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## The Maidenstone

by Jackie Ross

James Maitland and his faimly heided up the hill to ging and cut the peats. A' that is but Janet. For Janet, although she wis jist 17, wis tae be left at hame tae look efter the fairm and get the supper ready. For efter a hale day haukin oot at the peats, ye come hame real ravenous kin', and her brithers had made sure that she kint that she hid to hae bannocks and scones and a' kind a fine things ready for them tae aet.

Janet was real pleased. She liked i bakin and she was happy enough, singing awa to hersel, ower by the sink, washin the dishes and gettin ready for the bakin and washin up as she wint along. Efter a whiley she was weel on track and she thought she'd ging oot and enjoy the bonnie summer's day. Well she lookit up taewards the peats n wis thinkin back thon few years tae the nicht fin her granfaither wint missin. It was August time and he'd gone up tae see if the peats were ready tae tak in. And there'd bin an awfa haar that evening, a terrible haar and her mither had said til him, 'Noo, will you be careful and min and bide on the track'. But somehow her grandfather had gone off the wee roadie and he'd fa'en in tae the peat. Well, there had been a search party put oot but they hidnae found him til the next day fin they seen him drooned in the peat bog.

Janet thocht it was a terrible thing and her faither had warned her and her brithers umpteen times nae tae ging oot in the peat bog at nicht and tae be awfae careful even during the day and be sure tae bide on the trackie. Janet was thinking it would be richt fine though if there wis a road up tae the peat for then it would be a lot safer for fowk. Och, but she'd better get on wi her job and she gid back tae the kitchen and started on the next batch o' scones. She was singin awa til hersel fin there cum a knock at the door, and a wee voice that shouts oot, 'Hello. Is there onybody in?' And Janet looked roon and there staunin at the door was this handsome young cheil that she'd never seen afore. Oh, but mighty he wis a guid lookin loon and she didnae tak long ar she invited him in and offered him a cuppie o' tea and a bannock. Well, he sat doon b' the fire and was aetin awa at the fine bannocks and him and Janet were seen laaching and spikin awa as tho they'd kint een anither for years. Well, as young folk will, they started tae joke, jist fair hae a cairry on. And afore Janet kint fit had happened, he'd proposed til her and asked her tae mairry him. Janet laached and said 'Ach well, maiybe I will'. 'Fit wid it tak', said the young, handsome cheil, 'Fit wid it tak for you to gie me yer haun in marriage?' 'Well, if you were tae big a roadie richt up to the peats and up on

tae the Mither Tap, afore it was time tae tak the peats hame the nicht, I wid easy mairry ye'. And she laached at the ridiculousness o' her suggestion. Well, the chiel got up oot o' his seat, awa oot o' the hoose, n awa up the hill. Janet thought nae more about it and on she got wi the rest o' the cookin.

Efter a whiley, Janet gid tae the door tae look n see if onybody was comin for it wis nearly suppertime. And fin she lookit up the hill, she saw this glintin on the hillside that she'd nivver seen afore. And in that very instant, she realised it was a road, a road coming fae the Mither Tap a' the way doon past the peat bog. And she realised that yon good lookin cheil was neen ither than the Devil himsel, the Devil in disguise. Well, wi a gasp she realised that afore lang, he'd hae the road right to her door and she wid be forced to mairry him. She took til her heels at eence and ran doon the hill, jist as the very Deil himsel finished laying the last slab.

The Devil ran efter her. Janet ran as fest as she could. She wis screamin for help and the Devil wis comin richt up the back o' her. She could feel his het breath on the back o' her neck and jist as he reached oot and grabbed her shooder, the Spirit o' the Wid turned her tae steen. And there she is, at the bottom o' Bennachie, the Maiden Stone, saved fae the Devil but nivver seen again be her fairmy.

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