

Rashiecoats

As told by Senga Munro in Scots

A lang, lang time ago when folk had tae walk on their ain twa feet, and at nicht they lichtit caunles, there lived a king. An he had an awfy bonny dochter. An everythin went awfy weel, until wan day he ca'd her up into the big room and he said, 'Come and see this pictur, cause this is the king yer gawn tae mairry.'

An he held up a wee pictur and his dochter looked at it. The king wasnae all that young, an his eyn were ower close thegither, an his mooth was awfy ticht. She didnae want tae mairry onybody like that! And she didnae ken what tae dae, because she had tae dae what her faither had telt her tae dae. But she thocht she'd jist gang doon and ask the hen-wife.

She telt the hen-wife what was happenin, and the hen-wife said, 'Oh aye, I ken him fine – an he's no as ugly as he's awfy. So I'll tell ye what ye could dae, ye could try tae pit yer faither aff. Why dae ye no gang back and say tae him, 'A'll need some new claes if A'm gawn tae mairry a king! So A think A'd like a coat o beaten gowd.'

So aff she went and she telt the king, 'A need a coat o beaten gowd.' And the king didnae find that a problem, cause he had his jewellers beat oot the gowd til it was jist, almost clear, and licht as a feather. An in nae time she had a coat o beaten gowd that shone like the sun. She took it up tae her bedroom, and she opened up the lid o her mairriage kist, and pit it in beside the sheets and the blankets and the quilts.

An then she went back tae the hen-wife and said, 'Well, I've got ma coat o beaten gowd but I still dinnae want tae mairry him! The king, ye ken. I didnae like his pictur at all.'

'Well this time, gang back and ask yer faither fer a coat o the feathers o a' the birds o the air.'

An that's jist what she did, and it wasnae a problem because the king jist asked one ae his servants tae gan intae the big square o the toon wae a big basket o oats. An the servant got there, an he shouted, 'Ae grain fer ae feather! Ae grain fer ae feather!' An the sky darkened – there were hundreds and thousands o birds. An they swooped doon, and true tae the pact they jist took wan grain and left a feather. An a' the servant had

tae dae was tae tak the basket back, for noo it was fu' o feathers o a' the colours o the rainbow. There was red an blue an yelly an green an iridescent colours an black an grey and white. When the king saw the feathers he says, 'Right, my tailor'll make ye the bonniest coat ye've ever seen.' An shair enough, that's jist what the tailor did.

Ah well, the princess was still doon in the dumps so she folded the bonny cloak and pit it in her wedding kist, an doon she went again tae the hen-wife. An the hen-wife said, 'This time, ask yer faither for a coat made o rushes.'

Off she went, and she thocht, 'A don't think this is possible.' But not only did the king gie her a coat o rushes that was green like the only green ye see in summer, and it had a' the memories o flooers and smells and soonds, he made her a wee pair o shin as weel. An she took them, she lifted the lid o her weddin kist, folded it, pit it inside and shut the lid. An away she went doon tae the hen-wife.

An the hen-wife said, 'Oh A'm sorry, ye can only hae three things. A cannae help you ony mair.'

Weel, the mair she thocht, the mair the princess kent she couldnae stay. So, she got a big seck, an she waited til the gloamin', an she filled the seck wi her three coats an she went oot. An she walkit and she walkit, in an oot o the days an weeks, an afore the month was oot she cam to another kingdom and went to the castle. An the noo she looked like an ordinary country buddy.

Weel, she went roond tae the back door an she chappit on the door.

'Is there onybuddy in?'

'What is it ye want?'

'A was just wondrin' if ye needed some helpin' wi...wi onythin? A can dee all sorts o things!' (Which was a lie, but she was going tae try.)

'Ye can come awa' in, we need somebody tae help in the kitchen.'

An in she went, an she did a' the things that naebuddy else wanted tae dae. She scrubbed the pats, she lifted the ashes, she made shair that the spits were turnin' ...she did a' they things as weel as she could.

An it came tae the Sabbath day, an everybuddy was gone tae the kirk. But they said, 'Rashiecoat!' (Because that's what she ca'd herself) 'Rashiecoat, you cannae gang, you'll hae tae stay and watch the dinner.'

So she sat doon, and she was really, awfy stool. She was awfy sad.

An jist then, the kitchen door creaked open, an a hare cam loupin intae the kitchen. An it looked up at her and he said, 'Rashiecoat! Why are ye no at the kirk? Awa' ye go, an get on yer coat o gowd.'

'Right,' said Rashiecoat, an she went out o' the seck and she pit on the coat. But A think she had learned a thing or twa fae the hen-wife because she went out ae the fire an she said:

*'Ae peat maks another peat burn.
Ae spit maks another spit turn.
Ae pat maks another pat play,
Let the Rashiecoat gang tae the kirk the day!'*

An aff she went. An as she went intae the kirk, there wis a turnin roond, an a lookin, an the prince – his eyn were as big as saucers when he saw this bonny lassie in a golden coat. Noo, he made up his mind, he would see her when she went oot o the kirk. But Rashiecoat went oot afore the end o the ceremony and the prince couldnae see hide nor hair o her.

An when everybody got back and had eaten their dinner, the folk fae the kitchen were sayin, 'Oh, Rashiecoat, ye should have seen! There was this bonny lassie wae a golden coat! You should have been there.'

An Rashiecoat, she jist kept all they things tae hersel'. An the next Sunday she thocht she'd mebbe get tae gang tae the kirk, but no. What was said to her was, that the dinner was that good, 'You Rashiecoat are gon t' hae tae stay and look after the dinner.'

Well, the same thing happened. In through the door came the hare, an it said, 'Rashiecoat! Are you no at the kirk the day? Awa' ye go, an pit on yer coat o feathers.'

An that's jist what she did, but afore she went, she went out o the fire an she said:

*'Ae peat maks another peat burn.
Ae spit maks another spit turn.
Ae pat maks another pat play,
Let Rashiecoat gang tae the kirk the day!'*

Well, if the prince's eyn were like saucers the first time, this time they were like tea plets! An he moved up nearer tae the lassie, an when he was supposed tae be listenin tae the sermon, his eyn were feastin on this lassie wi the bonniest coat o feathers.

Before the end o the sermon Rashiecoat had tae get back tae serve the dinner, and she joukit oot, an afore the prince could get there, she wasnae tae be seen.

An when she got back – 'Oh, Rashiecoat! Ye'll never guess, that same lassie was there, and this time she wis wearin a coat made o a' the feathers o a' the birds in the hale world. Ye've never seen the like in a' yer born days.'

An the week passed an it wis the Sabbath again, an she still had tae mak the dinner. But efter they went, in came the hare and said, 'Rashiecoat! You should gang to the kirk the day, wearin' yer coat o rushes an yer wee shin.'

An aff she set, but no before she said:

*Ae peat maks another peat burn.
Ae spit maks another spit turn.
Ae pat maks another pat play,
Let Rashiecoat gang tae the kirk the day!'*

An aff she went, and the prince this time, his eyn were like soup plets because the green o' the coat, and it was jist like gossamer, and it brocht oot the colour in Rashiecoat's eyn, and she was the bonniest thing he had ever seen, an he decided this was gawn tae be his wife.

So he was ready, but so was Rashiecoat. She joukit oot, but in her hurry she drapt wan o her wee shane, an was back in the kitchen. The prince picked up the shae, had a look at it, an he thocht, 'A ken what A'll dae.' An he made a proclamation, saying that ony lassie that fitted this shae, he wid mairry.

An folk came fae all ower the country, an even oot o it. But naebuddy could get their fit into the bonny wee green shae. So he decided that he wid gan on his horse roond a' the ferm toons, tae every wee cottage and buton ben there wis in the country.

Naebuddy could. Noo in that country, there wis another hen-wife – she had a dochter, an she said to her dochter, 'Dochter, if you cut aff the heel o yer fit, an yer taes, an mebbe tak a wee bit aff the sides as weel, you could mairry the prince.'

Noo, the hen-wife's dochter was a big tumshie of a lassie, an guy ugsome, but it wis dark inside, and the hen-wife said, 'Prince, come in.' An shair enough, the hen-wife's dochter got her fit into the wee, wee shae.

An the Prince said, 'Ah weel, get up ahint me an we'll gan tae the palace tae ma castle an we'll get mairried.' An he raed an he raed wi the ugsome hen-wife's dochter ahint him.

An he was jist passin the woods, when there wis a wee bird sittin on a branch an it was singin:

*'Nippit clip fit and clippit fit, ahint the king's son rides.
But bonny fit and true fit, ahint the cauldron hides.'*

An the prince turned roond, an he looked at the hen-wife's dochter, an he said, 'You gang back tae yer mither, an see if she can dae something aboot that fit o yours, bit gie me the wee shae.' And she took it aff and gie'd it to him, an it wis fu' o blid.

He raed an he raed tae the castle, he washed the shoe an he dried it, an he ran doon the stairs tae the kitchen an there ahint the cauldron was Rashiecoat. An he said, 'Would ye try this shae on?'

An she did. An she said to him, 'If ye just wait a wee minutie.' An she went into the seck, an she took oot the other shae, she pit it on, an she pit on her coat o rushes. And ye ken this? They were mairried that very day, an they never drank oot o a dry cuppie.

