



The Fisherman, the Selkie and the Moon

Contributed by Sylvia Troon

(short version)

There was once an old fisherman and his wife who lived in an old one-roomed stone cottage by the sea. They both worked hard, but had very little, and their clothes were rough and worn. But they rarely grumbled, and were contented enough. They liked to sit at the end of the day outside their cottage on a bench, watching, and listening to the sea. The old man puffed on his pipe and mended his nets, and the old woman busied herself with her knitting.

One sunny calm day the old fisherman rowed his boat out into the bay, and let down his net into the water. After a while, he felt something tugging the net, and he pulled it up. He was very surprised to find a strange but beautiful seal caught in it. It spoke to him, and said, "Auld man, I am an enchanted selkie. Please help me, and set me free." He replied, "Bonnie selkie, of course I will set ye free!" He helped it out of the net, and it swam off and disappeared.

When he told his wife about the selkie, she said, "I mind being telt by ma grannie that if ye helped an enchanted selkie, ye could ask it tae grant ye a wish!" From then on, the old woman could not stop thinking about the selkie, and one night she said to the old man, "Husband, I 'd like ye tae go back tae speak tae the selkie and aske it tae grant us a wish. Ask it for a bigger house – a house wi' three rooms, and a garden!" "Oh," replied the old man, "I dinna want tae bother it!" But she went on and on about it, till for the sake of bit of peace, he agreed to go.

The next morning he went to the shore. This time the sky was cloudy, a wind was blowing, and the sea was restless. He called out, "Selkie, bonnie Selkie..." His voice echoed over the waves. Soon the selkie appeared and said, "Why did ye call me?" The old man replied, "Oh bonnie selkie, I am sorry tae trouble ye, but ma wife would like ye tae grant her a wish." After he told the selkie what his wife wanted, it said, "Go back home – her wish is granted!" Then it swam away and disappeared.

(1st transformation)

When he returned he found that their small stone cottage had changed into a neat, three-roomed house with a well-tended garden. His wife was standing in the doorway, in a new dress and snow-white apron and bonnet. She was very proud of her new house, and she

especially liked to show it to her neighbours. However, as time went on, she could not forget the selkie, and she began to tire of her house. She wanted to have more, and to be more important... One night she said to the old man, "Husband, I'd like ye tae go back tae speak tae the selkie, and ask it tae grant us anither wish. Ask it for a big MANSION HOUSE!" "Oh," replied the old man, feeling worried, "I dinna want tae bother it!" But she went on and on about it, till for the sake of a bit of peace, he agreed to go.

The next morning he went to the shore. This time the sky was more cloudy, the wind was blowing harder and sea was covered in waves and foam. He called out, "Selkie, bonnie Selkie..." His voice echoed over the waves. Soon the selkie appeared and said, "Why did ye call me?" The old man replied, "Oh bonnie selkie, I am sorry tae trouble ye, but me wife would like ye tae grant her anither wish. "After he told the selkie what his wife wanted, it said, "Go back home – her wish is granted!" Then it swam away and disappeared.

(2nd transformation)

When he returned he found that their home had changed into a very big mansion house with grand gardens. His wife was standing in the doorway, dressed in a fine silk dress and hat. She was very proud of her new house, and especially liked to show it to her rich important visitors. HOWEVER... as time went on, she could not forget the selkie, and she began to tire of her mansion house. She wanted to have more, and to be more important. One night she said to the old man, "Husband, I'd like ye to go back tae speak tae the selkie, and ask it tae grant us anither wish. Ask it for a CASTLE, because I want tae be QUEEN!" "Oh," replied the old man, feeling really worried, "I dinna want tae bother it!" But she went on and on about it, till for the sake of a bit of peace, he agreed to go.

The next morning he went to the shore. The sky was even cloudier, the wind blew even harder, and the waves were even bigger. He called out, "Selkie, bonnie Selkie..." His voice echoed over the waves. Soon the selkie appeared and said, "Why did ye call me?" The old man replied, "Oh bonnie selkie, I am sorry tae trouble ye, but ma wife would like ye tae grant her anither wish!" After he told the selkie what his wife wanted, it said, "Go back home – her wish is granted!" Then it swam away and disappeared.

(3rd transformation)

When he returned he found that their mansion house had changed into an enormous castle with high towers that reached to the clouds. Inside, his wife was sitting on a golden throne, and she was wearing a very fine dress, and a sparkling crown. She was very proud that she was now a queen of such a grand castle. She especially liked everything to be admired by all her rich and important visitors. HOWEVER... she could not forget the selkie, and began to tire of being queen in a grand castle. She wanted to have MORE, and to be more important! She tried to think of something even better. Then one night she was staring at the moon, and she said to her husband, "Husband, I'd like ye tae go back tae speak tae the selkie again, and ask it tae grant anither wish. Tell it I want tae be ruler of the Moon and the night skies in a palace made of stars. Tell it I want tae control the sea and the tides!" "No!" replied the old man, "I'll NO dae that – no way!" She went on and on about it, but he refused to go. This time she had gone WAY too far! So she said, "Well then, I'll go mase!"

He did not believe her. But that night, she crept out when he was asleep, and she ran all the way to the shore.

A storm was brewing. The moon was partly hidden because the sky was even cloudier, the wind blew even harder, and the waves were even BIGGER. She called out, "Selkie, come here!" The selkie appeared and said, "Why do ye call me?" When she told it what she wanted, it stared at her for a long time, then it said, "Are ye sure?" "AYE!" she replied. Then it said at last, "Your wish is granted!" And it swam away and disappeared.

But now what was happening to her?! She felt herself being lifted up. She felt herself flying! Up and up she went, this way and that - and on and on. Then BUMP! She landed on some hard rocks. She looked around and could see dust and rocks all around her. Hundreds of stars shone and twinkled above her. "I wonder where I am?" she thought. Then she could hear a voice in her head. It was said, "Welcome to the Moon – and ENJOY!" She shouted out, "Eh – wait a minute! Where's ma palace made o' stars? And how dae I rule the tides? Tell me!" But no answer came. "Selkie!" she called, "Did ye hear me?! Answer ma question – now!" But still no answer. She began to feel frightened. She was all alone. What should she do? She had never felt so lonely before. She thought of all her wishes. She remembered how she had wanted more and more, and that she had never been happy. Then she remembered her old husband, and how she used to be contented sitting beside him outside the cottage by the sea. She felt like crying, and she called out, "Oh selkie, I'm sorry. I really am! Please help me go home!" Then she felt very tired, and curled up on the surface of the moon, and felt herself drifting off.

(back to Fisherman's Wife puppet)

The old fisherman woke up with a start. He must have dozed off, he thought. He found himself sitting on the bench outside their old cottage. Then he saw his wife walking up from the shore. She was wearing her old dress and apron, and her rough shawl. She sat down beside him, and gave him a little smile – a happy little smile. He sighed with relief, and started to puff on his pipe, and mend his nets, while she busied herself with her knitting. Then they both smiled at each other. That night the moon shone brightly as it looked down on the little cottage.