

SHARLA SHANGELING

The Hobgoblin's Christmas

Once upon a time in a far off land called Maekawish lived all the beautiful, woodland creatures one could imagine. Now these were not merely the bunnies and woodland mice (though these are lovely indeed).

The creatures I speak of were magical beasts. Fairies fluttered translucent wings and pixies danced in the moonlight. Elfin folk sang sweet songs and hobgoblins played enchanted flutes. All was fair and all was fine.

Now I warn you of the impending sorrow because sadly the beauty did not last. The nearby mining town had grown and the village was crouching upon the Maekawish forest. The villagers sometimes spotted a Fairy folk, amongst the emerald trees and their reaction was more of fascination than malice. This may have lasted had it not been for the Industrial Magnate himself – Gerund Kilmnwik. Kilmnwik was a clever enough man. He had managed to run a company that could harvest all the ore from the earth and had led that company to more and more growth.

Kilmnwik's home was a castle and almost every single thing was made of steel. It was almost as hard and cold and practical as he was. For Kilmnwik was a pragmatic man. His practicalities had made him a fortune and gained him great influence amongst the townspeople. These were the things he cherished most.

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Kilmnwik detested all the nonsense about fairies and mystical creatures. He resolved to abolish any signs of them from the forest and so sadly the hunts began. The land was rampaged as he employed men with steel arms to search the land and destroy the creatures. The magical beings fled. They escaped to far away places. Kilmnwik was very pleased with himself and the order he felt he had restored. He sat down to a very hearty meal with a very grand smile on his face.

In the farthest corner of the forest, in the darkest tree sat huddled a creature with an empty belly and a sad countenance. One lone hobgoblin had been left behind. His curly hairy legs collapsed under him in grief. He was a strange sight with goat like horns, wispy hairs and a boyish mischievous look but he possessed the kindest, most beautiful, green eyes that anyone could ever wish to see.

Now time passed, as it has a habit of doing. The hobgoblin lay in hiding. He could run quickly and managed to remain mostly unseen. Of course there were sightings. You see, he had two weaknesses that undermined his elusiveness. Well Kilmnwik would have seen them as weaknesses. Firstly the hobgoblin loved to play his pipe and would do so. Secondly, though he had experienced great sadness, he remained kind and gentle. He would help any woodcutters in despair. Eventually the town folk grew to know of this beast.

The inquisitive children would dare each other into the forest to catch a glance and eventually they started to sit and listen to the dulcimer tones of his pipe. At first glance he was a wispy and beastly creature but those kind eyes and caring disposition would win one over.

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Winter had come and the biting wind tore through the land. Frost dusted the leafless trees and all was cold and dark. The hobgoblin would huddle into the meagre cottage he had built and suffice himself on the simplest of meals.

Kilmnwik however enjoyed banquets and planned a great Christmas festivity. He decorated his castle with steel ornaments that were neatly organised in rows and columns. He delighted in being admired almost as much as he enjoyed being right. He invited all the people of his land to this Christmas feast at his home. It was not so much a gesture of kindness as it was an opportunity for him to feel so very important. To Kilmnwik this was the best feeling in the world.

Yes Christmastime was here. The gloom of the night could only be borne because of the twinkle of the stars and the glitter of the Christmas lights that the villagers tacked unto their homes. Carols were being sung and presents were being bought. Kilmnwik looked down at the people and a smile spread over his crooked face. He could see them talking excitedly and could sense their eager anticipation. His annual Christmas event was the highpoint of the town's social calendar.

Christmas Eve came and midnight mass passed well. And then.... Yes yes yes.....

It was Christmas!!!!

All the town was a hub of excitement. Kilmnwik got up and starched his best tunic for the occasion. Soon the villagers would be here and they would "OOOHH" and "AAAHHH" at his feast and decorations. They were the most expensive that money could buy and he was the most powerful man in the town. He let his drawbridge down over his moat and peered out his window to see the villagers in

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procession, dressed in their finest carrying parcels of all kinds. His moustache made an extra curl with glee.

Meanwhile the hobgoblin sat in his little cottage. He sipped on some simple soup. He was alone once more. Another Christmas...and a little tear was about the fall on his kind, beautiful, beastly face when he heard a strange marching kind of sound. For fear that Kilmnwik had sent soldiers with steel arms once more, he rushed to the doorway in preparation to flee.

As he looked out he beheld the strangest and most heart-warming sight a hobgoblin ever saw. The villagers came bearing gifts and holly and treats of all kind. They crammed into his poor hut and it burst to the seams with warmth and joy.

Decorations were hung and gifts exchanged. The tastiest food was indulged in. The most filling stews and scrumptious cakes were passed around. The children danced as hobgoblin played his flute. It was the merriest Christmas there ever was. The dark of the forest was broken with the hung lights and gaiety. Hobgoblin sat down to a very hearty meal with a very grand smile on his face.

What about Kilmnwik you ask. Well, he was stuck in his cold, hard steel house all alone. His feast went to waste and he could not harm the hobgoblin because the villagers would never allow it. In time Maekawish would be restored to its magical glory as some fairy-folk returned. Kilmnwik got his comeuppance as he ended up with a lot of steel but not many friends.

But all that came in time...For now Hobgoblin was just so happy to be surrounded by the best Christmas ever.

You see his wish had come true.

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All that's left to be said is...

MERRY CHRISTMAS to you!!!!