

The Tailor in the Church

As told by Bea Ferguson

There was once a wee tailor who made wonderful clothes.

His stiches were so fine you could scarcely see them, and he was always in great demand for making new clothes, especially for the gentry. Now the Laird was in need of a new pair of tartan trousers, but he was also a man who liked a bit of a joke; so he called the tailor and dared him to make those trousers by night in the old ruined church. Everyone knew that the old church was haunted.

'If you dare to do that,' said the Laird, 'I'll give you a big reward over and above the price of the trouser.'

Well, the tailor thought he could do with a big reward, and he was a plucky little fellow, nothing much scared him, so he agreed. When night came, he walked the half-mile up the glen to the ruined church. He had the tartan cut-out for the trousers over his left arm, and he was carrying a candle and a tinder box in his right hand; and his scissors and needle and thread he had tucked away in a big pocket. It was dark and all very quiet, apart from the roaring and rumbling of the stream that ran through the glen and the rowan trees whispering in the wind. That and his own footsteps.

So he came to the church, went in, lit his candle, and looked around him for the best place to set out his work. There were a lot of flat gravestones on the floor of the church, and one or two raised ones. So he chose the biggest and flattest of the raised gravestones, clambered up on to it, spread out his work, sat himself down cross-legged, took needle, thread and scissors out of his pocket, and began to sew.

He was stitching away, working very fast because he knew he must work fast if he was to finish the trousers before morning, when, all of a sudden, the ground began to tremble, and up out of a flat gravestone at his feet a great,

great head rose up. It opened a great, great mouth, and roared out in a great, great voice: 'Do you see this great head of mine?'

The little tailor was just a teeny bit scared, but said bravely, 'I see that, but I'll sew this.' And he went on stitching.

Then the great, great head rose higher up through the gravestone, until a great, great neck appeared. And again it opened its great, great mouth and roared out in a great, great voice: 'Do you see this great neck of mine?'

'I see that, but I'll sew this,' said the tailor. And he went on stitching.

Then the great, great head and the great, great neck rose higher still, until great, great shoulders and a great, great chest rose above the ground. And the great, great voice roared out again: 'Do you see this great chest of mine?'

'I see that, but I'll sew this,' said the tailor. And he went on stitching.

Still the Thing kept rising up through the gravestone, till two great, great arms appeared. And the Thing shook those great, great arms in the tailor's face, and roared out in its great, great voice: 'Do you see these great arms of mine?'

'I see those, but I'll sew this,' said the tailor.

Well now he was sewing away faster than ever, and taking long stitches too, for the Thing kept rising and rising up through the ground until it lifted out a great, great leg. And it stamped with that great, great leg on the gravestone and roared out in its great, great voice: 'Do you see this great leg of mine?'

'Aye, I see that, but I'll sew this,' said the tailor.

And his fingers fairly flew with the needle. Now he was going so fast, and was taking such long stitches, that he finished his work just as the Thing was pulling its other leg out of the ground. So then the tailor tucked the trousers under his arm, blew out his candle, leaped off the gravestone, and ran for his life out of the church.

The Thing gave a roar that shook the church and stamped with both feet on the flagstones; and then it was off out of the church, racing on its great, great legs after the tailor.

Down the glen they raced, faster than the stream that raced and roared at their side. The Thing's great, great feet shook the ground, and it's great, great voice, roaring on the tailor to stop, set the glen echoing.

But the tailor had got the start of it, and he was light and nimble, and he ran as he had never run in all his life before.

And so, he came to the Laird's castle, ran in through the gate and slammed it behind him, just as the Thing came up to it. The Thing was so enraged at losing its quarry that it struck the wall above the gate with the flat of its great, great hand, and left the mark of its five fingers there for all to see to this day.

But the tailor got well paid for the trousers, and he got a purse full of gold as well. Maybe the Laird noticed that some of the stitches were a bit on the long side, and maybe he didn't. At any rate he never complained, but the tailor vowed he would never sew trousers in the old church again – however much money he was offered.



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