

Story Ceilidh



Story Ceilidh



YEAR OF
STORIES
— 2022 —

your
voice

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The Room Full of Everything and The Well of Life artwork by Katherine Hemmings
The Enchanted Cap and Queen Moremi artwork by Zu Dominiak
The Old Man and the Apple Seller artwork by Mhairi Robertson

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Introduction

Imagine having a whole year set aside to celebrate stories.

It's exactly the sort of gift we all needed.

Story Ceillidh was originally suggested by Jamie Dalgoutte of Your Voice Inverclyde, as a way to maybe bring some of our local New Scots families back together after a long time apart. We were delighted to receive support from the Community Stories Fund to make it happen.

We wanted to hear and share stories that people remembered being told as children, that they wanted to share with their families again now.

And so on Tuesday nights all through the springtime of 2022, we sat together, round a table eating pizza and biscuits (very traditional) to hear and record stories from long ago. Stories from Syria, Nigeria and Scotland, all shared around the table - sometimes in Arabic, sometimes with children and translator apps helping us piece it all together. The common language of stories and laughter.

Our storytellers agreed to share their stories live, once again around a table, sharing food, on June 21st 2022 and we have collected some of our favourites here for you to share and enjoy too.

Every moment, every day, every year is full of stories, but it has been a pleasure to be able to take the time to stop and listen, to find the silence filled again.

We hope you enjoy sharing them too.

Paul Bristow
Magic Torch Comics CIC

A stylized illustration of a campfire at night in a forest. The campfire is in the center, with bright yellow and orange flames. It is surrounded by a ring of grey stones. The background is a dark blue night sky with some lighter blue clouds. There are green trees on either side of the campfire, and some rocks are visible in the distance. The overall style is simple and cartoonish.

The Room full of Everything



Once, there was a Fisherman, who was very poor.

One day he caught a fish and found a ring inside.

It was a beautiful ring, full of precious stones, and his wife suggested that they sell it to get more money.

The Fisherman took the ring to all the finest jewellers in the town, but none of them would buy it – the ring was worth more than they could pay.

“How much is the ring worth?” asked the Fisherman.

“I cannot tell you how much, too much. The only way you could sell this, would be to take it to the governor, he is very wealthy.”

So, the Fisherman took the ring to the governor, and asked if he wanted to buy it.

“This ring is beautiful – priceless!” said the Governor.

“How much will you give me for it?” asked the Fisherman.

“I’m not sure what a fair price would be for such a ring,” said the Governor, “but follow me.”

The Governor took the Fisherman to a huge room, filled with tables full of the finest foods and the most beautiful treasures – crowns made of phoenix feathers, statues carved from fallen stars, books filled with magical spells and secrets...

“I will give you this room for six hours,” said the Governor. “And for those six hours, you can take whatever you want.”

“Six hours to take any of these treasures?”

“All you can carry out of the room,” said the Governor, “and for that, you will give me the ring.”

“It’s a deal,” said the Fisherman, handing over the ring.

The Governor left him to choose.

The Fisherman sat for an hour, looking at everything, trying to work out what would be best to take, what would be worth the most. It was all good. He wondered if he could take all of it.

At the end of the first hour, he realised he was hungry, and decided to treat himself to some of the food laid out on the tables.

The fisherman feasted for an hour.

At the end of the second hour, he had still not decided what to take, and so decided to enjoy some of the fruit, sweets and fine wines.

The fisherman kept eating and drinking.

At the end of third hour, he was tired from all the feasting, and decided he should have an hours nap before starting to lift out all the many treasures he would shortly take.

At the end of the sixth hour, the fisherman woke from his nap to see the Governor standing with his guards, waiting to take him out of the room.

The Governor shook his head sadly, “You could have had anything, but you wanted everything, and now you have nothing.”

The Fisherman left the Governors house, and walked home as poor as he was before.

The Old Horse





Once upon a time there was an Old Man with a big farm and he owned a big beautiful white horse.

He loved his horse and would spend time with it walking around his farm.

One day, his horse fell down into the deep well and the Old Man was very sad, because the horse was his only friend.

The well was very deep, and the Old Man knew that if he asked the men from the village to help him get the horse out, he would have to pay them.

The Old Man said to himself. "This horse is a good friend and has been with me a long time. But if I ask for help to bring him out it will cost me too much. It's better for me to bury him there and buy another horse."

The horse was down the well, and could hear everything the Old Man said, and he started to cry.

The Old Man asked the people to come and bury him, and they began throwing sand down into the well.

And every time they threw the sand down, the horse just jumped up on top of it, a little bit at a time.

Jump. Jump. Jump.

The people threw down lots and lots of sand, and eventually they thought, there was so much down there now, that the horse must be dead.

But the horse was now near the top of the well, and he shook off the last of the sand that was thrown down and jumped up out of the well to face them.

Everyone was very surprised, especially the Old Man who had left him down there.

He tried to apologise to the old horse, but it was no use, the horse had heard how the Old Man had spoken when he was in the well.

He trotted away, leaving the Old Man alone.

The moral of the story is...don't trust any man in this world, because if you get in trouble, he will just leave you to get on with his life.

A whimsical illustration of a campfire in a forest at night. The scene is framed by large, dark tree trunks on the left and right. The background is a deep blue night sky with a lighter blue circular glow behind the campfire. The campfire is a bright yellow and orange flame, surrounded by a ring of grey stones. The ground is a mix of green grass and dark blue patches. The title "The Enchanted Cap" is written in a white, serif font, centered in the upper half of the image.

The Enchanted Cap



This guy turns up on the Greenock dock, and he's keen to get doon the road tae Largs fairly sharpish. And time's knockin' on, so he figures he'll jist nip up the hill and take a short cut across the moors.

He's up the back, and he jist passes Dunrod Hill when this big storm starts...and it's lashin' doon. Absolutely lashin'. Thunder. Lightning. It's murder. And he's struggling along, walkin' intae the storm, when he spies this wee hut.

So he goes inside, heads up to the corner, wraps himself up in his jacket, and nods off.

A few hours later, oor man gets woken up, by aw these voices...murmurin'. And there's a wee peat fire gaun in the hut. There's a pot on the fire and roon aboot it, there's three witches, muttering and incanting.

Heedorum. Hodurum. Heedorum. Hodurum. Heedorum. Hodurum.

Ye know the sorta thing. Spells.

And the first witch right, she brings oot this pointy hat. She wrings it oot, as if she wis dryin' it, puts it on her head and says...

'Ho! To Dunoon!' and whoosh! She goes flying up the chimney. And after she's gone, the cap jist falls back down the chimney. So the second witch, she grabs the hat, wrings it oot and says...

'Ho! To Dunoon!' and she's away too. The hat falls back doon, and the third witch, she picks it up and says...

'Ho! To Dunoon!' and whoosh she's off up the chimney as well. Oor man looks oot the windae, an it's still lashin' doon. And the cap floats back doon intae the hut and he thinks tae himsel'...ah wouldnae mind a wee go oan that hat. And I

wonder whit's so good that everyone's heading to Dunoon...

So he picks it up, and he says....

'Ho! To Dunoon!' and...BOOM he's hurled intae space, still holding the cap, and he is speedin' through the air and he gets to Dunoon. And here, when he gets there is there no a big room full a witches. And they're aw waitin' there for the The Devil, who has decided to have a big party in this pub in Dunoon.

Anyhow, the witches don't seem tae mind, and he's invited tae enjoy the party. But here, he mebbe has a few wee glesses too many o the auld wine.

And he's dancin' aboot and falling over, and the devil turns up and he has a wee dance wi him, and, well, he jist has a right good time.

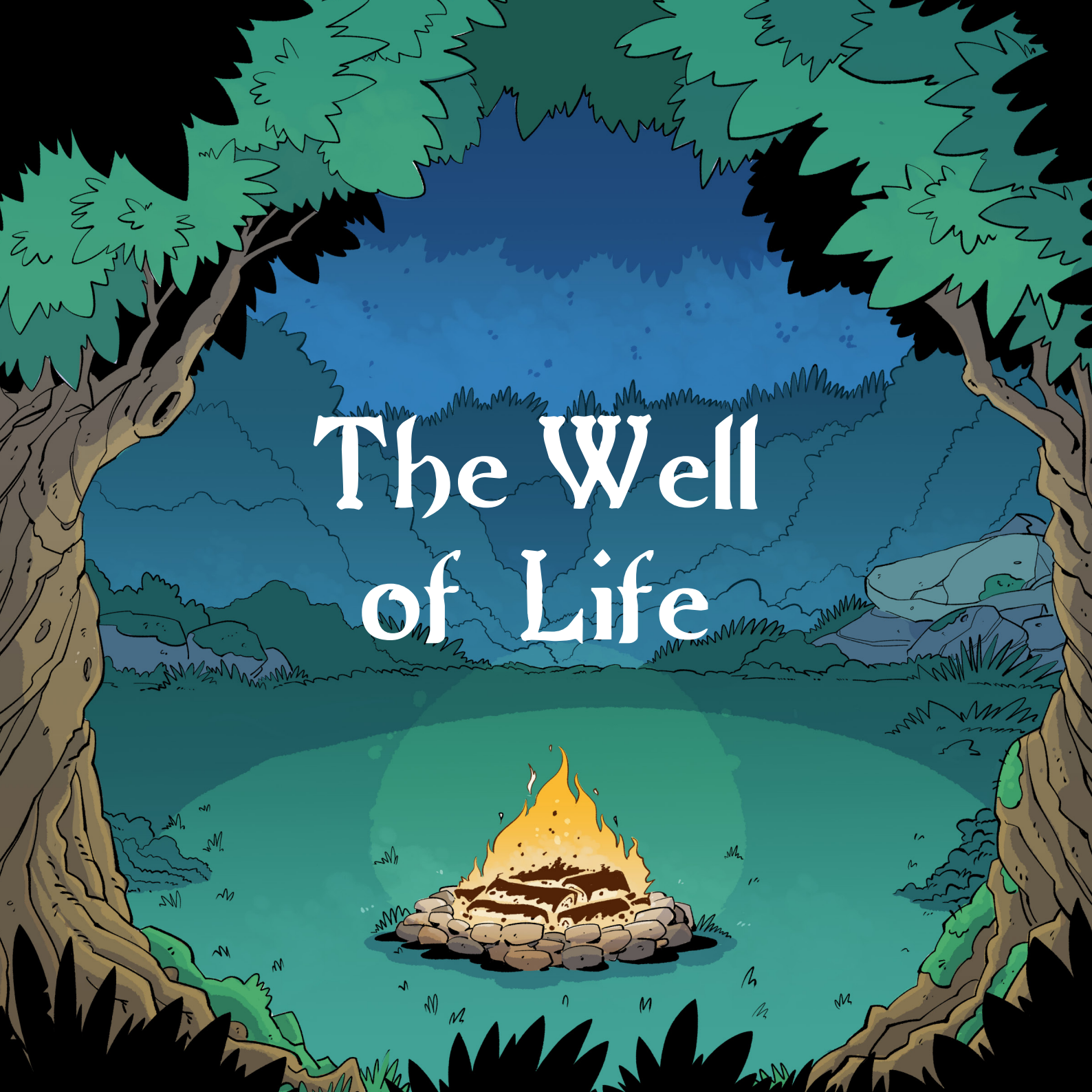
But, he comes to in the mornin' a wee bit the worse for wear, and he's in a cell in Dunoon Police Station. Seems he was wanderin' about the streets smashin' things. And when he tries tae explain that it wis really aw the fault o the witches and the devil... naebody believes him.

But he's in a right pickle, cos he's caused so much bother wi aw his swearin' and carryin' on, that he's being taken to court. And he's sentenced to a month in the jail, which as you can imagine, he's no aw that keen on, and so he says 'Would it be awright, if ah wore ma favourite bunnet on the way to the jail. My wee granny made it for me, and its my favourite thing in the world and it's a cold rainy day.

And the police kindly let him wear it. So they march him out and just as they start walking up tae the big doors o the jail, oor man puts on the enchanted cap and says...

'Ho! For Largs!' and he's away. Jist like that.

A long way round for a shortcut right enough.



The Well of Life



Once upon a time, there was a man who liked to walk in nature, to enjoy the wildlife and the trees.

One day, while walking through the trees, enjoying the beautiful scenery, he heard something creeping up behind him.

It was getting faster and faster and closer and closer. The man turned back, and he saw a huge lion! He was terrified and ran as fast as he could.

The lion was behind him at every step, closer all the time.

While he ran, the man saw a deep well, and jumped into it to escape. As he tumbled down into the well, he grabbed a rope and started swaying from left to right, his heart pounding in his chest.

When he finally took a breath, and calmed down, he looked below him, to see a huge snake at the bottom of the well.

And while the man was thinking of a way to get rid of the snake under him, and the lion that was waiting above him, he saw two rats, one black, one white, nibbling on the rope.

Now he was terrified that the rope would snap, and he'd fall down to get eaten by the snake.

He swung back and forth on the rope, to try and knock the rats off and stop them chewing.

As he swung from one side of the well to the other, his hand touched something sticky in the wall. It was honey.

He stopped swinging, and clung onto the wall to eat some of the honeycomb. And while he ate that honey, he forgot about the lion above, the snake below and the rats on the rope. The sweetness of the honey helped him forget it all.

And then he woke up. He wasn't down a well at all, the lion, the snake, the rats, all of that had been a dream. But he wondered what it meant...

He went to visit the wisest man in the village, to tell him the story of the dream he had, and the man said...

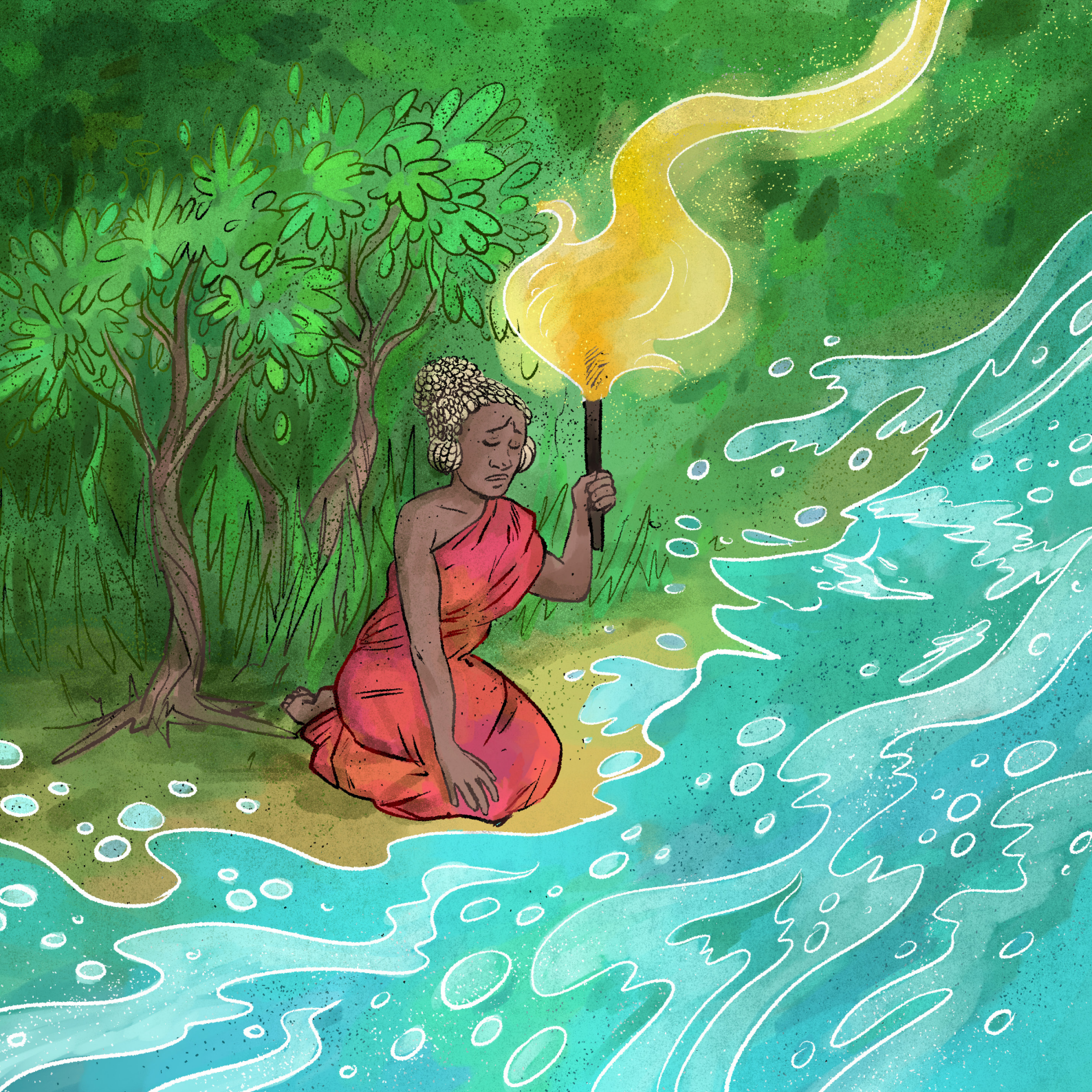
"Here is the meaning of your dream my son. The lion who was behind you, is death. That is why you were running from him. The snake beneath you, is the graveyard. The rope that you were hanging on is your life, the time you have in this world. The black and white rats are the day and the night, the dark times and the happy times."

The man was surprised by what the Wise Man told him, but there was something he still did not understand. "What is the meaning of the honey?"

"My son the honey is the sweetness of this world, and because of that, we can forget our time is short and forget there is an end. Just enjoy the sweetness of those moments."



Queen Moremi



This is the story of Queen Moremi of the town Ile Ife in south west Nigeria.

Ile Ife was often terrorised by a forest tribe who would dress in raffia leaves and masquerades. The people of Ile Ife were scared of the tribe, because they would often steal people away to become slaves.

One day, Queen Moremi herself was taken.

Now that she was with the enemy, she tried to think of a way she could use this to help her people.

Queen Moremi was very beautiful, and so she went to the King of the enemy tribe and quickly became his Queen too.

And now that she was a Queen, she was able to find out the movements of the enemy tribe's warriors and precious goods. She knew all of their plans.

Queen Moremi went to speak to the Goddess of the River, and she pledged that if the Goddess could help her find a way to save her community, she would give the river whatever it wanted.

It is always easy to make such pledges, we don't always think about what may happen when we have to pay. It's just a pledge after all. Only words.

Queen Moremi was now able to sneak back to Ile Ife with all the secrets of the enemy tribe.

The people of Ile Ife now knew when the tribe would next attack, and they got ready, with fire. And the enemy tribe, dressed in their dry leaves and masquerades, were easily beaten.

Everyone in Ile Ife could not believe that all this time, the answer to the troubles was to use fire. So simple! Everyone was so happy Queen Moremi had helped them.

Queen Moremi now returned to the River Goddess to thank her and to honour her pledge.

“River, river, what do you want?”

The River asked for the life of Queen Moremi’s only son.

“No,” said Moremi, “that can’t be. Tell me what else you want. I can get you any other thing.”

And the River asked for her son once more.

Queen Moremi realised she had no choice, but to fulfil her pledge.

This was not a test of her faith. It was what the river wanted.

And Queen Moremi had to give the river what it wanted.

Queen Moremi was so sad, and the people of Ile Ife, seeing how upset she was, made a pledge to her, that they would always be her children.

And to this day, the pledge is honoured and people remember Queen Moremi and what she did for the people of Ile Ife.

A stylized illustration of a campfire at night in a forest. The campfire is in the center, with bright yellow and orange flames. It is surrounded by a ring of grey stones. The background is a dark blue night sky with some lighter blue clouds. There are green trees and bushes around the campfire. The title "The Farmer and the Bogle" is written in white serif font across the middle of the image.

The Farmer and the Bogle



There once was a farmer lived up Kilmacolm way, and his name was Malcolm McPhee. He was neither a very good farmer, nor a very happy farmer. Malcolm had inherited his farm from his father and while he liked his land and his money well enough, he did not care so much for the hard work. But Malcolm was not a stupid man, and so he worked just hard enough to keep his wife and his farm and his land, and he dreamed that one day he'd find a way he'd never have to work at all.

It was a night in late November when Malcolm McPhee first heard about The Bogle, a cold night, but with no moon. There was a stranger telling stories that night in the Inn down Port Glasgow way, and all the usual folk had gathered round to listen and laugh. The stranger told them all about a mermaid who'd told his fortune at the Port Glasgow shore, about a witch he'd danced with up by Lochwinnoch, and about a ghost he met up on Duchal moor. He could spin a yarn and all were enjoying the company.

"And of course," he said "not half a mile's walk from here lives the Bogle himself. Aye. He hides behind the stone at the top of the Clune Brae, and will jump out to chase folk all the way across the moor to Kilmacolm. It's said that if he catches you, he chews you up with his sharp white teeth. But I know a secret about this Bogle, told to me by an old fox who owed me a favour. The Bogle doesn't want to catch you, he's just trying to scare you away, for if you turn round and grab him...he's got to give you three wishes."

"Three wishes?" said Malcolm "Any three wishes?"

"Yes indeed," said the stranger. "Whatever you want."

"With those three wishes I'd never have to work again," said Malcolm. "What does he look like this Bogle?"

"Oh you'd know him if you saw him," smiled the Stranger "For you'd never have seen his like before."

"Then I shall know him soon," said Malcolm "For I'm going to catch that Bogle."

So it was that the next night, Malcolm walked across the moors to the top of the Clune Brae and stood watching in case the Bogle should leap from behind the stone. He waited all night til it was light. And the Bogle didn't come.

When he got home he was too tired to work his farm saying to his wife

“Don’t worry about the fields, for when I catch this Bogle, I’ll wish for a much bigger farm and scores of labourers to work for us.”

The next night, Malcolm again walked to the Bogle’s stone. And again the Bogle didn’t come. When he got home he was once again too tired to work his farm, and said to his wife “Don’t worry, for on our new farm, I shall wish for our crop to be the best in the land.” Night after night, week after week, month after month, Malcolm stood by the stone, hoping to catch the Bogle. And the Bogle never came.

One morning he returned home, and found his home empty for his wife had gone. And he looked to his lands and he saw they were overgrown for he had not tended them. All too late Malcolm saw that his farm and his lands and his marriage were all in ruins, and he walked again to the Clune Brae and down to the Inn. He drank long and hard and when he had spent the little money he had left, he began the long wander home across the moorlands. But this night, as he passed the stone he heard a noise. A rustling, then a whistling. Malcolm turned, and there was the Bogle.

“Boo!” said The Bogle.

“Hah!” said Malcolm, who could not believe his luck.

“Aren’t you going to run?” asked the Bogle “People usually run when they see a Bogle.”

“Why would I run from you?” said Malcolm “I’ve been looking for you for months!”

“Go on,” said the Bogle “I’ll give you a head start.”

At this, Malcolm grabbed the Bogle by the arm.

“Hah!” said Malcolm “I have caught the Bogle. And now you have to give me my three wishes.”

But the Bogle just smiled and said

“And who told you this? A stranger? A stranger who dances with witches, talks to foxes and walks with ghosts?”

And Malcolm saw that the Bogle had tricked him all along.

“A Bogle can’t give you wishes and you must work for what you want,” laughed the Bogle

“You have wished your life away. And you should have run when you had the chance.”

The Bogle grinned a nasty grin with his sharp white teeth.

A stylized illustration of a campfire at night in a forest. The campfire is in the center, with bright yellow and orange flames. It is surrounded by a ring of grey stones. The background is a dark blue night sky with some lighter blue clouds. The forest is made of green trees with black outlines. The ground is a mix of green and brown, with some small white flowers. The overall style is simple and cartoonish.

The Old Man and the Apple Seller



Once, there was an old man who lived in the mountains.

One day, he decided to travel down from the mountains to the city, many miles away. He walked for a long time, with little rest, and hardly any food or water. Finally, he reached the city. He was exhausted from his journey, and he wanted an apple to quench his thirst. Slowly, he walked towards the market, but just as he reached it, he was overcome with exhaustion. He could go no further. Not one step. The old man fell to the ground.

As he lay there, a ripe apple rolled towards him. Thinking that God must have answered his prayers, the old man picked up the apple. Suddenly, he heard someone shouting at him. It was the apple seller.

“I hope you are going to pay me for that apple,” said the apple seller.

“I’m sorry,” said the old man, “I did not realise it was your apple. I thought it was a gift from God.”

“It is not a gift,” said the apple seller. He snatched the apple back.

“I have no money,” said the old man, “can you not spare one apple?”

The apple seller was a hard-hearted man, miserly, and without an ounce of mercy.

“No,” said the apple seller.

A kind man passing by and seeing the commotion, gave the old man a few coins to help him buy the apple. But the apple seller refused to sell to the old man, “That’s not enough for one of my apples,” he said.

The kind man helped the old man to his feet and helped him walk to the apple seller’s stall, “Come now,” said the kind man, “whoever has a heart would surely give this old man an apple.”

The apple seller refused.

Now, the kind man became angry at how selfish the apple seller was being and he turned to the crowds in the market, “Who will help me with a few coins to help this old man buy an apple?”

The crowd gave generously, and soon there was more than enough money to buy an apple. But now, the apple seller had grown angry and did not like the old man. So once again, he

refused to sell him an apple. So finally, the kind man bought an apple for himself and gave it to the old man.

“Thank you,” said the old man, with tears in his eyes.

The apple quenched his thirst and restored his strength.

The old man stood up now, he smiled, and he shook the hands of many people in the market to thank them. And then, he began digging a hole.

The old man dug the hole and then from his pocket, he produced some seeds which he threw into the hole in the ground. He covered the seeds over and then, to everyone’s surprise, a tree grew straight out of the ground. It grew quickly and before long, the tree’s branches were full of apples.

“It is gratitude that has grown this tree,” said the old man, “let this tree stand for gratitude. Now come and share.”

The old man offered apples to everyone in the crowd, people left with baskets filled with apples. He gave the best of all the apples to the kind man who had first helped him, “I will never forget a favour,” said the old man.

The apple seller looked at the tree and could see only bare branches. He did not see the beautiful apples, could not see what everyone else in the town could see.

The old man walked back to the mountains, with his pockets filled with apples.

And the apple seller lost his business, because the good people of the town simply picked apples from the branches of the tree. No one wanted the apples from the apple seller, which now tasted bitter and rotten.

The apple seller came to regret how he had treated the old man, but he never once saw the apples on the tree.

Acknowledgements

The Story Ceilidh project was a partnership project between Magic Torch Comics CIC and Your Voice Inverclyde.

Thanks to Jamie Dalgoutte from Your Voice for organising and co-ordinating the story sessions with all the families who participated.

Thanks also to Kevin Jannets at the Beacon Arts Centre Greenock for help and support organising our final project event, at which all our stories were shared live.

Special thanks to all our project storytellers and participants

Ipout Kutwai

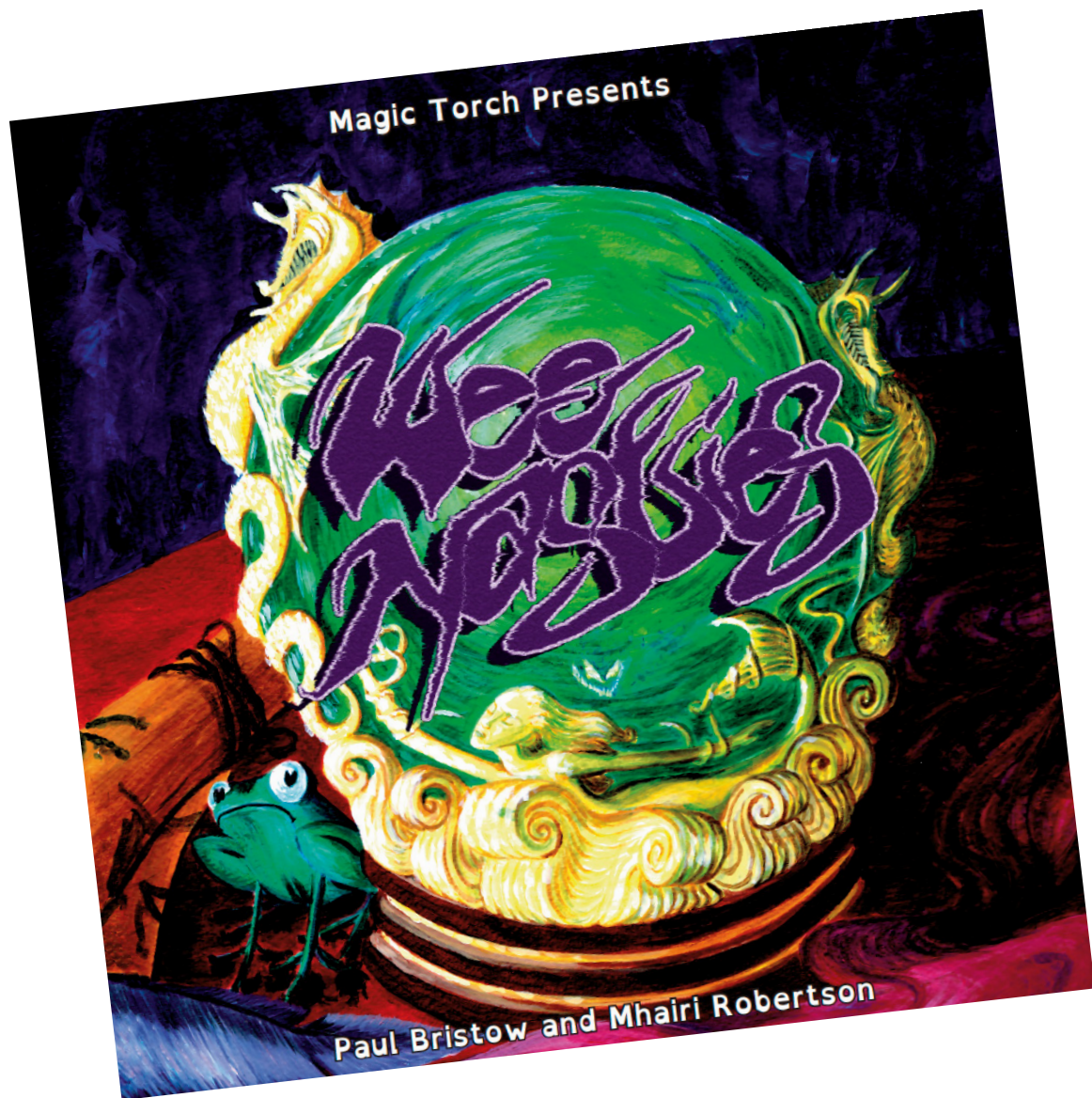
Dhuha Massini and Osama Karbouj

Asmatulla Safi

Adekoya Adegboyega and Adekoya Adeola

Amin Al Schweiti and Omar Al Schweiti

Amal Ibrahim



Scan the QR code with a phone or tablet to hear all about the Wee Nasties from Inverclyde folklore who can be found around town...



Scan the QR code with a phone or tablet to hear more folk tales read in a variety of languages...



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Year of Stories events





Celebrate the Year of Stories 2022 with a collection of folk tales from Scotland, Nigeria and Syria.

Journey through magical treasure rooms, down deep dark wells and across the skies with this selection of stories put together to recognise the universal language of storytelling and the joy of sharing and blending culture.



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