet since the first frost. Last night the children came. Neighbour's children wanting to rake the leaves for me. The girl is small and so lovely. Will you do a good job, I asked? She is so serious. I nodded, okay. Does that mean yes?

Most of the Canada Geese have left but you still hear the odd one calling. They leave now in dribs and drabs, the ones who seem almost to have been left behind. They fly right overhead, the setting sun turns their bellies rosy gold, outlines their wings. The birds somehow are markers in our lives, clichés of the fall, headed towards the solstice, oddly a time of beginning in another culture, and the time of closure in our own: for us, a little of both. I find their leaving as sad as I find their arrival in spring joyful. Winter is coming and with it, like the passing of the geese, inevitable sadness. Inevitable sadness, a kind of darkness comes to me as I write to you as well, and the writing grows ever more difficult. I wonder what you did on days like this. Work went on, didn't it? You'd have needed to light the lamps to see inside the house, or was light during the day extravagant, and you waited till suppertime so you could see what you were eating? I've put the heat on. No wood fire to keep burning here, no wood stove in my house, no coal. No places for the wind to blow in either, but you can still hear it outside, see the rain on the windows. The leaves are all gone now. Nothing is left that is green. People's yards are

clean and ready for snow, though today isn't cold enough. I left my sweet peas in the garden. They're still blooming and I haven't the heart to pull them out yet. It's easier after the frost has gotten them. I've pulled the petunias though, and most of the small vegetable garden is done.

I got a letter from your niece today. I put photos of you and her and my mother and me side by side. The resemblance is remarkable. The photos, except the one of me, are all portraits, old and new. I have always intended to have a formal one taken of me but I never go. Perhaps our needs are different. It's Indian Summer, warm and lovely after the first frost despite the soaking rain. I'm going to Scotland.

You'd be astonished to know that in little more time than it took us to get to Winnipeg and back from the farm, I have arrived in Glasgow. It would have taken you longer than that to get from Perth to Glasgow on your bicycle. Did you take the bicycle that day all the way to the docks? Then what did you do with it? I came here to look for your letters, you know, but I'm too late. Just as your letters are gone from the farm, they're gone here, too. Fragile words from your mother gone, burnt with the paper they were written on. You should have waited for me. Your stories are gone and I have none of my own. I think you must have ridden that day, on a bicycle, and left it behind.

I'm here, I don't know how many hours away from home. I'm feeling as though there are different parts of me in different places, something that isn't helped, I suppose, by having stored my luggage at the Waverley Station rather than lug it all over while I looked for a place to stay. So, I have walked and taxied all over Edinburgh and found a flat I can move into tomorrow. It's right on the Water of Leith and I can see the signal tower in Fife from the front window. I sit at home and look out across the prairie and I can sit here and look out across the ocean.

I am in need of comfort. A little heat or a cuddly blanket would go a long way. I have neither and the agency is closed for the weekend and I'm wishing with mixed feelings that I'd just stayed at a B & B where the bed was comfy and warm and someone would have coffee for me in the morning. I got my bags from the station but even though I've unpacked this flat seems awfully quiet and awfully empty and I am alone for the first time in my life. Funny what you do in a strange place, isn't it? I went for a half-pint of lager today, at a pub called The Wally Dog. You'd have known this: Wally dogs are porcelain dogs that used to sit in pairs on people's mantelpieces. I didn't notice a single one in the pub. Two minutes ago it wasn't raining, now you can hear rain rushing against the windows. Yesterday I stood waiting to cross Howe St. in a big enough patch of rain to cover about four cars. Everything else around me was perfectly dry! This is true. Did you have wally dogs on your mantelpiece? Did you have a mantelpiece?

- Reason is informed by emotion expressed in beauty, elevated by earnestness - lightened by humour. That is the ideal that should guide all artists - CRM

Well, I've been to Glasgow. Today I stood in line for ninety minutes in Sauchiehall St. waiting to see the exhibit on the works of Charles Rennie Macintosh. "Be independent. Be independent. Be independent. Go alone. Convince the world," he said, "that there may be things, there may be things more precious than ordinary light, but to do this, you must offer flowers growing from your own soul." I stood there in front of those words on the wall, eyes full of tears, and walked through the rest of the display without seeing very much at all. And what do I remember? While I waited in line I met an Australian doctor on leave from work in Saudi Arabia, considering a job in Norway House. This, while I try to understand what place meant to you, what it means to me. And while I waited I watched three little girls feeding about ninety pigeons. "You must offer flowers growing from your own soul."

The Bonnach Salanainn

Now ye bake this just like any other bannock, ye see, but with a great deal of salt, and ye eat it at Hallowe'en and your dreams will foretell the future, don't you know, but, mind ye don't drink and ye don't say a word after ye eat it or the charm will be broken.

*This is Hallowe'en
The morn is Hallowday
Nine free nights till Martinmas
An' sure they'll wear away.*

For the third time in three days I've had to go to a shop to get my glasses fixed and I had to walk all the way to George St and then Frederick St. to find an optician. Then I walked all the way home, about twice as far as I needed because, working on the assumption that the streets were relatively straight going downhill, I got lost trying to find Leith Walk, and it was dark by the time I got here. It is dark by 4:30.

Today is Hallowe'en and there are no signs of children in the streets, though the shops have decorations and one of the buildings in George Square has silhouettes of witches on broomsticks and black cats in the windows. I did see one tiny witch in the Meadows. She was waving her broom from her father's arms. And there is a witch reading "The Scotsman" in the window of the news-stand around the corner from the flat. There are also witches and voyeurs, no doubt, who will

gather, I think, at the witch's fountain at the Castle Esplanade. This is really disturbing. Three hundred women were tied at the stake, strangled, and then burnt around the turn of the 16th century (the last was 1722), and the fountain is a monument to them, intended to record the fact that not all witches worked for evil ends! Three hundred is but a fraction of the four and a half thousand who were killed in Scotland in a cleansing fuelled chiefly by King James VI, son of Mary Queen of Scots, through his book Daemonologie. There is a terrible symmetry to the fact of James VI's involvement - his own mother was beheaded by his predecessor Elizabeth I.

I can hear fireworks but I cannot see any from here. And for the past week bangers have been sounding well into the night. I was hearing propane bangers intended to scare the geese in the fields at home but I couldn't figure out why I'd be hearing the same thing here. Something on the docks, maybe? Nothing so complicated. They're fire crackers. Guy Fawkes Day is coming.

*For O, her lanely nights are lang
And O, her dreams are eerie
And O, her widowed heart is sair
That's absent frae her dearie.*

November. And the geese are long gone and for a month we've had snow. Snow almost every day. Yesterday I was walking in Edinburgh in the rain. A bus passing in the street sent up a sheet of water onto the front of me so when I got to the library, I was damp and chilled, my feet wet but not soaked like they were in the hills. Today at home the wind frosts the glass on the front door, and I wonder how you made it through prairie winters year after year, in and out of the house for firewood and water, in and out to milk cows and feed chickens. And there in the Perthshire hills, I wondered how you survived, too. It rained soaking rain for three days and I walked. In sodden grass through marsh across the moor. And it wasn't winter yet. Families lived there once. Outside. They sheltered where they could. I found a shepherd's house there, a stone wall beside it. There was a small window and a low

doorway and no light inside. One room under the low blackened roof. And a fireplace. And behind and around, hills rising. Not women's hills. But not women's prairie either. I have been to Scotland and now the prairie is no longer mine. Is it because there are no hills at all? It's flat and open and there's no place for me. Miles of prairie, no trees, no stone dykes, no ivy, no hills, no narrow roads, no paths where you walked with your sisters to school, with your brothers to the mill, with your mother to the burn to wash clothes, to the old kirkyard with an iron gate, to the big house at Delvine.

I look out at night and see that the waters are black, lightened irregularly by the reflection of the street lights, darkened more by the force of the wind wrinkling and rippling the smooth surface. The wind has been fierce. Last night in the height of the storm I looked down to see the swans in the shelter of the big boat in the channel below my window.

I have two weeks left here and I am in a panic. So little time to get a lifetime into a fortnight. Yours? Or mine? I don't know. I am comfortable here, happy to have heard from Duncan, but reduced to tears by thoughts of returning home so soon. The time I thought I'd have for writing is gone, not so much because I'm busy, but more because of place. What does that mean?

Fire engines are roaring by on Bernard St. and I am reminded of the Cuban missile crisis and the air raid sirens when I was growing up. Walking home from school or hearing the sirens in war movies on someone's TV, I was equally frightened, and now as I write, I have knots in my stomach hearing sirens rattle in the concrete of the city in a place where the evidence of war remains so visible to me. Today is

Remembrance Sunday and as I walked towards the church on Commercial St. this morning, the Boys' Brigade Band marched into the churchyard through the cemetery inside the stone walls. At the base of the Scott Monument is a small patch of grass cordoned off and filled with tiny crosses and tiny poppies. Each cross bears a hand-written name. In this place, this city of so many centuries, there are constant reminders of war dead. Flodden, Culloden, the Boer War, World Wars One and Two, a memorial to Wellington and the Battle of Waterloo, and to Burns who fought his own wars - somehow, these are memories. And names. Names of those long dead and strangely still living, names called out every day: Buccleugh, Melville, Argyle, Duke after Duke after Duke, St. Giles, St. Andrew, St. Michael, John Knox, Grey Friars. And four women. Weren't there any women besides Catherine Sinclair, Lady Stairs, St. Cecilia and Queen Victoria?

The little Highland Mutton when fat, is delicious and certainly the greatest of Luxuries. And the small Beef, when fresh is very sweet and succulent, though it lacks Substance which should preserve it long when salted. Amongst the poorer classes in Scotland, Beef is eaten only at Martinmas, when a Mart, or Ox is killed.

Kate tucked this little rhyme in with her Christmas letter, with no explanation at all. It sounds like our Hallowe'en. I'll ask her about it when I write next time.

*Rise up Gweedwife
Rise up Gweedwife and shak your feathers
Dinna think that we are beggars,
We're only children come to play,
Rise up and gie's oor Hogmanay.
Our feet's cauld, our sheen's thin,
Gie's a piece and let's rin.
Your pocket's full o money,
Your bottle's full o beer,
Will ye no gie's a bawbee
To see the geed New Year.*

*And for auld lang syne, my jo,
For auld lang syne
We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

Did you used to celebrate Hogmanay? I made a Cloutie Dumpling à la F. Marian Macneill, for New Year's Eve. Auld lang syne. Some things do not translate well into English and those words end up sounding more like a long lost person than a bittersweet reference to our treasured past. Last night after Duncan went to bed I stayed up and cried for what will never be. Duncan went out this morning to clear away the first of the New Year's gifts~ several inches of snow, and came back in, dark-haired as ever, a good "First-footer."

New Year Bannock

Oatmeal, butter and caraway seed. Put sufficient quantity of meal in a basin and rub the butter well through it. Put in the caraway seed, mix up the whole. Add water until the dough is a proper consistence, turn it out and knead the Bannock about an inch thick. Place a cup with its mouth downward on the center of the Bannock, cut round the cup with a sharp knife. Cut round the outer edges of the Bannock with a knife, pinch the edges with the finger and thumb, put the Bannock in a griddle or a brander, and bake over a clear fire.

*O, wert thou in the could blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.*

Oh, "wert thou in the cold blast," indeed. I found those words on the back of a photograph of you. But the poem isn't really about weather, is it? I looked it up. "I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee." The words haunt me. I want to ask who? Who would you have sheltered? I know who I'd shelter The weather has been bad in Scotland, too. No electricity, frozen pipes, no heat. Kate told me they'd cancelled Christmas till Easter when they could get the cooker to do the dinner; can't cook when the power is off. Christmas was not very successful from the sounds of things. The pipes froze and thawed, with twenty-three bursts in them. The bird's water froze. There was curling on the river. That hasn't happened for years. And here, you know about the cold here. It's January. Every time I go out I think of you. I have the warmest coat in the world and I feel guilty because I know you never in your entire life had anything that warm, and I complain about the cold.

For the Sake o' Somebody

My heart is sair - I dare na tell-

My heart is sair for Somebody:

I could wae a winter night

For the sake o' Somebody

O-hon! for Somebody!

O-hey! for Somebody!

I could range the world around

For the sake o' Somebody.

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,

O sweetly smile on Somebody!

Frae ilka danger keep him free,

And send me safe my Somebody!

O-hon for Somebody!

O-hey for Somebody!

I wad do - what wad I not? -

For the sake o' Somebody!

Candlemas

*If Candlemas Day be clear and fair
Half o' the winter's to come and mair
If Candlemas Day be sweet and full
Half o' the winter's by at Yule*

The Bonnach Bride

*Mind ye have this bonnach ready for the first day of
spring and mind, too, to guard the fires of St. Brigit*

Ground Hog Day, and he sees his shadow, too (the ground hog, I mean). I brought the video home for us to watch, (Ground Hog Day, I mean), but Duncan stayed late at work and I ended up watching it by myself, well, most of it anyway. The guy has so many chances to get it right. I suppose that's a metaphor and there's a lesson to be learned, but Goodness knows I wouldn't like to be stuck on February 2nd till I finally got myself straightened out. Then again. . . .

*Joekie's ta'en the parting kiss,
O'er the mountains he is gane,
And with him is a' my bliss -
Nought but griefs with me remain.*

I heard a crow today, the first one of the year. It's too early. We don't get crows in February, especially not in time for Valentine's Day, but there it was on the corner fencepost on the only bit of wood that isn't covered with snow. Ice crystals hang in the air today and the horizon is lost somewhere across the street and beyond. The neighbour's birdfeeder is swinging in the wind and yesterday's snow remains on the front window. It is very much like looking through the design on a paper lace doily with the centre cut out. I remember when my bedroom windows were frosted like that from the inside, so that the light coming into the room was whiter, softer somehow, in another time.

Chasing crows at Candlemas; the lassies chased the crows. That's the second day of February, and wherever this craa, wherever she fled or whatever housetop she settled on, she was supposed to be the partner 'at the lassie was going to get, ken, the laddie from that house, it was. Juist the first crow you saw, an' then you had to keep track on him.

I was scrounging around the other day to see if I could find a verse for a Valentine and I came across this old love charm. Well, I don't know if it is really a love charm, in fact it doesn't seem clear who even wrote it down - Duncan ban Macintyre or Blind Allan the Glengarry Bard, but how could I resist? Seeing it's not likely that I can find any of the ingredients, I think I'll just slip the words under my pillow and sleep on them, what do you think?

Verses Recited by a Maiden For Her Lover

*Water from straws or wisps
is no love charm for thee,
tis drawing to thee ardently
the love of him that pleaseth thee.*

*On Sunday rise thou early
to a level, broad flagstone;
and take with thee specimens
of butter-bur and monkshood;
lift those on thy shoulder
on a wooden shovel.*

*Get nine stacks of bracken
cut down with an axe,
and three bones of an old man;
extracted from a grave,
burn it on a faggot fire,
and reduce the whole to ash.*

*Rub this on his white breast
while facing the north wind
and I'll go bail and guarantee
that man will not desert thee.*

I never did get my sweet peas out, you know, and now the trellis Duncan built for me is bent with the weight of snow held, first by the vines, but now by the wind. The snow drifts, silent, to the bottom of the kitchen window and fills the corner where the Virginia Creeper grows. The fence is six feet high and in places you can't see it at all. I've read about prairie snowstorms and people dying inside their log houses because they had a single door that opened out and they couldn't get out after a snowstorm. I wonder if they froze to death or starved or both? Such a simple thing, having a door that opens in.

Another snowy day and the city has a different sound. An undue silence from the trapped blanket of air in the new snow. Rabbits cross the fence on snowshoe feet. And one comes every day now and sits where he can hardly be seen, behind a snowdrift. He won't touch the food I put out for him. He sits all day, watching. Winter is like that.

*My heart is sair - I dare na tell -
My heart is sair for Somebody:
I could wake on a winter night
For the sake o' Somebody.*

The winter wears on. The time of good humoured exuberance that comes with a storm has passed, and I am now waiting for something more pleasant than February's dull grey. I am feeling terribly neglected as I wait in vain for a letter in the mail. Did you leave someone behind?

Today is Duncan's birthday. The daffodils are blooming in the Princes Street Gardens, Kate tells me, so many that the fields of yellow beneath the castle become tiresome. Here, where everything is white or thaw-white, when the winter is so long, that is hard to imagine. I can't grow them myself because they'd bloom in June and I need their energy now, so after Kate's letter arrived, I went to Safeway and bought bunches and bunches of them and I put them in glass vases in every room in the house so wherever I go there will be spring for a few minutes. Those are for me. For Duncan, there are little pots of jelly beans~ where he watches TV, beside the bed, on the coffee table, and, after he got home from work, I put some in his coat pocket where he'll find them when he looks for his car keys.

*Musing on the roaring ocean
Which divides my love and me,
Wearying heav'n in warm devotion
For his weal where'er he be.*

April and still the winter wears on. But the sun is out and the sky is once again brilliant blue. The wind is wicked cold. It's a March wind. Just Friday we had more snow. Everything was covered in white again. The airport was closed and I wondered whether I'd be able to leave, but the flights later in the day were just delayed. Funny, it was snowing when I arrived home from Edinburgh Nov 1st, and it was snowing the next time I left home again. Scotland. I am so longing to return that when I see something which reminds me my eyes fill and my throat tightens. This happens most unexpectedly. I have to be the only person in the world who wept all the way through "Brave Heart" and "Rob Roy". Can you believe it? And not because of Mel Gibson or Liam Neeson either. It's the hills. And the Highlands. And the other day I was reading a story and turned a page to see a photo of the Cairngorms. I swear I could feel the mist. I have not yet

finished the story.

There is a flurry of activity just now in the tree across the street, and I look up to see about three dozen birds all headed for the same tree. They really are quite democratic, birds, aren't they? They just glide in and take whatever is available, and they all light in about ten seconds so that if you don't see them in that instant of landing, you miss everything. And the Canada Geese are back. Yesterday I saw a flock of about three hundred. I don't recall ever seeing so many flying together before. Duncan and I were laughing at some last week just before the snow came. They were flying south again. I feel a bit like a Canada Goose myself wanting to return somewhere, but how do you account for the fact that where I want to return isn't really home, at least not to me? And I wait here despite my heart.

*My heart is sair I dare na tell
My heart is sair for somebody:
I could wake a winter night
For the sake o' Somebody
O-hon for Somebody!
O-hon for Somebody!
I could range the world around
For the sake o' Somebody.*

*Ye powers that smile on virtuous love
O sweetly smile on Somebody!
Frae ilka danger keep him free
And send me safe my Somebody!*

*I would do - what would I not?~
For the sake o' Somebody!*

Whitsun

*It's time for Christening on Whitsunday
To keep the wee souls from going astray
Take Whitsun bannock, it's good for the soul
I will keep the weans healthy and whole*

The bonnach Bealltain

This I give thee, preserve thou my horses;

This to thee, preserve thou my sheep

This I give to thee, O Fox, preserve thou my lambs;

This to thee, O Hooded Crow, this to thee, O Eagle!

Ye take a cake of oatmeal and ye raise nine square knobs on it, ye see, and ye dedicate some to a particular preserver of the flocks or herds, and some to particular animals or destroyers of them, and then, ye see, ye turn your face to the fire and each person breaks off a knob and ye sling it over your shoulder and that's what ye say. And ye always do this for the first, the Sub-o' Mey.

It's May, and the houses and the yards are covered with frost in the mornings. Patches of ice melt slowly, later as the day wears on; the grass remains brown but the chives in the sun behind the house are already fresh and green and early asparagus seems to be shooting up by the hour, yesterday one head, today three. The trellis Duncan made for the sweet peas broke under the weight of the snow, and all the vines I missed in October wait to be pulled out soon, when the frost is out of the ground.

I remember your garden. I remember the lady slippers and brown-eyed susans and tiger lilies. The names still enchant me. I took a drive out to the farm last week on the old No.10 but there was nothing I knew. The bluff is gone, and the Saskatoon bushes at the edge of the highway. The barbed wire gate is gone, even the trees that lined the driveway. The garage where William kept the Austin waiting for Saturday nights, the chicken coop, the pigpen, the granaries. All gone. It's like Ruffle in October. Did I tell you I went there? The burn runs wild, the mill's abandoned. And the house . . . I dream of that house. Did you?

Did you know of Mrs. Beeton? She was the definitive voice in the area of household management from 1860 on. My friend showed me his copy of her book the other day. I need this book! But I've canvassed the local bookstores with no luck at all. I will wait and see what I can find in Edinburgh.

You were already gone the day John shot the crow. It was just sitting on the fencepost in the pasture. We were walking behind the cows and he had the '22 and he stopped me with his hand on my arm and he whispered, "See that crow? I'm gonna get it." And Granddad and Dad turned around to watch and he got the crow, but he didn't kill it. And they just stood there looking. "Shoot it again," they said, and I looked at John and his eyes were round and full of tears. And they stood there and watched and he loaded the gun and fired, and he did it again until Dad finally grabbed the gun and killed the crow. "If you're going to use a gun," he said, "you'd better know what you're about. Now get out of here. Both of you." I ran and hid in the barn. Funny I should have thought about that after all this time. That's what I was thinking about on the way to the library. It's about a twenty minute walk. I went through the field to look for crocuses and I heard the crows. I remember you digging potatoes in the winter garden while I called to the crows till my voice got hoarse. They always answered.

*Now spring has clad the grass in green
And strew'd the lea with flowers;
The furrow's waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers;
While ilka thing in nature join
Their sorrows to forgo,
O, why thus alone are mine
The weary steps o' woe.*

I'm sad today. Outside it is overcast and dreary and inside I feel the same way. It's mid-May and the trees are still bare, not even buds can be seen on them. The temperature is below zero again after about five days of warmth. Duncan and I raked the yard on Saturday. You'd find the small power rake interesting; goodness knows what you would think of it, though. I don't remember grass growing around your house but I do remember the rue on a damp morning and the gravel beside the house where the chickens were always pecking at the ground for grit. Well, we have a yard of thick cushiony grass which is, in summer, lush and green as the grass on a golf course. We put the raked grass into big sacks and the garbage truck comes and hauls it away with the other garbage they

collect once a week. This is life in the city. Strictly speaking of course it's not, not even close, but garbage collection is one aspect of life here.

*My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer.*

I feel disconnected. I'm not sure of my place here or there. It was all right till I came to look for you in the first place. But when I came home that first time, I cried to be back. How could you stay here? Was this ever truly your place? I mean in your heart of hearts?

I'm learning Gaelic. I wonder what you'd have to say about that? Dad says to me, "How can you keep studying, aren't you wise enough yet?" He pulls out a small newspaper clipping from Geordie and offers it to Aunt Maggie to pass on to me but she says to him, "She doesn't understand the Scotch." "No," I think, looking at her, "no, I don't." It's your broad Scotch they're thinking in their English Canadian words. I worked for a while at a seniors centre and many of the people were Ukrainian. One day, as usual, several of the old ladies were talking away and when I came closer they switched to Ukrainian and I asked them to please speak English, I couldn't understand them any more, and they said to me,

"But we don't want you to understand us." They weren't being mean. I think they were talking about me which is why I asked them to speak English in the first place. And they liked it that I couldn't understand. I think it's the same there with Dad and Aunt Maggie. They liked me better the old way.

It rained all last night and today a fine mist covers everything. I went for my first walk in the rain since November. I didn't get drenched by a sheet of water sent up by a passing bus but I came in damp nonetheless. And I am still damp. This is not the mist of the Cairngorms with clouds always moving, clouds so low that you seem to be walking in them. The sky today is solid white-grey, and the mist so fine that when you first go out you almost sense it on your face rather than feel it. The boy across the street has a slingshot. His parents are gone to work and he is in the garage firing small stones at the metal garbage can lid which he's set up as a target and the sound is making me crazy. He stops just long enough to make me think he's finally gone to do something else, and then the clunk of stone on tin starts again. Don't kids go to school anymore?

Slingshots aren't things city kids usually have. One time when I was out at the farm, Grandad took me with him to the barn. Not the cow barn, he wouldn't let me in there, the other side where William kept the horses. He handed me a smooth piece of wood with some rubber strips and some leather fastened

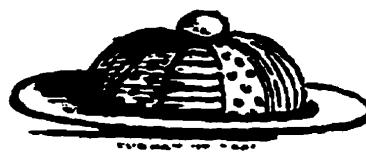
onto it. A slingshot. He didn't show me how to use it, didn't say anything, he just put it in my hand and said I could have it. The slingshot meant nothing when I could hear the tiny mewling squeaks of the days-old kittens in the empty stall, and I think Granddad likely had to haul me out of there despite telling me that when it was daylight I could actually see them in the barn. I woke up to the sounds of the grandmother clock and laid awake listening to the dark, Aunt Maggie snuffling in sleep beside me, and I remembered the kittens. I remember slipping out of bed. I must have really crept down the squeaky stairs because I got out with no trouble at all, and you know those stairs squeaked. I actually got right to the barn door before disaster struck. There were voices in the barn. Not the shifting night-sounds of the horses in their stalls, people's voices. Not talking. I remember the stillness. You could hear the crickets and the bullfrogs, and I hid at the side of the barn, but all at once the dog was there barking and out came William, stumbling and hopping on one foot and trying to get into his long johns and shut the dog up at the same time, and behind him, just a-chattering, was Louisa, and she was

hopping on one foot while she tried to get the other foot into her underwear. They had nothing on. And that dog barked and backed out of the way and barked some more and he only shut up when Granddad came out and had a look around, and William who'd gotten his long-johns on by that time came strolling out cool as anything, and said to Granddad, "Well. There ain't nothing in the barn so far's I can see. What's this, the third night in a row that idiot dog wakes everybody up with his barking? Couple more nights of this and I'll shoot the stupid thing. You go on back to bed and shut him up in the porch. I'm going to sit out here for a few more minutes just to make sure." William sat down on the edge of the water-trough and Granddad wasn't half-way across the yard when out came poor old Louisa wearing her panties and holding her slip up in front of her. William's long johns sleeves were hanging around his knees when the two of them went back into the barn. First thing the next morning, I was back out again to see those kittens and look for the slingshot. I met William coming across the yard. The rubber strap of the slingshot was hanging out of his back pocket. I never said a word.

Last night I took my new umbrella and went walking in the steady rain. This time it was like walking in the mountains. I was too warm in my jacket and it was too wet out to take it off. This morning the heavy moist air reminded me of the ocean. Wishful thinking. The prairie never smells like the ocean. The street looked as though a terrible storm had passed through and the wind had broken thousands of tiny twigs from the trees and blown them all out into the street. But the twigs were really earthworms beginning to dry out, grasping at the shallow narrow streams of water at the sides of the pavement. It was impossible not to walk on them and I thought to myself nothing will grow now because the earthworms are all gone.

Mrs. Beeton finally arrived today in the mail and imagine my dismay to discover that she had been thoroughly updated and wasn't the Mrs. Beeton I'd had in mind at all. When the bookstore told me they'd found a re-print for me, I was so excited it didn't even occur to me that they would send me a revised edition, and all the instructions you got have long since been replaced. It makes sense, I guess. What good would they be now? We have all the time in the world, each one of us,

*and yet there is no time for "Larks in Onions, or Attar of
Roses." And who ever needed "Sheep's Tongues alla
Nivernese" on the Turtle River not to mention the politically
incorrect Turban of Filet of Veal?*



2969. LARKS IN ONIONS

Ingredients. —12 larks, 3 or 4 slices of bacon, about 1 pint of stock, 1 or 2 fowls' livers, a bunch of herbs, 6 Spanish onions of equal size, ½ lb of forcemeat, salt and pepper.

Mode.—Clean the larks, bone them and stuff them with liver and herbs chopped very fine. Put some slices of bacon at the bottom of a stew pan and cover with stock. Simmer for about a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile peel and blanch the onions; let them cool, wipe them quite dry and take out enough of the inside to leave room for the larks and a little forcemeat. Put a little forcemeat in each onion and a lark over it, replacing the head with a little forcemeat, taking care to remove the eyes. Salt the onions slightly, cover with slice of lard and pieces of paper, and put in a baking pan in the oven, long enough to set the stuffing. Take out with care, put on a cloth first to drain off the fat, and then on an entrée dish. Glaze and serve with sauce espagnole, adding a little lemon-juice.

Time.—About ½ hour. Average Cost, 4s.

Sufficient for 10 persons.

Seasonable.—In full season in November.



LARKS IN ONIONS.

2966.-SHEEP'S TONGUES ALLA NIVERNESSE

Ingredients.—6 sheep's tongues, salt, pepper, nutmeg, chopped parsley, 1 pint of stock, 6 small lettuces, six carrots

Mode.—Cleanse the tongues thoroughly, and boil gently for two hours in water, with a little salt, pepper, grated nutmeg and chopped parsley. When done, remove the skin and let them cool, taking care to preserve their shape. Then lay them in a stewpan with reduced stock, and shortly before serving bring to a boil and glaze. Place them in a dish so as to form a crown, putting between each tongue a lettuce stuffed with forcemeat, and a carrot cut into the shape of a heart, all separately cooked. Fill up the centre space with any vegetable preferred, stewed in a little stock and butter.

Time.—2½ hours. Average Cost, 4s

Sufficient for 6 persons

Seasonable all year.

Ay Waukin, O

*Ay waukin, O,
Waukin still and weary;
Sleep I can get nane
For thinking on my dearie.*

*Simmer's a pleasant time;
Flowers of every colour,
The water rins ower the heugh,
And I long for my true lover.*

*When I sleep I dream.
When I wauk I'm eerie,
Sleep I can get nane,
For thinking on my dearie.*

*Lanely night comes on,
A' the lave are sleepin,
I think on my bonie lad,
And I bleeer my een wi' greetin.*

Lammas

*If warm and sunny is Lamma's Day
Then Indian Summer is headed this way.
But if the weather be cool and damp
I will be an early winter.*

The Bonnack Lunastain

Flour, oatmeal, bicarbonate of soda, cream of tartar, salt, sugar, lard and buttermilk

Sieve into a bowl six ounces of flour, four ounces of oatmeal, half a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda, three quarters teaspoonful of cream of tartar, half a teaspoonful of sugar and a pinch of salt. Rub in a piece of lard the size of a walnut, add enough buttermilk to make a soft dough. Turn onto a floured board and knead lightly, then roll out into a round. Cut in four and then bake on a hot girdle or in a thick-bottomed frying-pan

Put an apronful of nettles in a vessel. Cover them with boiling water. When cold strip the leaves from the stalks, and wash the leaves in cold water. Boil in a pot covered with water, for twenty minutes. Pour out the liquid. Add a piece of butter and a handful of meal. Beat and serve hot. People ought to take seven meals of nettles every year.

*If they would eat nettles in March,
And eat muggins in May
So many braw maidens
Would not turn to clay!*

Syrop of Nettles

Take red Nettles, wash and pick the Nettles very clean, then beat them and squeeze out the Juice, and let it stand and till very clear, and pour it off, and to each Mutchkin of Juice, take a lib. of Sugar, and boil it, when cold, bottle it up.

I've been wall-papering. When Duncan and I went to Scotland, the first night we were there we slept in a four poster bed in a room covered with flowers. And when I opened my eyes in the morning, the whole room had a pink glow, like a prairie sunset, though I didn't think of it at the time. It was my birthday. The canopy over the bed was pink, the curtains were rose-covered like the walls and the sheets. Oriental rugs at the sides of the bed were patterned with roses and green. I'd heard the wind all night and when I first woke up I tried to go back to sleep because I knew it was stormy out and I expected snow. But I was in Scotland and it was summer. Odd how your mind plays tricks on you sometimes, isn't it? Anyway, I'm wall-papering today. Roses and vines on ivory now cover part of one wall. Do you remember the wall-paper in Aunt Maggie's room? I don't recall paper anywhere else in the house but as I look at the new paper here, I'm reminded of that tiny room on the farm. Big wall-paper flowers more like hollyhocks than roses are what I remember, cabbage roses, maybe? And the iron bed with the knots on the spindles. And the quilt on the bed. And the clock ticking on the landing. And I remember you sitting on the side

of the bed and we talked sometimes on into the dark till Aunt Maggie finally came to bed and William sat in the parlour fiddling with his crystal radio, the voices and music coming into focus and fading and coming back into focus. Remember the two of us hiding under the bed that day Aunt Maggie was so mad at me and then she was mad at both of us? Was she like that all the time? I have to go and finish the wall before the last strip gets too dry. I always liked waking up in that room.

It seems as though I only write on rainy days, how can that be? I went to the fish market early today. Early means before most people get going, and my day is half over. Just inside the door at the market is a huge lobster tank and to the left of that, stands a long table piled high with ice and oysters, arctic char, monk fish and spring salmon. It's a bit like going to an outdoor market without the sights and sounds of the sea (on the prairie,) except everything there is gutted and cleaned up for sale. The char was expensive so I brought home a salmon for dinner. And a bottle of wine. But it's Friday and Duncan, who would rather stay out after work than come home, did just that, and I have had dinner alone. Not quite. I did have Billie Holiday for company. One can do worse. There was whitefish for sale today too, laying on its side under the glass display case, dead eyes wide open.



Do you remember that time you cooked fish and I wouldn't eat it? I don't recall ever seeing fish before that. Dad and William had caught a few jackfish and they were out behind the granary cleaning them. They laid them out on newspaper and Dad took one by the tail and started to

scale it but it wasn't dead yet, then he put his knife in its belly and I wanted to say something but I couldn't speak, and my stomach hurt, and then he saw me standing there. And he looked up and said, "Go get me some smokes from the house, instead of standing there gawking." There were new potatoes and fresh corn for supper and you scraped yours off the cob and the kernels flew from the knife like scales from a fish. I am sick remembering this. And Aunt Maggie said, "You're not gettin' nothin' else if you don't eat that fish." I sat there with my plate in front of me till the table was empty and it was dark in the parlour, and the oil lamps were hissing in the kitchen while you and Aunt Maggie did the dishes and the men sat out on the steps rolling cigarettes and twisting the ends to keep the tobacco in. William leaned on the door jamb and he called around the corner to me, "We're goin' fishin' again tomorrow, Chicken-shit," he said. "You wanna come?" And Aunt Maggie's voice in the background filtered in around him "First it's the water's gotta have Freshie in it. An' the milk smells funny. Fish tonight, 'n she just sits there. She's spoiled rotten that kid and nobody does nothin'." And when everyone had gone to town, you brought me some Freshie

and sat with me into the dark, on the edge of Aunt Maggie's chipped iron bed. And one day years later someone else brought tea to my room, only once, and sat on the edge of the bed, gentle, quiet. And I fell in love with him at that moment. Only once.

I saw William cleaning the fish and you must have known that. But you were gone the day I saw him kill the chickens and one ran around even though he'd cut its head off. And you were gone the day he castrated the pigs. I plugged my ears and hid under the bed. I felt their shrieks of pain inside me and nobody, nobody would tell me what was going on. And when it was quiet I crept out to the pig pen and just stood there. The pigs were inside, and Dad came out. "How long have you been standing there with your bare face hanging out? You get the hell back up to the house and you stay there for a while." And that was all he said.

1191.—TO BOIL A HAM. (*Fr.—Jambon*)

Ingredients.—Ham, water, glaze or raspings.

Mode.—In choosing a ham ascertain that it is perfectly sweet, by running a sharp knife into it, close to the bone; and it, when the knife is withdrawn, it has an agreeable smell, the ham is good; if, on the contrary, the blade has a greasy appearance and offensive smell, the ham is bad. If it has been long hung and is very dry and salt, let it remain and soak for 24 hours, changing the water frequently. This length of time is only necessary in the case of its being very hard; from 8 to 12 hours would be sufficient for a Yorkshire or Westmoreland ham. Wash it thoroughly and trim away from the under-side all rusty and smoked parts which would spoil the appearance. Put it into a boiling-pot with sufficient cold water to cover it; bring it gradually to a boil, and as the scum rises carefully remove it. Keep it simmering very gently until tender, and be careful that it does not stop boiling nor boil too quickly. When done, take it out of the pot, strip off the skin, and sprinkle over it a few bread-raspings. Put a frill of cut paper around the knuckle and serve. If to be eaten cold, let the ham remain in the water until nearly cold; by this method, the juices are kept in, and it will remain infinitely superior to one taken out of the water hot. When the skin is removed, sprinkle over bread-raspings, or, if wanted particularly nice, glaze it. Place a paper frill around the knuckle and garnish with parsley or cut vegetable flowers.

1192.—HOW TO BOIL A HAM TO GIVE IT AN EXCELLENT FLAVOUR

Ingredients.—Vinegar and water, 2 heads of celery, 2 turnips, 3 onions, a large bunch of savoury herbs.

Mode.—Prepare the ham as in the preceding recipe, and let it soak for a few hours in vinegar and water. Put it on in cold water, and when it boils, add the vegetables and herbs. Simmer very gently until tender, take it out, strip off the skin, cover with bread-raspings, and put a paper ruche or frill around the knuckle.

Time.—A ham weighing 10 lbs., 4 hours. **Average Cost,**—1s. per lb. by the whole ham.

Seasonable at any time.

How to Silence a Pig. Anecdote of Charles V.—When Emperor Charles V. was one day walking in the neighbourhood of Vienna, full of pious consideration, engendered by the thoughts of the Dominican cloister he was about to visit, he was much annoyed by the noise of a pig, which a country youth was carrying a little way before him. At length, irritated by the unmitigated noise, “Have you not learned how to quiet a pig,” demanded the imperial traveller tartly.

“Noa,” replied the ingenious peasant, ignorant of the quality of his interrogator:— “noa; and I should very much like to know how to do it,” changing the position of his burthen, and giving his load a surreptitious pinch of the ear, which immediately altered the volume and tone of his complaining.

“Why, take the pig by the tail,” said the emperor and you will see how quiet he will become.”

Struck by the novelty of the suggestion, the countryman at once dangled his noisy companion by the tail, and soon discovered that, under the partial congestion caused by its inverted position, the pig indeed had become silent

Did you ever have fiddlehead greens? My friend Margaret gave me a bag of them the other day when she got back from Nova Scotia. They look like a cross between asparagus and spinach all curled up, and they look, oddly enough, like a fiddlehead. Mrs. Beeton, for once, has no advice. She does have something to say about mussels and I've decided to follow her instructions when I've had another successful visit to the fish market.

506.- MUSSELS. (*Fr.-Moules.*)

Ingredients.-1 quart of mussels, parsley, 1 oz. of butter, 1 oz. of flour, 1 or 2 eggs, vinegar.

Mode.-Clean the shells and put the mussels in a pan of boiling water and boil for 20 minutes. Melt the butter in another pan, put with it a little vinegar, parsley chopped, and some seasoning, then add the flour and the strained liquor, and the yolks of eggs. Pour over the mussels, shelled, and serve at once.

Time.-20 minutes. **Average Cost,** 8*d.*

Seasonable all the year round, but most plentiful from June to September.

Lang Hae We Been Parted

*Near me, near me,
Laddie lie near me!
Lang hast thou lien thy lane,
Laddie lie near me.*

*Lang hae we parted been,
Laddie, my dearie,
Now we are met again,
Laddie lie near me.*

*A' that I hae endur'd
Laddie, my dearie
Here in thy arms is cur'd -
Laddie, lie near me.*

Why do I determine to do things like this in July? Never mind, the wall-papering is done. Last night Duncan and I picked up a bed that is remarkably like the iron bed I remember from the farm, right down to the dents and chips. It even has knots on the spindles. Duncan dislikes it for the same reason as I like it: it belongs to the past. But Duncan is generally generous to a fault and when we got home he refused to bring the bed into

the house. "Find a re-finisher," he said, "it's not coming in the house looking like this." Frazer will do it, he'll even pick it up, but Duncan says no, it's not coming off the truck except to be redone or to go to the garbage dump and he'd prefer the garbage dump. It's a good thing I bought it before he saw it. He was just the same with your side board before Frazer refinished it, and the harvest table before that. For the longest time he kept saying to me, "When are you going to get rid of that thing?" But I think he's given up, now he says nothing and the house has a flavour all its own. I will put the bed in the front room, and cover it with your crocheted bedspread and, sometimes, that is where I'll sleep.

I went swimming this morning. I've been going every day for the past month or so. Duncan tells me regularly that I don't get enough exercise. I think you'd find this frantic compulsion of the 1990s faintly ridiculous, as I do. It is almost as though we have a need to outrun ourselves and I wonder what we have become that people a century ago were not. I think that is the source of some of my fascination with Scotland; I see that there is another way to do things, apart from the American way which is so currently in vogue. But when I see that and let it influence me, I garner no praise at home. I am, I'm told, living increasingly in the past, but, as our pasts are longer than our future, how can it be otherwise for any of us? I refuse to think of swimming as exercise, preferring instead to simply enjoy the steady rhythmic, nothingness of mind that comes of the repetition of length after length in a pool. You come out feeling cleansed somehow. And calm. I didn't used to feel this way about swimming. In fact, if it weren't for Duncan making me go, I'd never have discovered its potential at all.

Speaking of swimming, Duncan came home the other day with the idea that we could rent a cottage at the beach later

on in the month. He has this idea every year and it never materializes because by the time he gets around to trying to get a place, it's too late. I did spend a week at the beach one time, though. When I was about fourteen, my friend Claire from down the street invited me to their place at the beach. I don't recall ever being away from home before that, certainly not for more than a weekend without my family, so it was quite a big thing for me. Mum got my things ready and put me on the train with instructions about where to get off and what to do if there was no one there to meet me when I arrived, and to be sure and call before we left the station and not to swim right after I'd eaten and not to leave my underwear on the floor and to be sure to help with the dishes. And the list went on. The train only made one stop and I was to be met, so chances of going astray were really slim, but that did nothing to dim my mother's concern, though, and for a while, she even considered coming with me. She and Dad could go with me on the Midnight Special just to be sure I got there all in one piece, then after they dropped me off, they could spend the evening at the dance hall and ride back home. And if she hadn't thought it would be a

waste of money to go dancing, that's exactly what she would have done. This is what she said when her scheme didn't work. Dad sang a different song. He wasn't going dancing. In any case, I went alone and arrived safe and sound and made my bed and picked up my underwear while I was there, and it took till the night before I was to leave for disaster to strike.

The story looks different now than it looked then. Claire and I spent most of our time at the beach alone. Her mother, Gertie, spent most of her time with Francis, who was always in the kitchen having coffee when we got up in the morning and outlasted us on even the latest nights. Francis was Gertie's cousin, and I don't recall anything else about him except that he had a cottage a couple of doors down and he particularly liked the water when there were strong winds at night. I think every night after we were in bed Gertie would call, "Good night, girls, we're just going to play Bingo for an hour. We won't be long." And then it would be dead quiet and then we'd hear the spring on the screen door stretch open and close again and Gertie and Francis would be gone. That last night we snuck out behind them and ran like mad to get to the beach and then we just kind of settled into

the rocks so nobody could see us, trying to be as quiet as we could and still talk and laugh. My mother would have died. That last night it was almost like daylight on the beach, and windy, and the waves were high and we watched a couple in the water, jumping and cavorting and laughing, like Claire and I usually did when Francis was in the water with us. And I remember Claire doing her breathy Marilyn imitation and stopping dead in the middle of it. "Oh my gawd," she said, "she's wearing a bikini." And then, "Oh my gawd, he's not wearing anything." And then, "Oh my gawd, that's Francis." And then, "Oh my gawd. . ." And we watched for a moment as Gertie jumped into a wave and came out with her top in her hand, and stood there in the moonlight for a second and suddenly there was Francis with his arms around her and they were on the beach and suddenly there was nothing to say.

I was wrong about the cottage. We came out last Friday and it's been raining ever since. The roof leaks. When the rain seems to be stopping, the roof still drips and unless you actually look outside you can't tell what's going on. Duncan, who never likes having nothing to do, is pacing like a caged cat. He has a route through the cottage. He goes back and forth through the narrow kitchen, turns right into the living room, takes the step down into the verandah, crosses to the table and heads for the kitchen again. All of this only takes about thirty steps, but he must have done it thirty times in the last half hour. He's driving me crazy. Last night when he wasn't in bed and I laid awake listening for him, I counted the footsteps like so many sheep till I finally fell asleep on three hundred and something. All this reminds me of one time we went camping and it rained like this. He hadn't wanted to go in the first place, so being out there in the rain didn't improve his humour in the least. He didn't pace though . . . he took to digging holes in the ground instead, while I stayed in the tent and read my damp book, first in the dubious comfort of my soggy sleeping bag and then beside the smouldering yet hopeful campfire that he kept feeding wet wood

for encouragement! After three days of this, without a word, we both began to pack up, and of course it was sunny all the way home and for about three months after that. It wasn't until I got into the hills last year that I enjoyed camping again, and it was pouring rain much of the time. And I didn't even care.

*It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held awa to Annie;
The time flew by wi' tentless heed;
Till, 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed,
To see me through the barley.*

It's August already and a full moon. The sky looks as though it is painted with broad wet strokes of pink and rose and greys that run and shimmer one into the other until the sun sets and trades light with the moon and the night shines clear with stars. And even in the city, and if I close my eyes, I can almost hear the dew settling around me, with the sweet musty scent of the fields. I can't look for you anymore here. I am going back again. I was in your kirkyard, did I tell you that? It's hot tonight and I am antsy, unsettled. Duncan is gone for the week. I joked with him before he left and said, "You didn't ask me to come . . .," and he said, "No." Well, the truth is I never wanted to go, but

I did want to be wanted. I thought about another fall and being left behind but I was the one leaving. I asked, "If I ever really need you, would you come to me?" And he said, "I need you now."

I told you I'm going back? In the autumn I walked the narrow road from your village to the kirk, around past the mill and I stood on the hill and looked down at water that was as dark and smooth as a mirror. And I knew what the gloamin was. It's that special light that comes at dusk. But somehow it's not the same here. I always used to think the gloamin was a place; the songs made it sound that way, songs and poems, and someone's always in it. But it's a feeling too. And it's not here. I'll be there in September this time, that means I'll have a little more time to be out in the gloamin. How long does it take to forget?

I've been out in the garden all day. It's hot. A beautiful August day, and the barn swallows are squabbling in chorus on my eaves-trough again. The fledglings, all fourteen of them, as they learn to fly take their time-outs, right outside my window. I realize that flying is a rather exciting thing, and I like birds, I really do, but these are making me crazy. This will make you laugh or at least smile: there I was reading Margaret Laurence the other day - and I'm still smiling over this myself - there was Morag in the middle of a discussion on barn swallows. Anyway, off I went a while ago, to get some spray to keep the swallows off the house. Are you kidding? I sprayed about a half hour ago and looked out just now to see how many are actually out there. There are five: the dad maybe, and four little ones clinging, trying to keep their balance on the narrow edge of the eaves-trough. Like all babies, their mouths are disproportionately large in comparison with the rest of them. And they are so pretty. A little down still shows on their backs and their breasts are touched with gold. It seems entirely unfair to me that these noisy irritating little packages of feather and bone should be so appealing close up, and worse, I now feel guilty for being

intolerant of their first landings. I will instead use the spray to try to impede the forces of nature and discourage the random gifts of my neighbour's dog and cat.

I have been trying to grow roses. Mine are not nice in the way roses are nice in the gardens of Edinburgh, but for my first attempt I'm not doing too bad at all. I've been reading Mrs. Beeton (the original, I borrowed my friend's) and have found a wonderful recipe for what is commonly known as rose-water. Alas! The current Mrs. Beeton, that is to say the Mrs. Beeton of the 1960s, has nothing so exotic; sadly many other pieces have been edited out as well. Still, should I ever have occasion to come out or to meet a member of the Royal Family, I can look up the more contemporary Mrs. Beeton and find out exactly what to do. Alas! Things have changed considerably since the 1960s and coming out no longer refers to a young lady's debut social debut, at least in North America in general. And even advice on Royal protocol needs to be re-written in the wake of the divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales. His title won't change; he is still considered Princely material but she, poor Lady Diana, has lost her HRH. And how would Mrs. Beeton handle that?

3380. ATTAR OF ROSES

The delicious perfume known by this name is a volatile oil, of soft consistency, nearly colourless and which is for use dissolved in alcohol. The best quality is prepared at Ghazipoor, in Hindoostan. It is apt to be adulterated with sandal wood and other oils. In the spring of the year, the country about Ghazipoor is a vast garden of roses, and presents a most beautiful appearance. The flowers are gathered and steeped in stone jars filled with water. These are set out in the open air overnight and early in the morning the essential oil is skimmed off. This is the "*attar*" and the water is sold for "rose-water." Two hundred well-grown roses are required to produce half an ounce of the attar; and this quantity, when manufactured, sells, if genuine, for about £12 at the English warehouses. It is very difficult, however, to obtain the genuine article, as even the original manufacturers adulterate it.

Mode. -Fill a large earthen jar, or any other vessel with the leaves of rose-flowers picked over and freed from all dust and dirt. Pour upon them as much pure spring water as will cover them, and from sunrise to sunset, for six or seven days in succession, set the vessel where it will receive the sun's rays. At the end of the third or fourth day a number of particles of a fine yellow oily matter will float on the surface, which, after a day or two, will gather into a scum. This is the attar of roses. It must be taken up as often as it appears, with a piece of cotton tied to a stick, and squeezed from this into a small phial, which must be kept corked and tied over.

Rain. Thick, fat, splashing drops. And the swallows are gone. My guilt is complete. It was yesterday that I sprayed the eavestrough and looked out to see the little ones teetering on the edge, and today they are gone, their nests abandoned on the house next door. I feel as though the summer is gone, too. And I am sad.

Duncan has come home today, with an Arctic Char he got up north. I will keep it in the freezer for Thanksgiving. If he had arrived with it in time, I'd have done it for Lammas. I know. Lammas doesn't quite work here. It's too early for the first harvest. And I've missed it again in Scotland. And I know, they haven't observed it for years there either. I was wrong: the swallows are not gone at all. I think they must have taken a little day trip because now, simultaneous to my writing, here they are, all fourteen of them ~ I counted ~ sitting right under my window. Making more noise than ever. And my neighbour who will harbour the noisy little migrants has installed a landing platform for them! Evidently it is too small. They're usually gone by September, but it is still summer.

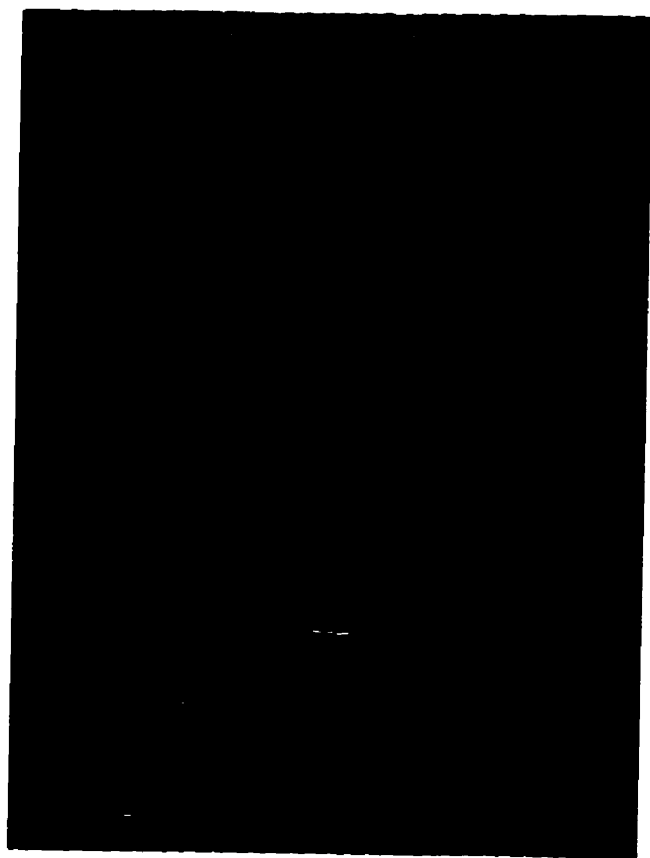


When Duncan and I were in Scotland, we went up the east coast through the fishing villages and I wanted to stay every time I got out of the car. There's a stone beach quite near to Drookit, at Auchmithie. It's all stone, and the wind and waves were lashing the shore and you could hear all of the little stones rolling in and out with the tide coming in. Duncan and I were at Clear Lake yesterday, hardly the same thing, but you were there one time . . . I have a picture, and the wind was driving the waves up onto the break-water where you once sat. I remember Dad taking a row boat out for a while but it must have been another time. And I remember that now, but yesterday under the grey sky I thought of the beach at Drookit and looked for stones to bring home. I've been reading Margaret Laurence. I told you that, didn't I? Her Morag went to Scotland, you know, but she stopped short on her visit to see McRaith. What was it she said? "The myths are my reality. Something like that. And also I don't need to go there because I know what it was I had to learn here." Did you find what you were looking for? Will I?

Roses are still blooming in the Princes Street Gardens, and in the window boxes in the Grassmarket and in the New Town, geraniums and lobelia, tuberous begonias, pansies rejoice in the September sun. Frost flirts with gardens in the hills but there's been none in the city so far. The colours of fire glow in the Birnam Wood and in the hedges along the roadsides, russets and greens compete to stand against clean berry fields or turnips and potatoes waiting for harvest. This is a landscape you absorb and which absorbs you, rather than one where anything upright alters it, where, it's so flat that if your dog runs away from home, you can see him for four days. I am inscribed by both.

2

Nevermas



Mrs. Beeton: *The Germans who are noted for the length of their hair recommend the following treatment:- Twice a month wash the head with a quart of soft water, in which a handful of bran has been boiled and in which a little white soap has been dissolved. Next rub the yoke of an egg slightly beaten, into the roots of the hair, let it remain a few minutes, and wash it off thoroughly with pure water, rinsing the head well. This, of course, is a recipe for the Lady's maid.*

3368. AN EXCELLENT POMATUM

Ingredients. -1 ½ lb. of lard, ½ pint of olive oil, ½ pint of castor-oil, 4 oz of spermaceti, bergamot, or any other scent; elder-flower water.

Mode. -Wash the lard well in the elder-flower water; drain, and beat it to a cream. Mix the two oils together, and heat them sufficiently to dissolve the spermaceti, which should be beaten fine in a mortar. Mix all these ingredients together with whatever kind of scent may be preferred; and whilst warm pour into glass bottles for use, keeping them well corked. The best way to liquefy the pomatum is to set the bottle in a saucepan of warm water. It will remain good for many months.

Mairi: In 1888 my maid, my *Lady's maid*, would have known about *Treatment Of The Hair*. Chances are I'd have been the maid. Chances are I'd have ended up in the scullery. I certainly would now if it was up to me to find these things for *My Lady*. *Spermaceti*? It sounds like a cross between a certain kind of pasta and something horrible, and you to put it in your hair? You're kidding. How are you going to get it out? Have you thought about that? And lard? I'll just run down to Cook for my lard, and whip up a couple of hair treatments before breakfast, something to promote growth, perhaps? Or a wash for thin hair . . . a little rum or tincture of bark, or how about just a good wash with camphor and borax, maybe a little rosewater? Where do you get this stuff? Mrs. Beeton, this is 1996. *I'm* the cook.

Mrs Beeton: A-hem. I do not know about a cook but you, my Dear, would never make a lady's maid. You seem to have a rather larger opinion of yourself than is perhaps desirable. In fact, I'd question your chances in the scullery if you can not restrain your tongue.

Mairi: I come from good stock, Mrs. Beeton. My Grandmother was in service before she came to Canada, perhaps none of us know our place.

3370. TO PROMOTE THE GROWTH OF HAIR

Ingredients. -Equal quantities of olive-oil and spirit of rosemary; a few drops of oil of nutmeg.

Mode. -Mix the ingredients together, rub the roots of the hair every night with a little of this liniment, and the growth of it will soon very sensibly increase. When illness is the cause of the loss of hair, brandy should be applied three times a week, and cold cream on the alternate nights.

3371. A WASH FOR THIN HAIR

Ingredients. 8 oz. elder-flower water, 4 oz. distilled vinegar, 2 oz. of good rum, 4 dr. glycerine, 4 dr. tincture of bark.

Mode. -Mix these ingredients well together and apply the lotion every night.

Note. -Loss of hair is often occasioned by a weak state of health, and tonics taken in those cases will do more towards restoring the hair than any washes.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, I've been working in the garden. Maybe not quite the same way as my Grandmother would have . . . let's be honest here: not the same way at all. I go outside and pull a weed once in a while, or deadhead some of the geraniums or pansies. And this year I've discovered the efficacy of fertilizer, so in terms of organic gardening, I'm a complete flop. But that's not what I want to talk to you about. My hands are dry and rough from working in the soil. That's one problem the other is freckles. Are you a red head?

Mrs. Beeton: If you aren't the living end, my Girl. Am I a red head? What an impertinent question. The next thing you'll be wanting to know is how old I am. My Dear, there are answers for questions such as these: *Why would you ask? How old am I? You aren't asking me that, are you?* What was it you wanted? Ah, I'll give you my recipe for curing chapped hands. It's fairly straight-forward.

Mairi: Impertinent? Mrs. Beeton, I am the red head and I have been out in the sun in the garden and I have freckles. And I thought if you were one too, you would understand about the freckles.

Mrs. Beeton: No. I am not a red head. Fair, yes. But a red head, no. As to the chapped hands, the recipe requires hog's lard. Do you think you'll be able to find hog's lard? I had to laugh about the spermaceti. In Shakespeare's time it was referred to as *parmcety*. You might be right in using your imagination as to its origin; it was in fact, once thought to have come from the sperm of the whale. It was also thought to have come from the froth of the foam of the sea. Now there's something alliterative for the writer in you. It does, in fact, come from the head of the sperm whale. I suppose living on the prairie one is not likely to have much exposure to that kind of thing. But hog's lard? Surely you can find a pig or two?

3376. CHAPPED HANDS

If the hands are washed in soft water with the best honey soap, and well rubbed dry with a soft towel, they need never be chapped. It is generally imperfect and careless washing which causes this inconvenience. When the hands are badly chapped, rub them two or three times a day with lemon-juice, or rub them over occasionally with an ointment made of fresh hog's lard washed in rose or elder-flower water, a spoonful of honey, two spoonfuls of fine oatmeal well beaten up with the yolks of two new-laid eggs; or a useful mash for chapped hands may be made by adding 14 grains of sulphuric acid to 1 pint of rose-water and ½ oz. of oil of almonds, well shaken together, and when used diluted with a little water.

Mairi: Pigs, yes. But hog's lard? Thank-you. I'll do my best. I don't know, did you say you had something for freckles?

Mrs. Beeton: Do you know the expression, *You can never be too rich or too thin*? If I had thought of it, I would have said it first. But I would have put it this way, *You can never be too thin, too rich, or have too few freckles.*

3377. ANTI-FRECKLE LOTION

Ingredients. -2 oz. of tincture of benzoin, 1 oz. of tincture of tolu, $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm of oil of rosemary.

Mode. -Mix the ingredients well in a corked bottle. When required for use, add a teaspoonful of the mixture to a wineglassful of water, and apply the lotion where required night and morning, gently dabbing it in with a soft linen cloth.

Mrs. Beeton: Let me guess. Tincture of tolu . . . I hate to be master of the obvious, but have you thought of going to the chemist for ingredients?

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, the pharmacist laughed when I told her what I needed. She did not know if tincture of tolu would still be available. She did tell me, however, that it derives from balsam, and that it is often used in the form of syrup as an expectorant. Perhaps it expectorates freckles, do you think?

Mrs. Beeton: Have you considered wearing a hat when you are outside?

Mairi: This whole conversation came about in the first place because I had been gardening. I am growing roses. And they are growing, so I have decided to harvest the petals and try to make perfume. To be honest, I will be content if I can retain a little of the scent of my first harvest. I see you have instructions for making *Attar of Roses*. Mrs. Beeton, you have thought of everything.

Mrs. Beeton: Am I forever destined to be the bearer of bad news? First I tell you that you would be very unsuited for life in service, then I advise you to go to the chemist if you wish to follow some of my recipes (my Dear, I really should never have had to tell you that), and now I am charged with the responsibility of remarking on your naïvety with regard to roses.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, I am charmed by your instructions. I know my rose petals will never come close to filling an earthen jar or any other vessel, more likely I will be unable to fill a tea cup with my rose leaves, but I do love to read your recipes, and you, Mrs. Beeton, mis-read me.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, I'm having a dinner party, and I'd like something French. I was thinking of a ratatouille, maybe. That or a paella which strictly speaking isn't French at all, I suppose.

Mrs. Beeton: Ratatouille? Paella? Where *do* you get your ideas? My Dear, let me tell you a little about French dishes. Of primary importance is the use of garlic. I find the quantity used sometimes so excessive as to make some of them quite inedible to the unaccustomed palate, but in good cookery its presence is scarcely suspected; nevertheless in partaking of a *gigot* of mutton, for example, dainty little cloves of the fragrant bulb occasionally tumble out onto one's plate. Salads, too, are perfumed with it, a clove or two being simply rubbed through the salad and removed before the dish is brought to the table.

Mairi: My concern was more with the menu.

Mrs. Beeton: Ah, yes, My Dear, but you are putting the proverbial cart before the horse. You must have patience. Cooking is an art which few of us practise, and in which still fewer of us ever excel. It is my opinion that if one is going to cook French, there are certain things of which one must be aware. We will consider the menu in due time. Perhaps we will begin with a word on French soups. Excellent as some of the French soups are, there is often much to be desired as regards the everyday *potages* served in most houses. But of course your dinner party could hardly be called everyday. The *potages* though, there is a certain lack of richness and thickening about them, which is not attractive even to the non-epicurean visitor. In the *soupes aux choux*, cabbage leaves struggle about in pale bouillon, and in the *soupe au pain* there is little taste save the floating bread crusts that cover its surface. An effort is made to get good soup out of the bouilli, and yet make the latter appetizing. Alas! Notwithstanding all its disguises, in the shape of sauces and pickles, if the soup has been really good, the meat has suffered accordingly and has nothing tempting left about it.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, . . .

Mrs. Beeton: Now we'll move along to French dishes. Naturally in the area of Provence which you mentioned, a great deal of attention is paid to the preparation of fish. This attention is most natural in a country where the rules of the church prescribe as a penance, a *maigre* fare once a week, though it is generally observed only on Fridays. This penance on the whole is a very pleasant one, for, besides the delicious dishes of fish, eggs, vegetables and sweets, dressed in most attractive and varied fashion, it contributes to the enjoyment of the penitent, to say nothing of teal, which is not regarded as meat.

Mairi: *Teal?*

Mrs. Beeton: Duck, My Dear, and while we're on the subject of poultry, every French cook, male or female, knows how to cram a fowl, duck or goose. To watch them, they would appear to go at the process with a will. Seizing the unfortunate bird three or four times a day, they open its bill and stuff quantity of warm meal and potatoe down its throat, carressing it and talking to it all the while, and when they consider it has had enough food, wind up by giving it a very small walnut by way of a digestive. I question your desire to do this, if you are determined to cook French.

Mairi: Question no more. There is not a chance. But Mrs. Beeton, I hadn't planned on becoming a cook. All I really had in mind was a dinner party.

Mrs. Beeton: Well, then, you might like a *pâté*, would that be a place to start? You do know about *pâtés*, I suppose?

Mairi: I hadn't thought of *pâté*. What do you think of salmon and dill?

Mrs. Beeton: The French excel in their entrées or made dishes, and there is something both artistic and scientific in the refinement of taste displayed in their various blendings of truffles, cock's combs and other garnishing and seasonings. There is a ring of the epicure in such designations as *croquettes*, *suprême*, *à la financière*, and a touch of sentiment in leaving one leg out of the chicken in *poulet à la Marengo* because it has remained *sur la champs de bataille*, or in suggesting that a piece of flesh or fish should not be allowed to boil but only to "shudder."

Mairi: I'll go with the *pâté* and maybe cheese for dessert.

Mrs. Beeton: Oh desserts, yes. A word about French Preserve and Sweetmeats. Your dinner party will be a resounding success, indeed. You shouldn't have occasion to serve French Preserve, I expect, still it never hurts to know these things. There is a sort of national jam, much affected by the middle class, used as well for cakes as for eating with bread and butter. It is called *raisinet*, and is a perfect hodge-podge of fruit and vegetables. Its foundation is the new wine as it comes from the press. Into this are thrown beetroot, turnips and carrots—all of course carefully washed and peeled - apricots, plums, apples, pears, and any other fruit that may be in season and the mixture is kept stirring for twenty-four hours. Everyone has a stir at the *raisinet* cauldron. No sugar is added but the process of long boiling is sufficient to make it keep for a whole year. As to the bon-bons or sweetmeats, no country can match France in the variety and excellence of its productions, and, indeed, the Americans, no people are so fond of sweetmeats as the French. Children are literally surfeited with them, particularly

about the *jour de l'an*, the result being that their teeth usually become discoloured and naturally cannot last long.

Mairi: All right, so we'll have *pâté* to start. And cheese for dessert. I think I'll go with the paella, Duncan usually likes that, especially the mussels. And maybe serve some melon after the *pâté*.

Mrs. Beeton: Do consider lamb, would you? Surely if you can find mussels on the prairies, you can find cock's combs?

CUTLETS OF LAMB A LA CONSTANCE

(An Entrée)

Ingredients. - 12 lamb cutlets, ¼ lb. of butter, four fowls' livers, 4 cocks' combs, 20 mushroom buttons, pepper, salt.

Mode. - Clean the combs, plunge them into boiling water, rub off the outer skin, and let them lie in water for 3 or 4 hours. Wipe, and make a stew with the livers, mushrooms, a little butter, stock and seasoning, cutting them all up into pieces. Then mix the stew with a hot béchamel sauce, or some butter made into a paste with flour. Shape and trim the cutlets, fry them on both sides with a little butter, adding pepper and salt. When done, drain off the butter, glaze the cutlets, arrange them in a circle in a dish, pour the stew into the centre and serve.

Time. -10 minutes for the cutlets. Average cost, 10d. per lb.

Sufficient for 6 to 8 persons.

Seasonable from Easter to Michaelmas.



CUTLETS OF LAMB A LA CONSTANCE.

Mrs. Beeton: And one more thing . . . a word on artistic cooking. —Most countries, if not all, probably have some equivalent for the French saying that all *men are governed by dinners*, but it is to be feared that it cannot be said with equal point that most countries govern their dinners by artistic preparation. We English are unsurpassed for our *rosbeef*, *bifecks*, and other dishes *au naturel*; what we have still to learn to some extent, for we have already learnt much, is the art of making a piece of meat or fish, or fowl that may not be of the youngest, not only edible, but palatable and delicate, as well as the art of blending herbs, vegetables and other ingredients, so as to produce most satisfactory results to the eye, the palate and the digestion, and consequently to the health, temper and happiness of not only men, but women and children, and certainly the cooks themselves.

Mairi: Well, Mrs. Beeton, I see you have instructions for cleaning feathers. You will undoubtedly be shocked and appalled to discover that I do not have any feathers.

Mrs. Beeton: You mock me. My Dear, every woman of consequence has feathers and, therefore, the need to have her maid be properly apprised of how to clean them.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, I do not mock. Alas! Feathers, like most things in the late 20th century have been replaced. We live in politically correct times here, and it would not be considered appropriate for us to run around with feathers in our caps so to speak, though goodness knows some of us try. In fact, it is arguably appropriate for us to wear hats at all unless an event involves the Queen.

Mrs. Beeton: You do know the expression, *You can never be too rich or too thin?* If I had thought of it, I would have said it first, only I would have put it this way, *You can never be too rich, too thin, or have too many feathers.* There are Grebes in the colonies. I would recommend that you see if you can avail yourself of feathers. There are Grebes on the prairies, six species, in fact: *Aechmóphorus occidentális*, *Pódiceps grsiegéna*, *Pódiceps auritus*, *Pódiceps cáspicus*, *Podilymbus pódiceps*, and *Pódiceps dominicus*, so obtaining feathers should not be excessively difficult although I have noticed that you have difficulty with the simplest things and, My Dear, your lack of resourcefulness, if you'll pardon my saying so, is somewhat surprising.

TO CLEAN FEATHERS

Cover the feathers with a paste made of pipe-clay and water, rubbing them one way only. When quite dry, skate off all the powder and curl with a knife. Grebe feathers may be washed with white soap in soft water.

Mairi: Mrs. Beeton, you astound me.

Mrs. Beeton: My Dear, *you* astound me.



1928

Concerning a Comfortable Shirt

Many Men declare that they only get real Shirt Comfort when they have their Shirts made to order. This is not to be wondered at for naturally all Ready-made Shirts are made to standard sizes and cannot possibly fit varying types of figures.

To meet this want I have now started a Shirt-making Department and am now turning out smartly-cut and fine-fitting Shirts and Pyjamas at very reasonable prices.

Patterns and prices will be willingly sent on request.

PATRICK McGEE,
TAILOR AND OUTFITTER,
27-33 Bridge St.



Mairi, reading an ad from 1923: Patrick McGee would you make me a shirt? And I'll tell you a story. Actually, I think pyjamas would be better. No, I've got it, a night shirt, please. I've always wanted a night shirt of soft white cotton, and make it roomy so I can tuck my legs up inside it or sprawl across the bed if I want.

PM: No, I don't think I can do that, y'see, I'm a tailor by trade and . . . I don't, I prefer . . . y'see . . . ahem . . . I prefer to make men's clothes. I don't know that you'll understand, Miss, y'see this is 1923 and I have my reputation to think about.

Mairi: Patrick McGee, you're just like the barber my grandmother asked to cut her hair. First he stammered and blushed and looked all around the shop and then he said, *It's such lovely hair, why would you want to go and cut it?* And then he said, *Come back when it's closin' time, Mairi.* And when she went back, he drew the blinds and put the CLOSED sign on the door, and when he was all done, he picked up all that hair off the floor and wrapped it in tissue and gave it to her. She thought he was going to cry but he held the door open for her and said, *Away with you now, and don't you be tellin' anyone I did this to you,* and he gave her the softest brush of a kiss on the cheek and locked the door behind her. But, Patrick McGee, the next day he found an envelope slipped under his door and inside was one raven black curl, tied in a piece of red satin ribbon and folded into a single piece of paper with four

words written on it. *Will you marry me?* Now Patrick McGee, my story's not done, but would you make me a shirt? And could you put an *M* on the pocket because Mairi's my name, too.

PM: Ye've no need to be tellin' me the rest o' the story. I'd know you anywhere. You look just like her. She was a feisty wee thing, she was. We all knew. Her father wouldn't hear of her marrying at all. Nobody was good enough for her. And he wanted her sisters married first. She was too young. Oh, there was always an excuse when it came to Mairi. And she wouldn't have another man, she was going to have him. And who knows how things might have turned out if they'd just been left to their own devices.

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**WILLAN SWAINSON, F.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.,
245 UNION STREET
Tel. 1886**

Mairi, reading a letter of recommendation: As a former pupil of Mr Willan Swainson, I'd like to state that Mr. Willan Swainson is a gentleman of such sterling quality that I almost married him and would have if my watch hadn't stopped. What happened was this. Because my watch stopped, I missed the train to Aberdeen and because I missed the train to Aberdeen, I missed taking the A.R.C.M. examinations for which Mr. Willan Swainson had

been preparing his pupils for many months. I tell you this in order to cast no aspersions on the person of Mr. Willan Swainson, whom I have already stated to be of sterling quality. What I was not prepared for was to miss the train, and as I sat in dismay, there appeared suddenly before me a young man, much younger than Mr. Willan Swainson to be sure, and he kindly offered me his card and suggested that he might be of service. And indeed he was, and it is no reflection at all upon Mr. Willan Swainson that I haven't sung a note since. I credit Divine Providence for the appearance of a watchmaker at the exact moment that I had need of one.

Mairi: Mr. Swainson, I was looking for a voice teacher. How are you with vocal jazz?

WS: Vocal jazz. Well, Miss. I am able, given an instrument of course, to prepare my students for the concert platform. Hm . . . Your speaking voice is not too bad, perhaps you'd care to audition for my choir, and we could take it from there? While I am not very familiar with what you're calling vocal jazz, I do suspect it would be best suited for another venue, a music hall, perhaps?

Mairi: Mr. Swainson. Please. Do I look like I belong in a music hall?

WS: Young Woman. I make no judgement on how you look, it is the way you sound which concerns me, but let me tell you a story. I once had a young woman approach me for singing lessons. Strange I should think of her now after so many years. She was about your size and height, as a matter of fact. You remind me very much of her. I was quite a bit younger then, you understand, and a perhaps bit more interested in sight than sound, as young men will be. And this lovely young woman appeared. Although I usually auditioned my students, I invited her directly to sing in the church choir. We always needed voices in the choir, you understand. And she came and we began with some psalm tunes as was our habit and her voice rang clear and sweet above the rest, and without missing a beat, I passed her a solo part. I wanted to hear that voice without the others. But you'll remember, I hadn't auditioned her, and when she came to realize that I wanted her to sing alone, she became very upset and took up her things to leave. And no amount of pleading would convince her to stay, let alone sing. I've always wondered what became of her.

Mairi: Mr. Swainson, I've heard this story. May I finish it for you? You see, she came to you to learn to sing. And for a brief moment, singing the psalm tunes, she was in her glory. But you gave a solo to a woman who couldn't read music, which was precisely why she came to you in the first place. She stood outside, did you know this? She stood outside and listened to the rest of the rehearsal, and heard *Messiah* for the first time and hated it for the rest of her life.

THE ROYAL ATHENÆUM
RESTAURANT AND GRILL ROOM
Chops and steaks from the Silver Grill done to a turn.
Patronised by the leading Town and Country Families,
Professional and Business Gentlemen.
THEATRE DINNERS, A SPECIALTY
SERVED FROM 6 P.M., 5/6
Proprietor: JOHN MITCHELL
Refreshment Contractor to H.M. The King

Mairi: I had to look up the word Athenæum in the dictionary in order to find you, you are John Mitchell, aren't you? An important detail seems to have been overlooked in your ad . . . your address. Never mind, all I wanted to do was talk anyway.

JM: Madam. I am afraid you have revealed your ignorance. Had you recognized the word Athanæum, which you confess you had not, you would have known right off where to find me, directly opposite the institute. Be that as it may, it has been some time since anyone has bothered to find me, what was it you wanted?

Mairi: I'd like to work for you. I'm a good cook. You know, chops and steaks done to a turn as you say.

JM: Madam: I cater to professional and business gentlemen and, on occasion, to H.M. The King. It wouldn't do to have you cooking for me. You don't look the part. You do have a character, I suppose? I do not believe I caught your name.

Mairi: A character? No, I have no reference if that's what you mean, I haven't been in service as a cook. My name is Mairi. Mairi Òg.

JM: A Highland name. I once met a young woman who answered to that name. Still, it is a common enough name. She came from Huntly way if I mind right. A bonnie lass, not one you'd forget. And feisty! She left in a bit of a huff. Aye, I remember that one, Mairi Òg.

Mairi: Would you let me tell you a story, John Mitchell?

JM: I told you, Lass, I cater to professional and business *gentlemen*. I don't know that you understand but it wouldn't be right. You could, perhaps, try one of the Tea Rooms. They are quite popular with the ladies. Aside from that, you are awfully small. Cooking is very heavy work. And I don't have much time for stories.

Mairi: John Mitchell. You cater to gentlemen. You and Patrick McGee are a perfect pair. And you are rather like a gentleman my Grandmother applied to work for. He was not a very large man himself, and he sat through her interview, reading her character and peering at her periodically through his monacle. You're awffy small was what he said. And she drew herself up to her full height of four feet nine inches and said to him, "Too sma' for the likes of you."

JM: That was me, Lass. That was me. You, Mairi Òg, you have her eyes.

What goes up when the rain comes down?
J. WALKER & SON are the oldest established
Practical Umbrella-makers in the North of Scot-
land. We have the largest selection of the best
and most up-to-date Umbrellas in town. Give us
a trial and convince yourselves that *each umbrella*
is a genuine bargain.

Only address

J. WALKER & SON,

(Established 1830)

59 Schoolhill

Mairi: Is your name Johnny? We drink Scotch Whiskey, that's *whisky* to you, called Johnnie Walker.

JW: Whisky's whisky no matter what it's called.

Mairi: Yes, but is your name Johnny? I just thought it might be a coincidence of naming, if your name was Johnny Walker too.

JW: My name is James Anthony Alexander Walker, does that please you?

Mairi: I have a friend named Alexander, does that please you?

JW: You've a quick tongue in your head, I like that. How can I help you?

Mairi: I have a story for you but tell me if you know this though. Do you know umbrellas are said to have been invented in Scotland by a Largo man?

JW: Largo, in Fife?

Mairi: Actually, it was Lower Largo. Alexander Selkirk of Largo, Defoe's original for Robinson Crusoe—I didn't invent this, honest— Alexander Selkirk of Largo had an umbrella with him when he was marooned at his own request on Juan san Fernandez, so Defoe gave

him an umbrella in the book. It was long believed in Fife that a Largo man invented the umbrella, and it was known for years as a *Nether Largie*. It's true. But that's not my story.

JW: Why is it I have a feeling I'm going to get your story anyway?

Mairi: I brought an umbrella.

JW: So it would seem. I don't need one, thank-you.

Mairi: That's not really what I had in mind.

JW: All right, Miss, you have my attention.

Mairi: Look. Just above the handle, there, there's a little brass plate. And it's got *your* name on it.

JW: Not my name. My grandfather's, I'd guess. There'll be a date on the other side of the plate, and a number. My father did that, too. Put people's name on the plate so if the umbrella got left somewhere, it might get back to the owner. My grandfather made them all by hand, though, and that was his way of keeping track of who got what, and then again, when someone needed another umbrella, he'd know what they'd had before. How did you come by this one?

Mairi: My mother's aunt died a number of years back and this turned up in her garden shed. The silk's rotted away but the wood's still in good shape. I've cleaned it up a bit, you can see the M, but I can't read the rest. It took some time to make out the name Walker. And I didn't really figure it out till I saw your ad.

JW: Let me guess. You want to know who this belonged to. Well. Come back, let's see, tomorrow, maybe. Now my father gave all his father's papers to the national archives, and if you're wanting to find out what he was about, you'd have to go there and get into the manuscripts.

Mairi: James Anthony Alexander Walker, I'm three steps ahead of you. I got those papers, now listen to my story. I found letters in with the papers, letters to Canada. Letters from a young woman. And I found her name in the journals and in the household records. She was mentioned for the first time in 1901 when your Grandfather remarked on the new servant. He was sixteen or seventeen and home from school, having been ill for some time. They sent her

up to read to him and to help pass the time while he recovered and when he went back to school, the two of them began what was to become a life-long correspondence.

JW: There was a terrible rift in the family over that. She was the love of his life, she was. But she left him. When he got older, and after my Grandmother died, he used to talk about her and her life, never named her though. The letters were a surprise. All those years, he kept her letters, all those years. My father was going to burn them, he wouldn't read them you know, so we left them tied up in the ribboned bundles and gave them to the archives the way we found them. He never knew why she left, but he blamed his mother for the rest of his life. All those years, and he never knew why she left him. So. Go on with your story, then.

Mairi: Did you read the journals? Her name was Mairi. Mairi Henderson, when she met him. You can see the big house from where she lived. She was twelve when she first went to work up there with her sister Catherine who was already working there. Mairi kept a journal, too, you know. She worked in service for eight years, for the Walkers, and then one morning she put on her walking boots and set off . . . for the Glasgow docks. She'd saved some money, what little she could after turning most of it over to her father for the family. There were nine of them altogether. Her father was crippled with arthritis. By the time he was forty he walked with two canes, with much difficulty. The ones older than her worked out and brought the money home, too, till the first one went to Canada, then the second, then Tam but he joined the army just after he sent for Mairi. There were four of them there at one time. But that's not my story. I read her journals. Your Grandfather had gone back to school, of course, when he'd recovered his health. Then he'd gone to St. Andrew's to University, and all along she got letters from him, and finally, I think she was about twenty, maybe, they decided to get married, or decided at least to tell his family. They seemed to have been quite fond of her, certainly seemed to have treated her nicely the years she worked there. Many times she remarks on what she's been given to take home, usually food, but sometimes clothing for herself or the younger ones. Anyway, my grandmother and your grandfather decided to get married, and they kept that to themselves for some time, but when he finally finished at the university and came home for a short rest, they made their announcement. The next day . . . the next day, Mairi was given her notice. Your great-grandmother had known for some time that her son was planning on getting married, and as proof, she produced a letter addressed to Mairi written by James some months before. She had thought long on her course of action, and Mairi was made to see that her marriage to James would hinder him in every way imaginable, and that if she *truly* loved him, she would do what was best for him in the long term. James was never to know what had taken place between the two women that day. She gave Mairi paper and a pen, and dictated a letter stating that there would be no marriage. It

was addressed to James. Mairi was handed an umbrella and seen to the door with instructions to take Mrs. Walker's regards to the family. They were never to meet again.

JW: Miss, forgive me. Please come in. Would you have a wee dram? I have many things to tell you.

**“What bangs fu’ leal the e’enings coming cauld
and gars snaw tapit Winter freezes in vain?”**

**A Good Fire of . . .
Clean, Bright-burning, Heat-giving
. . . COALS.**

APPLY TO

Mr. Muir

**The Northern Agricultural Co. Ltd.
30 Waterloo Quay**

Mairi: Well, Sir, forgive my observations, but Scotland is a puzzling place. You get keys cut at a shoe repair, you leave film for developing at the drycleaner’s, and you go to the Northern Agricultural Co. Ltd. for coals. I’d have frozen to death before I discovered where to get coal. When I was a kid, we had a coal furnace for a time. Dad used to stoke it up before he went to bed. He’d get a good fire going and then close the dampers so it wouldn’t burn out at night. Then he’d stoke it again at five in the morning when he got up to go to work and Mum would do it in the middle of the day unless it was very cold. About once a month the delivery truck would back up to the coal chute and dump a load of Souris or Rocky Mountain coal into the coal bin in the basement. It came from the coalyard on Bell Ave.

Mr. Muir: Excuse me, Miss, was there something you were wanting?

Mairi: Well, yes. I have a fireplace. I’d like some coal, please. Do you deliver?

Mr. Muir: Yes, of course. Might I remark upon your accent? It’s rare to hear an accent like that in these parts. Where do you live?

Mairi: I’m from Canada.

Mr. Muir: And were you wanting to have coal delivered there? That’s quite unusual. Where in Canada?

Mairi: Manitoba. The prairies.

Mr. Muir: Winnipeg?

Mairi: Well, yes.

Mr. Muir: And would you know my sister Jean? You'd be thinking that's an odd question. It's not. You see my sister Jean left for Canada about four years back and she married a young lad there, Jimmy Mackinnon, and Jimmy, you see, had a brother he was living with on the farm, and the brother got married at the same time, to Catherine Henderson. Now, Jeannie has the second sight. And she told Catherine that before the year was out that something would happen to her man. And Catherine didn't believe in that sort of thing, didn't believe in the second sight at all, you see. And sure enough that next spring young Geordie got caught in a snow storm, that was two years back, and they found him about three weeks later in the winter garden. And Catherine moved into the city with Jeannie and Jimmy, and just the other day here, maybe it was a week ago or so, I got a letter and Jeannie told me to be watching for a stranger to town. She'd had this vision, you see, and the day this stranger comes to town, there's to be a boat lost near Peterheid, and Jeannie's worried about the younger brother here. She told me to keep an eye on him. Now, you're a stranger here, and the boats are already left the now, and there's nothing I can do. She's done that before, Jeannie has. Aye, and more than once, too, but you come in and sit in the back and I'll tell you a wee story.

I told you Jeannie wrote me a letter about a stranger, and here you are. And there's not a thing to be done about the boat, but she didn't say she saw the young brother on it. A few days before she left for Canada, though, she saw our mother in a shroud, just for an instant, and she wasn't on the boat two days when Mother took a stroke and died. And she'd said to me, "I'll never see her alive again," and I said to her, "Lass, you go and enjoy yourself, you'll be back soon enough." And I had to send her the news. Aye. Jeannie knows these things. Now what about this coal? You didn't come here because you wanted coal in Canada.

Mairi: It's 1996. We don't use coal to heat our houses in Canada.

JW: 1996? Good God, Miss. Where *did* you come from? This is 1923.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITURE
In all Modern and Artistic Processes.
Class Groups, Football, Tennis, Hockey,
and
Cricket Groups a Specialty.
High Class Enlargements Executed with
Taste and Skill. Miniatures in Ivory.
FRED HARDIE
STUDIOS—416 UNION STREET.

Mairi: Miniatures in ivory. How romantic. Would you make me one? I'll be going home soon and I'd like to take something with me.

FH: Excuse me, Miss, but you're dressed rather oddly for a portrait, if you don't mind me saying.
You're bonny enough, that's not a problem.

Mairi: Oh, are the colours wrong?

FH: Colours, Miss, are the problem. You really ought to be wearing either black or white and, excuse me, but this is short notice and what *is* that you're wearing? Is that a *vest*?

Mairi: You mean my t-shirt?

FH: It's rather, ach, never mind. I'm no doin' pictures today and that's it. Come back tomorrow.

Mairi: You don't understand. What I wanted you to do was make a miniature from *this* picture.

FH: Oh, I canna do that. I only work from my own photographs, I'm sorry.

Mairi: Oh, but it *is* yours. Please look, at least.

FH: Aye, let's have a look, then. Now, where would you get a picture like that? No. I know that well enough to look at you. It's a rimie day, you'd best come in the back and warm up. There's a fire, I'll get you some hot tea.

Mairi: I'd like a picture of me beside her. I thought an ivory miniature. . .

FH: There's no use girmin and greetin over spilt milk now. I went off to Australia. I thought I'd get a farm going. I took over some Black Angus cattle thinking to settle them there, and one year ran into two, and into three. And finally it looked like I could come home for another boatload and start breeding, but the war broke out and there wasn't any boats to go back. You'll be wondering where she fit in all this. Well, I'll tell you. Her father wasn't too keen on her getting married at all. Och, everybody else expected her to marry all right, such a bonny lassie, but whoever it was, he was havin' none of it. Not the barber, not a fee'd man—she was too good for that—and not the laddie from the big house. And not me either. Och, we spoke of it, she and I, but the only thing to do was leave, she wouldn't hear of going to Australia. Too far, she said. She'd try Canada. And then she was gone. You've no need to tell me who you are. I'd know you anywhere. What was it you were wantin'?

Mairi: A miniature, an ivory miniature, you could use the photograph.

FH: Are you warmin' up, Lass? I'll be closin' soon.

Mairi: Mmm, thank-you. Could you make me one, then?

FH: No, Lass, I'll no be makin' you one. I did the photo of her. She came over a few days before she left and asked for a photo and, well anyway, I did the job but she wasna very pleased at all. D'you see what she's wearing? You'd be well to take note, Lass, she's wearing black. Now when the time came she wouldna' have the photograph after all. Och, she paid for it all right, but she told me to keep it and that was that. No, she wasna having that photograph. Then one day she sent for it and I wrapped it up and sent it off to Canada, just like she asked. And after that she sent the odd Christmas card or letter asking about this or that. I never wrote back, though, it just didn't seem right. And then I realized one day, and I wrote back, then. But aye, it's no use girmin. You do what you have to do and get on with it.

You were wantin' a miniature were you? Well, if you don't mind the wait now, just give me a minute and we'll see what we can find. I had a wee box of things, there should be something here for you.

Mairi: No, you don't understand.

FH: Aye, I do. You were after something to take home with you. Well you can have this one. I was keepin' it for when she came back. I told her I'd always be here. It could be a likeness of you, nobody'd know the difference. Och, such a bonny lass she was. Away wi' you, now, and haste ye back, Lassie, haste ye back.

Loose Connections

Now you wouldn't know Jimmy Òg. Young Jimmy we used t'call him. He was quite an old man, and he had a young wife and she got sick and died. And he was away home after the funeral and croonin' a lullaby to the bairns to quiet them an' stop them cryin', y'see. And there was a wicked young lad who noticed the ring on the wife's finger when they put her in the coffin. An' he was goin' to have that ring, y'see. An' he opened up the coffin to take the ring and Young Jimmy's wife cried out in pain when he was tryin' to get it off, and what happened, but the wife came home while Young Jimmy was singing the lullaby. And she just came in the door and Young Jimmy's joy knew no bounds, I'm sure. Or perhaps he had no desire at all to have her back. The Lord he gives and the Lord takeaway. Blissit be the name o' the Lord.

You wouldn't know Auld Jock from the Mains, but he was a braw young lad in his day. An' he married Maggie an' that was a great occasion, don't you know. Y'see a weddin' at that time would last three days, y' see, and I mind when the invitations came and there was such excitement and sheep to be killed. But I was wantin' to tell you about Auld Jock. Maggie turned a bit wild over the years and poor Jock, he couldn't say, "Father, hallow't be thy name," without her interfering. Oh, she was a besom, that one, but always good hearted, she was. And one day she died. And on the day of her funeral it was rainin' and cold and there was a drink before they set out for the kirkyard. And on they're goin' to get round the corner at the high garden wall and Jimmy stumbles. And he threw the rest of them off, see, and they smashed the coffin and upsits Auld Maggie, roarin' and greeting'. Y'see, she wasna deid at a'. So it's back to the house they go for another wee drink and such goings on you never did see. And Auld Maggie, she lived for another nine or ten years after that before she died again, but that's no the end o' the story. There they were the next time, as we's all there to see it just like before, and if I mind right, it was even a rainy day. And they was gettin' ready to go and headin' round the corner of the garden wall, and all of a sudden out of the blue Auld Jock cries out, "Mind y' tak' care o' the corner this time lads." Ay, Deith, whaur is thy victorie?

You're an awffy one for the stories, aren't you? Well, ask , an it s'be gien ye. Now, ye wouldn't be knowin' Jimmy but he had a big old black dog he kept with him at the smithy. And his wife had these two wee girls. That was a sad story, that. Her man went off to the war and had the legs blown off him, he did. An' then he gets home here and gets drowned in the big flood on the river Tay and Jimmy took the wee girls. They was just like his own, y'see. But one day here the girls up and disappeared. They was sent across the moss to do an errand and they was never seen again. And we all went out, y'see. It was such a sad thing. And there was no sign o' them. None at a' and Jimmy applied to Black Jock up to Aberdeen. Now Black Jock, y'see, was a professor of the Black Art. An' one day Jimmy's fiddle disappeared. He left it at the dance and when he went back in the morning it was gone. An people wouldna take things in those days, not things that belonged to others. But nobody'd seen Jimmy's fiddle, an' after a time, he was up to Aberdeen. An he went lookin' for Black Jock. And Black Jock says to him, he says, "Your fiddle's no far away. You'll find it if you go a wee bit to the north past the kirkyard and turn east a ways. And whoever lives there, that's where you'll find your fiddle." And sure enough, that's where it was. But Jimmy didn't want it after that. He thought it would bring bad luck. Now when the wee girls were gone, up he went again to Black Jock. An' Black Jock, he came down to the moss and he conjured up a big black dog just the same as Jimmy's. An' the dog dived down to the bottom of a moss pot and brought the bodies up. And that was the end of it. Ay, the yird is the Lord's an aa that is intil it. I don't mind what became o' the dog.

Now you wouldn't know wee Rhona, but she was a fine lass she was. And there was two brothers was each wantin' her, see? But she liked one better than the other y'see. An' the day o'the wedding they set out down the road past the field. And there's the other brother workin' at the plow as they pass. An' off he runs to have a peek at the wedding. And things was just beginning when Rhona fell down in a faint. Now y'see, if you were goin' to a wedding in those days, you'd take along your fork and knife. And Rhona's man pulled out his fork and knife and he crossed them on her breast, and here's the queer thing. He stood up and he called out to his brother, "There's folks here as clever as you and you'll no outwit me!" And after a time, Rhona got up and the wedding went on just like nothing happened. But that wasn't the first wedding to be stopped by sorcery. It won't be the last. Juidgna, an ye wadna be juidged, Lass.

Now you wouldn't know about this. But they used to sit up for the dead in the wake-houses, and they used to play the pipes, for the dead, y, know. And this time the piper was in the corner of the house, ye see, and pipin' and the auld man who was laid out on a bier just got up and began to dance. And he was dancin' there and the piper had to carry on all night with the auld man dancing continually. And the piper just kept on till the cock crowed at three in the morning and just like that, the auld man fell dead on the floor and the piper stopped. And y'see, that put an end to pipin' in all the wake-houses. Aye, and that piper was Angus from Blackhead, and he used to come around to work from time to time, and my father always gave him what he could. Ilkan at seeks finds, don't you know. And didn't he have the stories to tell?

*I sall go intil a hare
With sorrow sigh and muckle care*

Now you were askin' about witchcraft, were you? I've a wee story for you. Three sisters used to live in the wee house beside my Grannie's and two of them, they had red eyes, and we were so scared to go there, you know. Grannie was always tellin' us red-eyed persons were witches and the two sisters had red een. And the two of them died the same day. The same day, it's true. And I mind my Grannie sayin' what bonnie corpses they were with their eyes shut. Were they witches? Who's to say. Now I don't know, but when I was a wee lassie, you couldn't have gotten me in the front gate. And that's the truth.

*Hare, hare God send thee care;
I am in a hare's likeness now
But I sall be a woman e'en now
Hare, hare God send thee care.
Or else intill a dog I'll go
I'll take your health leave naught but woe
I'll curse your cow and make her dry
And in the byre she'll heave and die.*

Now you never see a black hare these days, but there was a black hare that used to visit. And every evening it came. And my Grandad tried to shoot it but he couldn't, and some of the neighbours tried too, and just after that Grandad's cow got sick and died and of course the rabbit took all the blame. Grandad never tried to shoot it again though. You see, witches, if they have a grudge against you, they ruin your health, or maybe make cows go dry. And they change themselves into a hare or a dog or a cat, you know.

*Dog, dog God send thee care;
I am in a dog's likeness now
And I sall be a woman e'en now;
Dog, dog, God send thee care.*

*And I sall go in the devil's name
Ay while I come home again.*

Have ye heard tell of Isobel Gowdie? She was a witch. She had a charm she repeated when she turned herself into an animal. She got sent on errands to her neighbours, in the shape of a hare. And the servants at Kilhill, going about their work, the hounds were with them, and they came after her, her in the shape of a hare, and she ran very long but at last took to her own house, and the door was open and she ran in behind the chest. And the hounds followed in but they went to the other side of the chest and she was forced to run out again and got into another house before she could take the time to say the words to change her back. This is True. And she'd return to her own shape. Sometimes the hounds got the rabbits, and Isobel Gowdie sometimes, she'd be seen in the town with a bad arm or a terrible sore leg. Oh, my Grannie knew all about Isobel, she did.

*A cat I've been, a cat I sall be
And you'll n'er see the end of me
Until your hounds and servants take
Both cat and woman burned at stake
And throw the ashes in the river
Then I sall be gone forever.*

My Grannie never had a cat in the house but one time. She used to keep wool all carded and ready to go in one big pile, and she found a cat on the top of the pile one morning just sleeping in the sun. And she'd never had a cat around before and she didn't really like cats but she thought there was something about this one and she let it stay. And it was always sound asleep on the soft pile of wool when she went to bed. But the mornings after that, the cat was always gone and the pile of wool always seemed to be smaller than it was the day before, and she was working just as hard as she ever had. And she tried closing the door before she went to bed, so the cat couldn't get out, but the cat was still gone the next day so one night finally she decided to sleep in the chair in front of the door and see how it got opened, and she woke up to see a woman at the door with her arms full of wool. And Grannie was so surprised she just sat there and the woman disappeared and she never saw the cat again. And didn't she just love to tell that story!

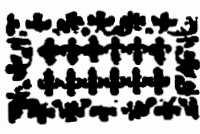
*I sall go intil a cat
And sair my heart with meikle thought
And I sall go in the devil's name
Ay while I come home again.*

To Dress a Tongue and Lure Sweet

*Sauce for the goose is Sauce for
a roasted Hare with Syrop of Lemons or
Syrop of Turneps or for the Walrus
Syrop of fricasie Oysters To market
to market To colour a Pig and
For a Goose Pye take my advice
To dress a Sea Cat you may put him in a sailor suit
but my cat likes to hide in boxes*

It is not hard To make a white Fool

Mrs. McLintock's
RECEIPTS
FOR
COOKERY
AND
PASTRY-WORK.



GLASGOW,
Printed in the Year **MDCCLXXXVI.**

To Dress a Tongue and Lure sweet

Take two Tongues and a Lure, take the roots of the Tongues when they are boiled, mince them very small, take one hundred Oysters, keep out some of the biggest of them, mince the rest small with a few Cucumbers and Capers, season them to your Taste with Nutmeg and black Pepper, take the broth the Tongues and Lure was boil'd in, put the minced Meat into the Liquor, boil it three Quarters of an Hour, then put in two Onions minced very small, and put in a little grated bread to thicken it, and a Gill of white Wine; put in some of the Oyster Liquor to season it to your Taste, boil them all together a full Quarter of an Hour, put the Lure in the middle of the Plate, slice the Tongues in two and put round it, and pour the Sauce on them, and garnish the dish with Cucumbers, Capers, the big Oysters, and fry'd sippets of bread.

Sauce for a roasted Hare

Take a good quantity of Spinnage, Parsly, Sorrel, and fill the Hare's belly and roast her, when she is enough, take the Herbs out of the Belly, shear them very small, put them in a Sauce-pan with a little of the Gravy, some claret wine, a little Vinegar, a Piece of fresh Butter, beat them all well together, and to thicken them, drest in a little flour, and pour it on the Hare.

Syrop of Lemons

Cut your Lemons, and squeeze out the Juice, and put it in a silver Tankard, and let it stand till it be clear, pour off the clear; for a Mutchkin of Juice, take 2 lib. of fine Sugar, straw in your Sugar till it be all dissolved, wash your Tankard, pour out the Grounds, and put in the clear Juice and Sugar, put white paper on the mouth of it, tye it close, set it in a Pan full of cold Water, and set it on the fire, let it boil a Quarter of an Hour, then take the Tankard out of the Water, and let it by all Night; take off the scum, take off the Paper, and bottle it when cold.

Syrup of Turneps

Take your Turneps, and wash them clean, and wipe them with a Cloath, grate them, wring them through a Cloath, to every Mutchkin of Juice, take a lib. of Sugar-candy, clarify it with the Whites of Eggs, let it boil well, then skim it; and when 'tis thick and clear, bottle it when cold.

To friggie Oysters

Take two hundred Oysters, stew them in their own Liquor and wash them from their shells, then strain the Liquor, and put the Oysters into it, with some white wine, pickled Mushrooms, and some capers, sweet Butter rolled in flour, grated Bread, some Lemon peel, stew them a little in the Pan with a little Pepper, beaten Nutmeg and Mace, then take the Yokes of four Eggs beat very well, put them into the Pan, and toss them all around till the Eggs curdle, till they be near boiling, then put them in your dish, and garnish it with sliced Lemon, Mushrooms, and Pickles.

To Colour a Pig

Take your Pig and cut off the Head and Feet and slit it down the back and Belly, and take out all the Bones, wash the blood clean from it in water, dry it well with a cloth, and take black Pepper, Jamaica Pepper, Nutmeg, Cloves, Mace, Salt, a little Lemon-peel, beat your Spices, season the sides, and roll them up in a Colleur, roll it in a clean cloth, and tie it up straight with broad Tape, put it in a pan with boiling water and salt, put in the Head and Feet and let it boil till it be tender, then take it out and let it ly till it be cold: take as much white Wine Vinegar as you think will cover it, with black Pepper, Jamaica Pepper, Cloves, Nutmeg, let all the Spices be whole you boil with the Vinegar; when the Vinegar is cold, take the Colleur out of the cloth and lay it in a can with the Head and Feet, stuff the Head full of Cloves, and if you love sweet Herbs, take Sage, Thyme, Winter-favoury, Bay-Leaves, rub them small, and put them in with the beaten Spices.

For a Goose Pye

Break the Bones of the Goose, and rub it within and without black Spice, Jamaica Pepper, and Nutmeg, lay it in the Pye, with the Giblets round about the Goose, to fill up the Corners of the Pye, give it good store of Butter, Spice, Salt, then put on the Lid and send it to the Oven.

To make white Foot
 Take the whole whites of six Eggs, strain them
 through with a Cloth, mix them with a Matchkin of sweet
 Cream, set it on the Fire, stir it till at the boiling, pour it
 in your Loom Plates, put Cinnamon and Sugar on the top
 of it and serve it up.

To dress a Sea Cat
 Skin the Cat, boil it among Salt and Water, take it up and drain it well, take
 some Anchovies, dissolve them in strong Broth, take a Quarter a hundred of Oysters,
 half a hundred of Mussels, half a hundred of Cockles, stew them and wash them clean
 from the shells and Sand, keep the biggest of the Oysters for frying them; take a lb. of
 fresh Butter, half a Matchkin of white Wine, half a spoonful of Catchup, put the Broth,
 Oysters, Mussels, Cockles and their Liquor, with the Lemon Juice cut very fine, a Gill of
 Capers, a Gill of Olives, mix all with the white Wine and Butter, stew them together
 with two Yolks of Eggs, a little French Mignonette small, togs all together, till they
 be thick; lay the Cat in your dish, and pour the Sauce on it, have ready some small fishes
 fried, such as Whitinge, Flounders, and fried Oysters to garnish your Dish.

*Mairi
and Morag Gunn*

Mairi: Oh, Morag, first there was Christie and the stories about Piper Gunn. And you heard those stories again and again, and the thrill was in Christie's telling. And you didn't know they were your favourites because they were his.

Morag: Well, Kid, I liked them because they were about Piper Gunn and that meant they were about me.

Mairi: You went to London. Why didn't you go to Scotland in the first place? I mean, I know. You had to find work, but why London? It was yourself you were after, and yourself you were trying to escape.

Morag: Why London? It was practical. I suppose it put Scotland within reach, just like McRaith did. And in the end, I didn't need it after all. Christie knew all the time you didn't need to find it. You had it in you. Gainsay who dare.

Mairi: McRaith. He had the same attraction for you as Jules. How many people in our lives do you think hold that kind of magnetism for us? But you took your answers in the same practical way you took everything else, and you left and they left. By mutual consent. Me? I found my McRaith too, Morag, and I'm going to have to leave him there. He's got his own Bridie. . . a few less kids though. Me, I have trouble letting go.

Morag: Just think of Catherine Parr Traill, kid.

Mairi: That was fine for her, she probably never had time to think about the man in her life, or did she have that down to a science too, do you think? I mean between naming plants and kids and cooking and gardening and the list goes on. Saint C. you called her. What do you think she would have to say about McRaith?

Morag: I think she would have liked him fine.

Mairi: That's not exactly what I meant.

Morag: Look, kid, I never really let either of them go, is that what you want? I just tried to stick with CPT's advice, hers and Piper Gunn's, it is better to be up and doing.

Mairi: Gainsay who dare.

Morag: Look kid, that's the best I can do. You've got to find the stories for yourself.

Mairi: Well, Morag. Got any advice?

Morag: Want to give me a hint?

Mairi: It was easy for you. You could have stayed, don't you think?

Morag: No, Kid, it was easy to leave because after a lifetime of looking, I found home.

Mairi: I always thought I knew where home was.

Morag: Sorry, Kid, you're on your own.

My Iala Bhan

thirty-one flags discoloured and grimy in the salt sea air
compete in silence with the strings of white lights
on the vessel in whose shadow *My Iala Bhan*
floats outside my window

fastened firmly by chains *My Iala Bhan*
small and marine blue floats bravely
ahead of the white giant which offers shelter in the gale
for mallard ducks and mute swans
and they swim at her water line next to the sea wall
in happy oblivion while riggings strain above them

My Iala Bhan's life boat swings and jerks in the wind
and for the first time ever
I am sick with the thought of being tossed
like seagulls in the wind across a churning sea
in a vessel so small I can touch both sides at once

*the white giant's white lights weather the storm
but the flags on My Iala Bhan are re-arranged now
wound tight about the masts they no longer fly free
the swans patrol the middle of the channel once again and
like the mallards. come and go while I
fingers numb and stinging with cold
walk into the bitter winter wind
and try to hang on*

Leith, Nov.96

afterthought

*it's snowing
thick irregular snowflakes
so that you think you're inside the magic glass dome you shake
snow falls and swirls in the water
there is no sign of birds
just thickening clusters of snow*

*on the Water of Leith the adolescent swans turn white
the cormorant sits on a log at the mouth with his mate
and the mallards cruise the waters across from Fife
seagulls circle and drift in place on the wind
the Scandinavian ship is gone from the dock
where mechanical arms lift loaded pallets
and swing back empty*

*I have thrown out the flowers
and left the flat clean
put the trash in the bin
defrosted the fridge
turned off the power
taken my small markers of place
photos of home. books
notes by the telephone*

no one can see what I have left behind

Winnipeg, Nov/96

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

**Mairi Òg, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, F. Marian Macneill
Robert Burns, Mrs. McLintock, Patrick McGee,
Mr. Willan Swainson, John Mitchell, J. Walker, M. Muir,
Isobel Gowdie, Mrs. Beeton, Morag Gunn**

CREDITS:

Conversations in the text have been inspired by various sources among which are: recipes in *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management (1888)*, and in Mrs. McLintock's *Receipts for Cookery and Pastry-Works (1736)*. Passages in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* inspired Mairi's conversation with Morag Gunn, while ads printed in *Notes and Queries (1923)*, inspired still others. I have edited, re-phrased and re-worked transcriptions of taped stories in Scots, originally printed in various issues of *Tocher: Tales, Traditions, Songs selected from the archives of the School of Scottish Studies*. Mairi's conversations with Robert Burns appear only indirectly in the text, but his influence is visible in the selected quotations of his poems and songs. The notes on the quarter days appear in *Carmina Gadelica*, which is also the source for excerpts from Duncan ban Macintyre's poem. Other information surrounding customs derives from such sources as Dr. Emily Lyle's unpublished document entitled *The Four Quarters of the Scottish Year*, and F. Marian Macneill's book *The Scots Cellar*, both used by permission. The quotation by Charles Rennie Mackintosh appeared in a public exhibition of his work in Glasgow, 1996.

I have tried to remain faithful to the spirit of the authors, and the tale-bearers and their traditions.

GLOSSARY

airt. *direction*
bangs. *surpasses*
bawbee. *copper coin, half-penny, money*
Bealltain. *Beltane (Gaelic) old Scottish quarter day, pagan festival*
besom. *a woman (derogatory or jocular)*
bhan. *white (Gaelic)*
bleer. *obscure the vision, deceive*
bonie. *bonny, beautiful*
bonnach. *bannock*
braw. *brave, handsome*
burn. *a small stream*
cauld. *cold*
colour. *colleur. to roll and tie up (meat or fish)*
erie. *sad, weird, ghostly*
fu'. *full*
gars. *causes*
girmin. *whining, grumbling*
greetin. *weeping*
heugh. *a crag, a pit, a hollow*
gub o' Mey. *stormy weather at the beginning of May*
ilka. *each, every*
lammas. *1st August, old Scottish quarter day*
lane. *alone*
lave. *all the rest or remainder*
leal. *loyal, true*
lien. *lain*
lure. *udder*
mart. *ox*
muckle. *much, great, large*
muggins. *ref. to mugwort plant*
mutchkin. *.212 litres*
neat. *cattle*
piece. *a piece of bread, scone with butter, jam etc.*
plaidie. *a broad piece of cloth for wrapping around the shoulders*
sair. *sore*
sheen. *shoes*
snaw. *snow*
tentless. *careless, heedless*
waukin. *waken*
yird. *earth, the soil*

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