

# **THE LOST WIFE OF BALLALEECE MANX FAIRY TALE**

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One time the Farmer of Ballaleece married a beautiful young wife and they were thinking the world of one another. But before long she disappeared. Some persons said that she was dead and others that she was taken by the Little People. Ballaleece mourned for her with a heavy heart and looked for her from Point of Ayr to the Calf; but in the end, not finding her, he married another wife. This one was not beautiful, but there was some money at her.

Soon after the marriage his first wife appeared to Ballaleece one night, and said to him:

‘My man, my man, I was taken away by the Little People, and I live with them near to you. I can be set free if you will but do what I tell you.’

‘Tell me quick,’ said Ballaleece.

‘We’ll be riding through Ballaleece barn at midnight on Friday,’ said she. ‘We’ll be going in on one door and out on another. I’ll be riding behind one of the men on horseback. You’ll sweep the barn clean, and mind there is not one straw left on the floor. Catch hold of my bridle rein, hold it fast, and I shall be free.’

When the night came Ballaleece took a besom and swept the barn floor so clean that not one speck was left on it. Then he waited in the dark.

At midnight the barn doors opened wide, sweet music was heard, and in through the open door came a fine company of Little People, in green jackets and red caps, riding fine horses. On the last horse, sitting behind a Little Fellow, Ballaleece saw his first wife as pretty as a picture, and as young as when she left him. He seized hold of her bridle rein, but he was shaken from side to side like a leaf on a tree, and he was not able to hold her. As she went out through the door she stretched out her right hand and pointed to a bushel in the corner of the barn, and called out in a sad voice:

‘There’s been a straw put under the bushel—for that reason you couldn’t hold me, and you’ve done with me for ever!’

The second wife had heard what had passed and had hidden the straw, and turned the bushel upside down so that it would not be seen.

The young wife was never heard of any more.

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