

A Hebridean Love Song - 20th February

James Robertson

Where did he come from, that man with the shining smile? He came in a long dark coat, and dark was his face beneath the broad brim of his hat, but when he lifted that hat and gave his smile, if my heart had been of ice it would have melted in the warmth of it.

We had had the news of his coming from Oban, and we had had it from the fishing boats of Barra, and all up the long road from Lochboisdale to Gerenish the word of his approach came to us like the tap of his fine black boots.

Whiter than lambs in May were his teeth, and his hands like two brown trout from the loch. When he showed me his wares and I saw the length of his fingers I wished to bring them to my lips and make them wet with my kisses.

Then he sat down across from me and drank his fill of tea. And Peigi Mhor was at the drying green, but I did not invite her to join us. And though it was not proper, I fetched a little whisky from the press, and even if it was against his faith, did he and I not drink it?

And on the bed he laid the clothes he had brought all the way from Glasgow. Such beautiful things I hardly dared touch them, nor could I look at him when asking their price, knowing they were too dear and too delicate for such as I.

So he folded them all away save one, and that one he gave to me. Deep it is in the bedroom kist, still in its tissue paper, and never will I wear it. And he spoke of the land of his people, and how at nights he dreamed of returning there.

Where did he go, that man with his shining smile? He came in a long dark coat, and lovely was his face beneath his hat, and when he put his fingers to my lips it was to stifle my cries of joy. And Peigi Mhor was at the drying green, but I did not invite her to join us.

This is part of the 365 Stories project, stories by James Robertson with music by Aidan O'Rourke - you can hear the music and learn more at www.three-six-five.net