

Monday, Tuesday

As told by Bea Ferguson

Once upon a time, at the mouth of a beautiful green glen in the hills of Scotland, there lived two old men.

They lived on opposite sides of the glen and both were bent double from working hard all their lives. The one who lived on the left side of the glen, well he had a hump on the right of his back, but he was as cheery as the day is long; always out and about, meeting and greeting, whistling and singing away. "Hello there, how are you?" He was always ready to give you the time of day and have your news.

But the other old fellow, who lived on the right hand side of the glen, he had a hump on his left side and he was a grump, a real crosspatch. He sat in his wee cottage with the windows and door shut tight, and a filthy wee place it was. He only went out when he had to – to fetch water or messages – and when he went along the road he muttered away to himself, never lifting his eyes from the ground. The most anyone could hope for was a grunt or a mump.

Well, one evening, it was late June, about midsummer, the cheery old man went out as was his custom for a stroll up the glen. He was humming softly to himself as he admired the flowers and green leaves in the warm summer air and listened to the birds chirping in the bushes. Then all of a sudden he heard singing coming from up ahead at the top of the glen. At the head of the glen there was a grove of old oak trees and a circle of stones, half buried in the moss and grass and it was from there that the singing was coming.

"Monday, Tuesday
Monday, Tuesday"

went the song.

“That’s strange,” thought the old man. “It’s a nice song but a bit short.” And when he came to the top of the path there were the guid folk, the fairy people, dancing on the green floor and singing as they danced.

“Monday, Tuesday
Monday, Tuesday”

So just to be helpful the old man, who had a nice voice, added:

“Wednesday”

“Monday, Tuesday” sang the fairies

“Wednesday” added the old man

“Monday, Tuesday” sang the fairies

“Wednesday” added the old man.

So the little people stopped dancing and hurried over to the old man.

“Oh thank you,” they said. “Thank you so much. We’ve been trying to get the next bit of that song for ages.”

“No problem,” said the old man. “It’s my pleasure.”

“But we must reward you,” said the fairies’ wee chief man – I suppose he was a fairy king. “What can we give you? We’ve got lots of treasure in the hill back there.”

“Oh no,” said the old man. “I don’t need any treasure. It was nothing.”

“But we must reward you,” cried all the wee folk together.

“Oh well,” said the old man, laughing, “Perhaps you can do something about the hump on my back. See it’s all twisted with the rheumatics on my right side.”

“We will have to see what can be done,” said the king.

So that was that. The old man had a grand wee crack with the fairies and then with thank yous and goodbyes on all sides he headed back home.

But as he started down the path he could hear, quite distinctly, the delighted fairies singing...

“Monday, Tuesday, **Wednesday**
Monday, Tuesday, **Wednesday**”

The next morning when the old man awoke, he was amazed to see that his back was completely straight and equal on both sides. He stood upright like he did when he was a young man. He was delighted.

Well, of course word soon got around because the old man was walking as straight as a rake and he was quite happy to explain how the wee people had helped him. And, of course, the grumpy old man who had the hump on his left side felt he was owed a bit of straightening too. So, before the month was out, the old grump was on the road up the glen to the fairy circle, looking neither to his right nor to his left. And just as his neighbour on the other side of the glen had described it, as he came to the head of the path he could hear the fairies sing.

“Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday”

“Right,” he thought. “I’ll soon put these wee nuisances right.” And lurching forward into the clearing he snarled out,

“Thursday, Friday, Saturday
See, you forgot a bit!
Thursday, Friday Saturday”

Total silence fell. Even the birds stopped chirping in the twilight. Then the wee king came forward.

“How can we help you?” he asked.

“Well, it’s me that’s helping you,” said the old man. “But since you’re asking, I want this hump off my back and a pile of treasure forbye.”

“We will have to see what can be done,” said the king. And as the guid folk stood around watching him the old man lurched over the clearing to a wee door in the hill, stooped down and stuffed every pocket of his old coat with gold and silver till the treasure was falling out around him.

“Till tomorrow then,” he said and stomped off down the path.

“Aye, till tomorrow,” said the king, and sadly he turned back to the clearing.

The next morning, when the old man awoke, great was the wonder because instead of one hump on his twisted back he had two.

And as for all that treasure? It had turned to a pile of withered leaves on the muddy floor of the old man's cottage.

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