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The Bishop and The Hermit

by Jess Smith

Well, there was a famous bishop and he lived in the area of Dunkeld and he wandered among the people in Birnam and all these places, a wonderful man and he became quite a hierarchy in the world of the early bishops, monks I think they were called in those days and he became quite high and beloved by all his fellow brothers.

But his beginning, it's amazing how he began because he was found as a waif and he was a thief and he was a liar and he was a cheat as a boy and the monks took him, found him as a wee orphan wandering around the area just like an urchin causing a lot of bother, you know like a goblin, so they took him in and he kept stealing and being violent and running away and they wanted to wash their hands of him but they didnae want to give up on this little boy but anyway he ran away and he crossed the river in Dunkeld yonder and he went away up in to the woods of the river Braan but there was an old man lived up there and he was a wise old man, a kind of a hermit, and this wee laddie run in to his wee campsite and he sat the boy down and he said 'What's wrong with you? You look like you've got all the troubles of the world on you'. And of course the wee boy was cheeky and he kicked the coals on the fire or the peats and he made a bit of a nuisance so the old man sat him down and whatever he said to this bairn, his teaching of wisdom and of working through his anger, he took away the evil that was in this child and this child looked upon this old man more and more like a father figure and he visited him and he taught him how to weave baskets and how to read the signs of the wind and in many cases how to catch it and hear the song, the song of the ancestors, and he continually lived up until he was about 14, 15 and then the old man said 'Your calling is with the monks. Go in there at Dunkeld because you have to lead them for there are many will come among them and try to cheat them and steal from them'. So he became one of the most powerful early, early head bishops, as we'll use the word for want of a better word, abbots maybe, in among the monks and they absolutely loved him. They put him on a pedestal and they gave him a great authority among all the heirs. And many royals would come and speak to this great man.

And when he was reaching the end of his life, he said to his fellow brothers, he said 'When I die, bury me over in the Braan' he says 'beside my old friend' he says, 'I don't want to be buried here where there will be great, you know, stones for me and everything like that I want to be among the earth'. 'But you're a man of God'. 'God is everywhere, everywhere. Bury me there'.

So when he died, they didn't bury him over in the Braan, they thought he was too, too powerful so they buried him in the Abbey and, strangely enough, the river flooded and as it flooded, his grave was the one that it flooded and removed his coffin and eventually they said 'He's telling us that he doesn't want to be here and he's not content' so they took his coffin over to the Braan where the old man's campsite, the old hermit, was, and there they buried him and they were buried side by side so that, in time, the earth would claim back the godly man.

This is the transcript of the audio file available at
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