

GHOST HORSES

Storyteller: (Children gather as she speaks)

Gather round friends, I've got a te'al to tell
About a time not very long ago
About a place here on the Solway shore.
Twa handsome brothers lived beside the sea
Followed the plough and fished
And all went well, until a fisher lass ...
But nay! My te'al goes farther back than that ...

Children: Back! How far back?

Storyteller: Til seven months before when they were stannin seawake ...

Children: Seawake? What's that?

Storyteller: In short, they watched the sea.
They watched the sea to warn the folk
When ships came up the firth,
When wild sea-reivers showed their sails ...

Children: What did they do?

Storyteller: They blew a horn to warn the folk,
Who gathered cattle, kith and kin

- Brother 1 Of what?
- Brother 2 The race?
- Children Who's she?
- Storyteller A stranger no-one knew. But they should heed her, yet.
- HF The race indeed. Ill-fated, doomed!
Say what you will, evil will come of it.
- Lass Get off, old crone! We'll pay no heed til thee!
Aye! Race ye, lads! See where the setting sun
Meks a long pathway on the shore and sea
Off til the west?
Let that your racetrack be over the shining sand
- HF Nay, lass! Ill fate! No good will come of that!
I warn ye, do not race!
- Brother 1 Your words are grim, my friend.
What dost thou mean, ill fate?
- Brother 2 Pay her no heed.
- Lass Heed if you wish, my lads. Tha'll niver dance wit me!

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Brother 2 Well, then do mine, and wear this favour green.

[Shows her green scarf]

Lass Nor thine. As for your favours. Well, I like them but ...
Blue or green? Nay! I cannot decide.

Brother 2 Thou must decide! And soon

Lass Nay, thou must win the right to dance wit me.

Brother 1 How so? Ah'll niver fight my brother.

Brother 2 Nay, nor I!

Lass Well, I've no taste for fightin', but a race ...

Brother 1 Aye, have a race. I like it fine.

Brother 2 A horse-race, then I'll win.

[Hooded figure of a woman enters, slowly, she hobbles and is bent]

Who'rt thou?

HF It matters not. I'm here. And say
No good will come o' this!

enter]

Brother 1: Didst see me ride?

Brother 2: Didst see me jump yon hedge?

Lass: Ride? Jump? Ah dinna care for that.

Brother 1: Thou carest for dancin', though
Thou'll dance with me tonight.

Brother 2: Nay! Dance wit me!

[Musican strikes up again, and they all dance a few steps, she turning to avoid the
brothers as they dance]

Lass Perhaps I will, perhaps I won't. I canna say.

Brother Ah know tha likes to dance.

Lass I do, but not perhaps wit thee.

Brother 1 Come lass, thou'll wear my favour at the dance. It's blue.

[Shows her blue scarf]

Lass Horseman or no, I'll niver do thy biddin'

Brother 1 My eyes are sharper. It's not men, it's horses!
 Comin' this way! Let's ga!

(Brother run off)

Children What happened? Did they catch the horses?

Storyteller: Nay! Who tells this story, ye or me?
 But aye, they caught the horses; and the lord
 Wanted to keep them. Then he had
 Uneasy feelings. Thought again and gave
 The horses to the brothers.

Children Ahh!

Storyteller The brothers were well pleased to have the gift
 To gallop on the shore and show their friends
 A thing or two.

Children And did they gallop?

Storyteller Aye, they did. And all the lasses round about
 Thought well of them. Except one lass
 Who toss'd her heid and kept away -
 So they were mad for her.

[Musician plays slowish dance tune. Enter lass, sketches dance steps. then brothers

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Brother 2 I canna see it!

Brother 1 Aye! Theer it is again!
It is a sail - Nay, twa black sails. See them! They come this way.
Now brother blow your horn. Then run.
Ah'll watch - Run til the church and ring the bell.
Run fast! The ships draw near. Ah like it not!

Children Nor we!

Storyteller: Nor anybody living on that shore.
The lord, his men came with their swords and shields
And better still with arrows and long bows
And beat the drums and yelled aloud.
Then out to sea the rievvers saw the blades
Flashing and archers lining all the cliff
So turned their ships, and slowly disappeared
Into the mist.

Children Aah!

Storyteller But then a shout was heard.

Brother 1 Look! Out to sea!

Brother 2 Theer's summat swimmin'! Is't yan man or twa?

And ran for shelter. They told the lord an' all
To arm his men and meet upon the shore;
To face the robber band. And what is more
Line up along the cliffs to fight them off.

Children And did the rievvers go away?

Storyteller Sometimes they did, sometimes they burnt and stole
Carried off cattle and much more besides.

Children What happened to the brothers?

Storyteller: Aye, the brothers! Well ...
As I was saying, they watched the sea for ships.

Children: Both day and night ...

Storyteller Aye, night and day and then one time they saw ..

Children: What did they see?

[Enter the brothers. They look towards the sea]

Brother 1: Look yonder brother, canst thou see
Where t'mist is risin' off the firth
There's summat black - Nay, now it's ga'an -

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