

eBook/CD in British Sign Language/English



Fair Donald Dark Donald



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Signed by Frank Essery

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Fair Donald Dark Donald

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Long, long ago, on the Isle of Skye, there once lived two brothers. They were fishermen and, although they were brothers, they both had the same name - Donald. The older brother was called Fair Donald and the younger brother was called Dark Donald. Fair Donald had hair so fair it was almost white. Dark Donald had hair so dark it was almost black.

Fair Donald and Dark Donald lived with their old father in a little low house near the shore of a great sea loch. The house was made from big grey stones. The roof was made from grassy turfs. Inside the house there was only one room. The fire was on a stone hearth in the very middle of the room and the smoke crept out through a hole in the roof, just over the fire.

The old father had once been a fisherman too, but now his strength was gone. He stayed at home and looked after the cow who lived inside the house all through the cold winter. He kept a good peat fire burning on the hearth. He made thick potato soup in a black pot over the fire and

he baked flat oatcakes on a griddle.

Early in the morning, whenever the weather was calm, just as it was getting light, Fair Donald and Dark Donald rowed their fishing boat far out on the green waters of the great sea loch. They let down their nets. They sat quietly in the boat and waited for hours and hours. Then they pulled the heavy nets, full of shining fish, back into the boat. Fair Donald and Dark Donald rowed back to the white sandy beach. They packed their fish into two wicker baskets. With the baskets on their backs, the two brothers walked three miles along the shore, to the nearest village. In the village a boatman bought all their fish and took it over the sea to sell to the people who lived on the mainland.

When their wicker baskets were empty, Fair Donald and Dark Donald walked the three miles back home again. They were tired now, and hungry. It was almost night time. Their father always had the big pot of soup waiting for them and flat oatcakes on the griddle. As soon as they

got home, the two brothers sat down with their father close to the warm peat fire in the middle of the room and ate their supper. Every evening, winter and summer, not long after the sun had set, Fair Donald climbed into his bed tucked away in the west wall. Dark Donald climbed into his bed tucked away in the south wall. The old father climbed into his bed tucked away on the east wall. The cow lay down near the door by the north wall. Soon they were all fast asleep.

Very early the next morning, just as it was getting light, the two brothers woke up. They ate their breakfast of thick white porridge with fresh milk from the cow and they rowed far out on the green waters of the great sea loch.

One dark winter's evening, as Fair Donald and Dark Donald and their old father were eating their supper by the fire, a sudden storm came rolling in across the loch. Lightning flashed, thunder roared, the wind howled round the house and the rain came pelting down. Out on the loch the waves rose higher and higher. On sand and

rock the salt water crashed and foamed.

"What a terrible storm!" cried Fair Donald, raising his voice above the noise of wind and waves and rain. He pulled his stool up closer to the fire.

"I'm glad we're not out on the loch tonight," said Dark Donald. "Our boat would be smashed to smithereens!"

The little stone house seemed to shake as the wind tore wildly at the turfs on the roof and the rain beat hard against the walls.

Suddenly Fair Donald lifted up his head.

"Listen!" he said. "Do you hear that sound?"

"I can hear the wind and the rain," said Dark Donald.

"I can hear the thunder and the waves on the rocks," said the old father.

"No, no! That's not the sound I mean! Listen!"

All three of them sat in silence and listened. Very, very faintly, they heard a little cry, almost drowned by the roar of the storm.

"Miaow! Miaow! Miaow!"

"It's a cat!" cried Dark Donald. "A cat out in the storm!"

"Let her in! Let her in!" cried the old father. "We can't leave a poor cat to wander about on a night like this!"

Fair Donald went to the door and opened it just a narrow crack. He peered out into the darkness. The icy wind whipped against his face. There on the stone step sat a small black cat, wet and shivering in the cold, mewing sadly over and over again.

"Miaow! Miaow! Miaow!" she said.

"Come in, come in, little cat!" cried Fair Donald, and he opened the door a bit wider.

The little black cat walked in through the door and went across at once to the fire. Water streamed down from her black fur and ran into a pool on the floor.

"You poor wee thing!" said Dark Donald.

He took down his towel from its hook on the wall and he rubbed the cat's wet fur until it was

dry.

"Sit here by the fire, little cat," he said, "and we'll bring you some milk in a dish."

Fair Donald warmed the milk in the pot. He took his own dish down from its shelf on the wall and he filled it almost to the brim. He broke up an oatcake and he stirred the pieces into the milk. Then he put the dish down on the hearth.

"Drink up! Drink up, little cat!" he said gently. "You must stay by our fire till the storm is gone."

The little black cat lapped and lapped at the milk. She purred as she drank. Soon the dish was clean. The little black cat washed her face and her paws. She curled up in a ball on the hearth. She closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.

"Sssh! Sssh!" whispered Dark Donald. "We mustn't wake her!"

He blew out the candle. Fair Donald, Dark Donald and the old father crept quietly into their beds. All night long the storm raged and howled round the low stone house but the little black cat

did not stir.

Very early the next morning, just as it was getting light, Fair Donald and Dark Donald woke up. The storm was over. They climbed down from their beds. There on the hearth was the little black cat, still fast asleep. The old father got out of bed and he set up the smouldering peat on the fire to make it burn more brightly. He milked the cow. The big pot of porridge had been cooking all night on the hearth. Soon it was ready for breakfast.

Now the little black cat began to stir. She opened her eyes and looked carefully all round the room. She stood up and stretched herself. She washed her face and her paws.

"You must have some of our porridge before you go," said Dark Donald, "and some fresh creamy milk from our cow." He took down his dish from the shelf. He filled the dish with thick white porridge from the pot and he poured on fresh milk from a jug. He put the dish down on the hearth.

"Eat up! Eat up, little cat!" he said gently.

The little black cat lapped and lapped at the porridge. She purred as she ate. When the dish was clean, she walked across the room and stood by the door.

"She wants to go out!" said the old father.

Fair Donald opened the door. The winter sun was shining. The sky was clear and the waters of the loch were calm.

"Miaow!" cried the little black cat, and she ran out of the door.

"Where is she going?" asked Dark Donald.

"Where did she come from?" asked Fair Donald.

The two brothers stood with their father on the stone step. They watched the little black cat running across the heather towards the hills. They watched her till she was out of sight.

"We must get ready for the fishing," said Fair Donald.

The two brothers ate up their porridge and milk. Then Dark Donald gathered the nets in his

arms. They walked down to the white sand. They dragged their boat over the sand right to the water's edge and they rowed far out on the green waters of the great sea loch.

Winter ended at last. Spring came to the Isle of Skye with wild flowers along the shore and birds' nests in the heather. Spring turned to summer, to long warm days and clear starry nights. As autumn came on, the heather turned slowly from purple to brown and the days grew shorter and colder. Early in the morning, whenever the weather was calm, just as it was getting light, Fair Donald and Dark Donald set out in their boat for the day's fishing. And in the evening, when the fish had been sold, they came home to a good pot of soup and a flat oatcake and a warm peat fire on the hearth.

One misty day in November, when the two brothers were fishing far out in the middle of the loch, a sharp cold wind began to blow from the north. A sheet of bright lightning flashed across the sky and thunder rolled in the distance.

"There's a bad storm coming!" cried Dark Donald.

"Let's pull in the nets and turn for home!" cried Fair Donald.

Their nets were still empty but they pulled them in. They grabbed the oars and began to row hard towards the shore. The wind blew louder and stronger. The rain poured down in torrents. The waves surged higher and higher. The little boat was tossed this way and that. Water poured over her sides. The brothers rowed and rowed with all their strength but the wind and the tide kept dragging them back. Night began to come on. Still the storm raged and howled. For the first time in their lives, the two brothers felt frightened.

"What can we do?" shouted Fair Donald over the noise of the wind and the waves.

"We're sure to drown!" Dark Donald shouted back, gripping his oars in terror.

The little boat was lifted up, up, up on the huge white waves and flung down, down, down into the black hollows between the waves. The wind

was blowing her further and further from home. The tide was pulling her nearer and nearer to the rocky shore on the far side of the loch.

"The boat is sinking!" called Fair Donald.

"We'll be smashed against the rocks!" shouted Dark Donald.

"There's no hope left!" cried Fair Donald.

The two brothers clung to each other as the little boat pitched and tossed and rolled in the stormy sea. They were drenched to the skin. They were shaking with fear and with cold.

"Help! Help!" they called in despair, but there was no one to hear them.

Suddenly an enormous wave seized their boat and flung it on the rocks. The boat was smashed to smithereens. Fair Donald and Dark Donald were bleeding and bruised, but somehow they were still alive. Slowly, very slowly, they crawled in the dark over the rocks and away from the loch. They slipped on the slime and they cut themselves on the jagged stones. At last they reached a beach of soft white sand. They lay



there, groaning with cold and with pain.

Fair Donald lifted up his head and looked around him. He could see nothing at all. The night was pitch black and the storm was still raging. Slowly, very slowly, he dragged himself to his feet. Again he looked all around him. Far, far in the distance, across the wet heather, he saw a faint light.

"Look!" he cried. "A light! Someone must live there!"

Dark Donald was still lying on the sand. He could hardly lift his head.

"But no one lives on this side of the loch," he said. "There's not a house for miles!"

"Where there's a light, there must be a house," said Fair Donald. "And where there's a house, there must be a fire and food. Come on! We must go and see."

Fair Donald took his brother's hands and pulled him to his feet. Together they limped and stumbled over the rough heather towards the shining light.

As they came nearer and nearer to the light,

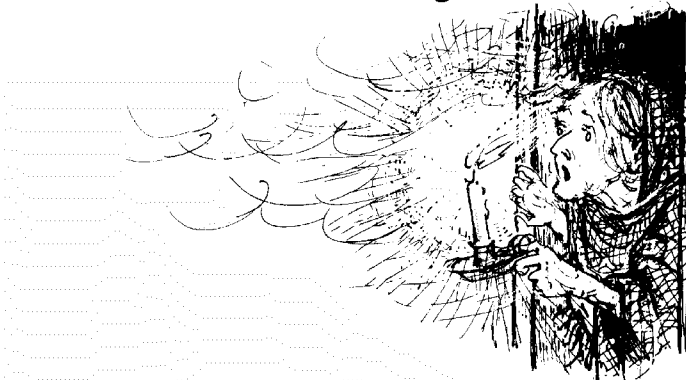
they saw that it shone from the window of a tiny stone house. They felt their way to the door. They knocked on the door and waited. Slowly, very slowly, the door opened just a narrow crack.

"Who's there?" asked a strange, frightened voice.

"We're two fishermen wrecked in the storm," said Fair Donald.

"Can you please give us shelter for the night?" asked Dark Donald.

The door opened a little bit wider. Now the brothers could see the wrinkled face of an old, old woman. She had a long black shawl over her head. She held a flickering candle in her hand.



"What are your names, fishermen?" she asked, peering out at them. "And where do you

come from?"

"We are brothers," said Fair Donald. "Our names are Fair Donald and Dark Donald. We live with our old father on the other side of the loch. Please let us in. We will do you no harm. All we want is shelter for the night."

Now the old woman opened her door wide.

"Fair Donald and Dark Donald!" she cried. "Come in! Come in! I've a nice pot of soup on the fire and a good piece of oatcake on the griddle. I've a wide bed in the wall where you can sleep all night and two fine black sheepskins to keep you warm. Come in, come in, and sit by my fire!"

Fair Donald and Dark Donald walked into the tiny room. A bright peat fire was burning on the hearth. The water poured down from their heavy wet clothes and ran into pools on the hard earth floor.

"Here is a towel!" cried the old woman as she lifted it down from a hook on the wall. "Take off your wet clothes and rub yourselves dry. And here is some ointment that I made from wild

herbs. Rub it into your cuts and soon they will heal."

Fair Donald and Dark Donald did all that the old woman said. Soon they were warm and dry. Their pains had gone. They wrapped themselves up in the fine black sheepskins and sat down close to the fire.

The old woman brought them soup and oatcake. The two brothers were so tired they could hardly speak to thank her. They ate up the soup with wooden spoons. They ate up every morsel of the oatcake. Then they slowly climbed into the bed in the wall. They pulled the sheepskins up over their bodies. Just before they closed their eyes, they saw, the old woman wringing the water from their clothes and spreading them out by the fire to dry.

When they woke up in the morning, the door of the tiny house stood open and pale winter sunshine streamed into the room. The storm was over. The rain had stopped. A blackbird was singing in the heather. The old woman was standing by her fire. She was stirring and stirring at a big pot of porridge. Fair Donald and Dark

Donald could see her better now. Her hands were gnarled and crooked. Her back was humped and bent. Under the black shawl that covered her head, her hair hung down, long and grey. She was a strange, strange old woman, but her face had a kindly smile.

"Your clothes are dry now, Fair Donald," she said gently. "Here they are, all ready for you. And here are your clothes, Dark Donald, dry as a bone and warm from a night by the' fire. Your porridge is almost cooked. Time to be up now. The sun is shining. You'll have a long walk round the top of the loch to get home to your father's house. He'll be thinking the two of you were drowned in the storm last night. How glad he'll be to see you walking in at the door, alive and well after all!"

Soon the two brothers were up and dressed in their own warm clothes again. They sat by the fire and ate the thick white porridge. When at last they were finished, Fair Donald spoke to the old woman.

"How can we thank you for all your kindness?" he said. "You have taken us in from the

storm and given us food and fire and bed. You have welcomed us here like your own sons!"

"You must let us pay you something for all you have done," said Dark Donald. "We have no money with us here but back in our father's house we have two silver coins hidden away behind a stone in the wall. We'll walk home now round the top of the loch and we'll take our two silver coins and we'll bring them straight back to you before the sun goes down."

The old woman laughed a strange, long laugh and she smiled at the two brothers by the fire.

"No, no, no!" she said. "I don't want your two silver coins. Keep them to buy yourselves a new boat. You have no need to thank me at all. You were kind to me so I was kind to you. You took me in from the storm. You gave me food and fire and bed. You did me no harm when I came to your door so I did you no harm when you came to mine." Fair Donald and Dark Donald stared at the old woman in astonishment.

"But we've never seen you in our lives before!" cried Fair Donald. "You've never come knocking at our door!"

"No, indeed, you have not!" cried Dark Donald. "We've never set eyes on you before!"

"Don't you remember a little black cat, wet and shivering in the rain?" asked the old woman, smiling.

Fair Donald and Dark Donald nodded their heads.

"Yes, we remember," they said together.

"And you took her in and you gave her food and she slept all the night on your hearth by the fire?"

"Yes, we remember," they said again.

"I am the Witch-Cat!" cried the old woman and she hobbled quickly out through the door.

Fair Donald and Dark Donald hurried after her but she was nowhere to be seen. They stood together on the stone step and looked out across the heather towards the hills. Far, far in the distance they thought they could see a little black cat, running and leaping in the sunshine. Slowly, very slowly, the two brothers set out on their long walk home.

Notes about the author

Judith O'Neill grew up in Australia and came to live in England in 1964. She moved to Edinburgh in 1985 and wrote many children's books. Judith often writes stories about Scotland. Fair Donald, Dark Donald is like a traditional Scottish folk story. If you enjoyed this story you may also like some of her other books which are published by Cambridge Reading. Leaving the Island and Spindle River are both set in Scotland. Heroes and Villains are plays which can be used in schools.

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System specifications

Operating systems:

Windows 98

Windows ME

Windows 2000

Windows XP

Windows Vista

Screen resolution: 1024 x 768 pixels

Troubleshooting

When the CD is loaded, it should autorun. If it does not, please do the following:

Click

Start

Click

My Computer

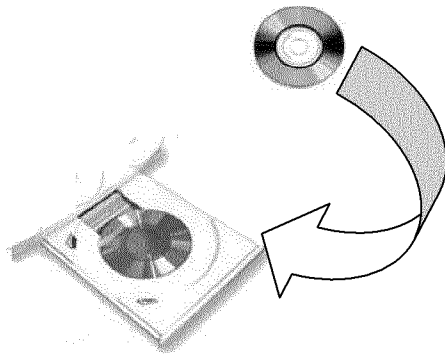
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CD Drive

It should now work.

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