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Adam Forrester and the Circle of Steel by Tony Bonning

Quite near to Polmaddy is a hill called Waterside Hill and on that is a round ditch, a circular ditch, which some say was part of an old fort. I know something different.

Adam Forrester was a farmer at Knocksheen which is fairly near to Polmaddy and every night he used to ride down to the town of Dalry and he would go to the pub there, the Clachan Inn and he would sup a pint of beer and some whiskies and he get himself roaring drunk fu'. But as he would walk into the pub, he would say to the woman who owned the pub, whose name was Lucky Hare,

'Lucky Hare, hen. Adam is here. Gie's a kiss' and she would say,

'No! No kissin a smelly auld fermer'.

'Och fine, I'll have a pint and a whisky and a whisky and a beer and a beer and a whisky'.

And he would get himself roaring drunk fu' and then he would ride all the way back, crossing the ford on the River Ken, all the way back to Knocksheen.

Now it just so happened on a Friday night, he had finished his day's work and headed down to Lucky Hare's hostelry and going in the door he said as usual,

'Lucky Hare, hen. Gie's a kiss.'

And she'd said her usual 'No'.

He said 'Well give me a whisky and a beer'.

'No'.

'How no?'

'I'm gaun oot'

'Whaur ur ye gaun?'

'It's nane o yer business', she said

'Och fine, cheerio'.

So off she went and Adam started drinking again, his pints and his whiskies and his whiskies and his pints. 'Thank you, Jim, that's great'. And, by midnight, he was again roarin' drunk fu'.

Well, he went back out the door, climbed on to his old nag and began to ride down the hill heading towards the ford on the River Ken but as he passed the old kirk that was there, he noticed there was a candle burning in the window and music coming from it. And he walked across, looking in the window in his drunken state, saw Lucky Hare dancing away like a young thing. And old Jock and old Jean, his wife, and they about 96 years old, dancing like young things as weel.

'Oh no, they're carlins, witches. Oh no.'

And then in the corner, he saw a great, black beast. It was the Devil himself playing the bagpipes and everybody's dancing. It was a ceilidh. No, it wasnae, it was the witches sabbat.

'Oh no, oh no, no, no. Oh but there's Lucky Hare. Oh Lucky Hare, hen, gie's a kiss.'

And suddenly, all was silent and then the lights went out. And the door opened up and out they came saying,

'Adam Forrester, we're going to get a grip o' you. We're going to drag you doon into hell and burn you in hell fire'.

And he says 'No you're no'.

And he ran and he leapt on to his horse and, hard as he could, he rode for the ford, knowing full well they could not cross running water.

Well, he crossed the running water but the witches and the carlins and the beasties, the bogles, the ghaisties, the wraiths, the Devil himself ran down to the bridge further down on the Ken and they crossed over and they began to catch up on Adam Forrester, riding hard for Knocksheen. He finally got onto Waterside Hill, just at the moment when Lucky Hare herself skelped the horse on the backside and left a hand mark, pulling off half the tail of the horse.

But he made his way on to the top of the hill and they surrounded him and then they began to creep towards him saying,

'We've got ye noo, Adam Forrester. We're gonna drag you doon into Hell and burn ye'.

Well, he louped from his horse and he pulled his sword out and he cut a circle in the grass all the way round about him, a deep ditch, with his mighty sword. And then he turned the sword around and made the holy sign of the cross and he said,

'God's curse on any beast, bogle, ghaist, wraith, de'il or the like that dares to pass God's holy circle o' steel'.

But all night, they circled and circled and circled but they could not pass the sacred barrier that protected Adam Forrester until 'Cockadoodledoo'. Phhhhh. They disappeared back down into Hell.

As for Adam Forrester, well, finally he rode back to Knocksheen and, wisely, from that day forward, never touched another drop of drink.

This is the transcript of the audio file available at
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