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opening extract from

The Evil Eye

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published by

Barrington Stoke

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The Evil Eye

Retold by Oisín McGann

Reloaded

Chapter 1

Into the Whirl-pool

High up in the stone tower, a woman screamed. Her begging and her sobs rang through the darkness. For a moment it was silent. Then came the sound of heavy feet making their way down from the top of the tower to the door below.

A huge shape loomed at the door of the tower. It was Balor, king of the Formorians. He was a monster, taller than any man and stronger than any warrior. His grey skin was pulled tight over massive muscles. A spiky fin ran from the top of his head to the middle of his back. There was webbing between his fingers and toes. He had the gills of a fish on his

neck. But the most horrible thing about him was his face.

Balor was a terrible warrior, but his greatest weapon was not his sword, nor his spear or his club. His left eye was small and wrinkled, almost blind. He could not see much with this eye. But it opened and shut like a normal eye. His right eye was enormous - a great lump in the side of his head. The lids of this eye were closed. When this eye opened, people died.

In his arms Balor had a basket. And from the basket came the shrieks of three babies. They cried out for their mother.

Balor walked away from the tower. He walked across Tory Island to his castle. His castle was Tor Mor, a fortress where he lived with his people - the

Fomorians - high up on a cliff. Balor strode to the edge of the cliff and looked down at the sea. Far below him, the sea crashed against the rocks. Further out, in the dark waters, a huge whirl-pool churned up the waves.

Balor looked down at the three babies in the basket and a tear dripped from his small left eye. It ran down his cheek and dropped into the basket. No tears came from his right eye. He began to speak. His voice sounded like rocks crushing sea-shells.

“Long ago a witch came to my door,” he said to the babies. “She looked into my future. She said my daughter would have a son who would try and kill me. So I locked my daughter in a tower, where no man could reach her. I thought I was safe.”

Balor stared down at the sea, at the whirl-pool.

“But a man did find her,” he went on. “And I will find him. I will find the man who is the father of my daughter’s children and I will kill him. I will rip him apart for making me do this.”

Then Balor threw the basket out over the sea. The three babies shrieked as they fell. They hit the water and vanished under the waves. Balor turned away and walked back towards his fortress. Down in the water, one baby swam back up. On the shore, in the shadows at the bottom of the cliff, another woman stood waiting. Her hair was long and black and the wind blew it across her face. As soon as Balor turned away, she threw off her green cloak and dived into the freezing cold water.

The babies were half Fomorian and the Fomorians were good swimmers. They did not drown easily. But the whirl-pool dragged the first two away. Their weak bodies were sucked down to the bottom of the sea. They became food for the things that lived down there.

The woman grabbed the third little boy just as the current started to pull him towards the whirl-pool. She swam back to the shore with strong strokes. She climbed up onto the rocks and wrapped her green cloak around herself and the child to keep them both warm.

“You are strong, little one,” she said to the boy. “I think you’ll live. And that monster, Balor - your grandfather - that piece of scum, will never know that one of his grandsons is alive.”