

Stories in the Doric from the Monastery of Fable

By *Sanners Gow*

Catty.

Mabel potted about in the gairden clearin een o the vegetable beds. It hid been a gye while since she got the chance tae come intae her beloved gairden. Apart fae the odd cut o the greenie she'd hardly been near it ava. Her poor mither hid teen up maist o her time and the last months hid been awful as the dementia teen a hud o her. Her mither hidna been in the best o health for a lot o years but Mabel hid managed tae work at the council offices and look aifter her ana but nae once the dementia hid started. Her mither hid been found wanderin about the toon a couple o times and Mabel hid teen early retirement tae look aifter her. In so deein she'd lost a lot o her pension package but she'd loved her mither dearly an widna see her gyan intae a home. The church bell struck ten so wi a wee groan Mabel straachtened hersel up fae the veggi bed and made her wye intae the hoose first takin aff her dubby beets and pittin on her slippers at the wee porch at the back door. Mabel didna like gyan intae the kitchen noo that her mither wiz awa, she ayee expected tae see her sittin on her cheer at the side o the fire.

The kitchen wiz aal farrent wi slate flag on the floor at the lum waa wiz the big Aga stove that kept the room as warm as a pie and the reason they'd spent maist o their time in the kitchen for there wisna ony ither form o heat in the hoose apart fae a two bar electric heater in fit hid been her mither's bedroom and of course the grate in the gweedroom that wiz nivver used these days. Mabel fullid the kettle an switched it on and gyan tae the press aside the windae she teen oot her 'special' treat for mornin fly a jar o Nescafe coffee. She drank fae a china mug nae een o yon horrible big heavy joogs that fowk drank fae noo-a-days. She sat doon at the aal deal table wi her steamin joog o coffee and opened the cutlery drawer in the table and teen oot her ither 'special' treat, a packet o fags. This wiz the only fag she smoked, she'd hae een at ten o'clock ivvery mornin alang wi her one cup o coffee. She sat back wi a sigh and takin a guilty glance at her mither's cheer lichted her fag. Mabel's mither hid been that against smokin so she'd ayee wint ootside tae hae a fag.

The room hid a big settle against ae waa, an aal leather thing that hid definitely seen better days but it wiz comfy an nae too far fae the tv on the wee table. She'd kent this room nearly aa her days and fin her parents were here it hid been fullid wi laughter. Her ee shifted tae the mantle piece abeen the Aga tae the photo o her father an mither's waddin day an a gweed lookin couple they were ana. Dad in his Gordon Highlander's uniform wi his medals on his breest an his sergeants stripes, her mither smilin and lookin up at him wi love in her een. That's been jist aifter the Great War. Mabel hid been born in 1923. It wiz soon aifter that they'd moved intae this hoose that's siventy years ago. Mabel gave anither sigh and looked at the ither photo showin a bonny lassie in her earl twenties. Mabel wiz far mair critical o this photo though thinkin that the lassie in it wiz bonny enough but her nose didna seem richt and though she'd a bonny smile it wiz spoiled wi her showin ower muckle o her gums abeen her teeth. But sayin that she'd hid a fyowe suitors in her day an mair than eence she'd been offered the chance tae mairry. Mabel gave anither sigh and wint tae the sink wi her cup an gave it a sweel. She'd rejected the offers though. Her father hid teen affa

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ill wi his heart and hid left his job wi the railway. Mabel then mair or less became the breadwinner at that time. Eventually her father died and the doctor said his hert wiz enlarged. He'd tellt her that a lot o men that hid focht in the Great War teen this type o hert complaint and her father haein been a piper also added tae that. Her mither nivver in the best o health hid teen a turn for the worse and wiz nivver the same aifter her husband died. Mabel hid managed though and worked awa at the cooncil eventually reachin the rank o Registrar. She'd loved her job at the cooncil and hid set up a filing system second tae none which wiz her pride and joy. But as things do in life they change and the new computers came on the go. Younger fowk used them and eventually her card index system wiz relegated tae history. It wiz about that time that her mither started showin the signs o dementia the cooncil hid wanted tae mak staff cuts so she'd teen early retirement. She wint back tae her vegetable bed and wiz soon lost tae fit she wiz deein. Aboot half eleven she'd been thinkin on pittin on a tattie for denner fin she noticed movement aneath the big elder bush. Standin up wi a groan Mabel crossed tae it and hid a look. At first she couldna see onything amongst the last years growth until she moved some o the twigs aside.

That's fin she saw the bonny blue ee lookin at her. "Oh me peer wee catty!" She put her haan in tae touch it but the cat hissed at her and backed aff. Mabel saw that its richt ee wiz a mess o scab and its luggie on the same side wiz nearly aff. She tried athing tae get it tae come tae her but it jist hissed an tried tae clook her. She spoke quietly till it tae see if that wid work but it held aff lookin at her wi the bonny blue ee. She wint intae the hoose and got a saucer o milk and put it aneath the bush then she moved awa an sat on the greenie wi the saucer o milk in sicht. Aifter a good while the cat came towards it an started tae sup. She could see the cat wiz in a gye mess an saw livid weepin cuts aboot its neck as weel as the festered ee an damaged luggie. "Oh ye peer wee thingie!" It looked like somebody's pet cat that hid wint feral. Mabel didna ken muckle aboot cats but saw that it hid marlled colours and by the size o't must be male. Ower the next fyowe days Mabel fed the cat and as she did it seemed tae get a wee bittie tamer and came as far as the back porch tae get fed. But still it widna let her touch it and jist hissed at her if she tried. In the mornings she'd ging oot and shout "Catty! Come on dearie!" and it wid come fae ablow the bush. She decided tae caa it 'Catty' because it seemed tae answer tae that. Eventually 'Catty' started tae come intae the hoose and loved tae sit on the flagsteens ablow the Aga. Mabel got tae touch it noo and wiz even alloed tae wash its wounds wi saaty water tae clean them. The festered ee wiz her main concern but aifter a lot o saaty water and solutions o cider vinegar the infection got better. The ee wiz blinded though and instead o the bonny blue o the good yin it wiz milky and sair lookin. "Oh ma peer wee Catty." she'd mutter as she tended its wounds. As the weeks passed Catty wid let Mabel pet him in front o the Aga but wid nivver come ontae her knee.

Mabel loved tae watch her films on the vhs video. She'd got it for her mither and her tae watch, baith o them loved Doris Day films an mony's the nicht they spent watchin them. One film though wiz Mabel's favourite. 'They Carved Her Name With Pride' a true story aboot a lassie in the S.O.E. that wint tae the war in occupied Europe and wiz captured by the Gestapo. The actress wiz Virginia Mackenna and she fairly made a good job o the film. Fin Mabel watched it she'd usually end up greetin because it wiz so sad. Ae nicht she sat watchin it and as usual at the end she started greetin. She saw Catty lookin up at her fae the fleer wi the one blue ee and aifter a minty it shoochled its wye ower tae the settee and

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came up intae her bosie and put ae big paw ontae her cheek as if sayin 'It's gan tae be fine.' Aifter that Catty spent nearly ivery nicht in her bosie and did the same thing wi his paw finiver she graat at that film.

The months wint by and in that time her and Catty became inseparable. Finiver she wiz in the gairden Catty wid lie as close tae her as possible an a fyowe times she nearly stood ontae him.

At the back o her gairden a block o fower pensioner's hooses backed ontae it. There wiz a widden fence on tap o the dyke because the hooses were higher up than Mabel's gairden. The aal fowk hid left tae gang intae sheltered housing and the cooncil hid began pittin younger fowk intae the hooses. The young couple that bade in the hoose directly ahin Mabel's were affa fine. They'd twa bairns the loon Michael wiz four and the wee lassie Greta seven. She often spoke tae their mither ower the fence and wid ayee speir for the bairns. Mabel wid gie them birthday cards wi a fiver in it and the same at Christmas alang wi a selection box each. The man hid a job at a local hotel workin makin brakfasts so he'd an early start ilka mornin. Mabel hid often thocht o inviting them in for supper some nicht but ayee kept pittin it aff because she wiz sic a private person. That mornin though the lassie hid tellt her they were moving awa doon the Arbroath wye because her man hid landed a good job in yin o the fancy hotels doon there. That wikein they moved but nae afore Mabel getting their new address and giein the bairns a penny for the journey.

Sadly that wiz the last real peace Mabel wid iver ken. The next tenant wiz a single man and in nae time he'd the loud music on the go and drinkin pals inaboot makin a noise tae aa oors. Fin Mabel wint oot in the mornins she'd find empty beer tins and loads o tabbies in her gairden. Aften she'd hear folk rinnin throwe her back yard as the new lads mates used her gairden as a short cut at nicht.

Mabel thocht o gyan tae the police or maybe the cooncil about this but decided she'd hae a word wi the new lad about the noise and rubbish. She did get tae speak tae him but for aa the gweed o't and the moothfae o abuse Mabel hid jist walked awa. "Nae point!" Aa that she'd achieved wiz tae enrage him and things got an affa lot worse aifter that. If she'd keepit quate an said nithing, things micht've worked awa but noo she'd shown her heed abeen the parapet and ended up a real target for him and his mates. She could hardly get intae her gairden ava noo for the abuse and ilka mornin her greenie wiz littered wi empty tins and bottles. Because they drank aa nicht she could get intae her gairden early in the mornin. She'd use the time tae clear up the mess. She started tae find wee squares o tin foil that looked as though they'd been burned. She'd shown yin tae the man at the local shop and he'd tellt her it wiz heroin that hid been heated on the foil. Seemingly there wiz a lot o drug takin about the toon noo a days.

A gye thochtful Mabel made her wye hame tae her hoosie. Afore she'd loved bidin here but noo it felt tae her like a prison. She couldna enjoy her gairden ony mair and recently they'd teen tae throwin steens at Catty finivver he wint outside and on mair than one occasion hid hit him. This wint on for months till ae nicht she'd heard a commotion oot the backie and Catty myowin in agony. She'd jist gotten oot in time tae see the lad and three o his pals throwin Catty in the air wi a squeeb attached tae him. It wint aff wi a bang and Catty howled in terror and pain. Screamin hersel Mabel got Catty intae her bosie and ran intae the hoose

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wi him followed by mocking laughter fae the fower men.

She'd tried athing tae help Catty but as he started tae shak wi shock she'd seen the life leave his bonny blue ee. She'd graat and graat and graat ower Catty and kept him tae her bosie. Steens were stottin aff her reef and windaes as the men cairried on laachin and caain her an aal witch. Early the following mornin Mabel beeriet Catty ablow his favourite bush. She hoped that neen o the lads saw her but naebody did they were ower busy sleepin aff their drink and drug filled souls.

Ower the next few months the tormentin didna stop, she'd stopped gyan oot tae tidy up noo and jist left the rubbish tae accumulate. If she did show her heed oot the back they'd shout about roasted cats and throw steens at her. Mabel hated bidin in the hoose so she'd use her pensioner's bus pass and ging awa maist days. She'd een o yon wee trolleys wi twa wheels that ye pulled ahin ye. Affa handy for eerins but also tae tak wi her on the bus wi her flask and sandwiches and some ither things she'd need for the day. It wid've been a sax weeks later that she wiz sittin watchin 'They Carved Her name With Pride' that a strange thing happened. As usual as the film ended she'd burst oot greetin but this time the greetin wiz so uncontrollable that she thocht she'd nivver manage tae stop. Aa the traumas o the past fyowe months seemed tae come tae the fore and the tears flowed like a river. She felt something touch her cheek and fin she looked here wiz Catty and its paw touchin her cheek like he used tae dee. Oh me but she teen him intae her bosie an sobbin 'Yer back! Yer back!' The big blue ee looked at her as she said this. Mabel must've fell asleep because fin she wakened she wiz shiverin wi the caal. Och she'd let tha Aga gyang oot. The tv aff station jist sizzed awa so she switched it aff. Shoutin for Catty she searched aroon but nae signs o him could she see. Mabel kent she'd been dreamin but oh me it seemed so real tae her. Next day wiz pension day so she made her wye doon tae the Post Office. There wiz an affa lot o ongyans and abody wiz speakin about the drugs war that wiz gyan on in the North East o Scotland. Seemingly there wiz an assassin gan about killin drug dealers and so far there'd been fower deaths. Mabel hearin this felt like sayin that she wished he'd come an shoot the bugger that bade at the back o her.

Ower the next twa years Mabel spent nearly ivery day awa on the bus she jist couldna abide her ain hoose now. But still some nichts she'd sit and watch her special film and fin she graat Catty wid come tae her bosie and look at her wi his bonny blue ee. She wiz weel aware Catty wiz deed but she enjoyed feelin him in her bosie aa the same, imagination or no it seemed so real.

Mabel intae her siventies now decided tae mak a will. So ae day she wint in by a local solicitor tae get een made up. The hoose and athing wi it she left tae the young couple that used tae bide at the back o her alang wi the fyowe coppers she'd in the bank. Her Post Office savings accoont hid a good puckle siller in it so that wiz tae be left tae the S.S.P.C.A. for tae look aifter cats. She'd nae faimily o ony kind so rather that let athing gyang tae the Crown she thocht this wiz the fairest thing she could dee. The solicitor made up the will and a couple o days later she'd tae gyang and sign it and twa o the office staff counter signed it as witnesses. Her affairs now in order Mabel returned hame and that nicht watched her film. Catty came intae her bosie and she cuddled him as the tears ran doon her cheeks. It wiz comin on the wikeind, always the worst time for Mabel fin her neighbour wid hae his

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drunken mates inaboot. The steens wid start eence mair rattlin doon her reef. Aa the windaes at the back o the hoose were broken noo and her eence bonny gairden wild and unkept. There wisna ony point in plantin floors noo because that nicht some o the lads wid come intae the gairden an staan aa ower them.

The fire engines , police and ambulance were on the scene they'd nivver seen onything like this afore. At the back o the hoose were fower burned bodies. Seemingly they'd been sittin oot the backie enjoyin a quiet drink fin somebody hid thrown a napalm type grenade in amongst them. Naebody could get near the bodies for the burnin syrup type stuff that continued tae incinerate them as they stood helplessly and watched. The police said it wiz anither gang war hit. Anither four bodies tae add tae the five ithers that hid been shot. They were caad by the papers 'The Double Tap Murders' on the accoont that each hid been shot twice one round in the chest an yin atween the een. Aifter the fire eventually wint oot the fower bodies were examined for bullet wounds but neen wiz found so they'd been roasted alive. "Poor buggers!" said the pathologist "They died in agony and it widnae hae been that fast!" The papers got a hud o it and said the 'Double Tap Murderer' hid moved ontae a new weapon o terror. It wiz aa speculation of coorse for the only link that there wiz atween the deed wiz they were aa drug dealers baith big and smaa. But fitivver, the Chief Constable wiz teen ower the coals for nae catchin the killer. Poor man hid jist teen it on the chin because naebody hid ony idea faa wiz responsible. They'd drawn a complete blank. The bullet used wiz completely unknown tae the fire arms experts and kent only that they must be specially made for executions like this due tae the devastating effect the low velocity rounds hid on the human body. The only ither forensic type clue wiz that at each murder scene they'd found tiny bitties o rubber. That wiz it! Nae anither thing tae gyan on ava.

Police officers did a door tae door seein if onybody his seen or heard onything and apart fae fowk haein heard the dull thud o the grenade and the horrible screams o the dyin men nae useful information wiz gotten. Mable faa hid been the nearest said that jist afore the explosion she'd heard somebody rinnin throwe her gairden. The constable duly noted her statement and tellt her that she'd probably be getting a visit fae C.I.D. afore lang. It wisna till the next day that the detective sergeant and a constable peyed her a visit. They chapped on the door but got nae answer the constable peered in the windae but jumped back as a cat cloured at the widae and hissed. "Gweed sakes!" Turnin tae the detective he said "Did ye see that?" He shook his heed, "See fit?"

The constable still shakin tellt him aboot the big angry lookin cat wi one ee almost comin throwe the windae at him.

"Oot o the wye!" The detective teen a look in the windae but saw nithing. "Michty min ye must've been imagining things!"

Gyan roon the back they found the door open. The constable stood aside tae let the detective gyang in first. The detective laughed at this and said "Are ye feart o cattie's min?" He got twa steps inside fin he wished he'd nivver mocked the young policeman. The one ee'd cat wiz there and in seconds hid clookit baith his legs till the bleed wiz fleein. Wi a gasp o pure terror he ran fae the hoose knockin the young constable doon on the wye oot. Aifter a lot o cursing they looked intae the back windae and could see an aal woman sittin at a desk aside a big stove. She wisna moving and fin they knocked the big one eyed cat near came throwe the glaiss at them. It teen a couple o oors for the lassie fae S.S.P.C.A. tae

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arrived but fin she wint in nae sign o a cat did she find. Feelin like a richt pair o plunkers the DS and the constable wint tae the body. Mabel sat at her wee roll top desk staring intae nithing. At one side o her sat an empty coffee cup at the ither an ashtray wi twa tabbies squashed intae it and a wee tin canister as thick as a fountain pen wi a skull & crossbones and one word 'Cyanide'. "Oh God!" said the DS "Go get the big boys doon here!" The constable stood like a statue lookin at Mabel. "Go on min and dinna touch onything!" Galvanised the PC made awa.

Ower the next couple o days the place wiz fullid wi army bomb disposal teams, forensic fowk and the Chief Constable. A complete news blackoot wiz in place and in the end it wid tak weeks afore ony sense could be made o their findings and even then nae information wiz iver given oot about fit hid happened.

The Chief Constable sat at his desk fingerin the report in front o him. He jist couldna believe fit he'd jist read. First ava they'd found oot that Mabel hid made the napalm used in the grenade in her back shed. And it wiz so simple how she did it. She'd used easy tae hand materials tae mak it, a haanfae o chaip electronic lighters strapped on a weighted steel plate fae an Aga attached tae a canister fullid o petrol and ither stuff she'd used tae mak the napalm. Fin the weighted plate hit the grun the device wint up like a grenade dowsin abody within aboot ten feet in flaming syrup. That wiz bad enough as tae how an aal woman in her seventies could mak such a device but it got much much worse as tae fit else they'd found in the shed. He still couldna get the next bit richt in his heed. The search team hid found a pistol, and nae an ordinary pistol. This wiz a pistol designed for assassination it hid a clip wi twa bullets in it but again nae ordinary bullets like ye'd expect. Oh no! This bullets were designed tae fit the special pistol. But the maist amazing bit hid been the silencer for the weapon. It wiz in size and shape like a Vim tin but made o aluminium, inside it wiz fullid o ground doon bike inner tubes tae absorb the sound o the discharge. That's far the rubber hid come fae at each o the hits that naebody could explain. The two bullets were for the 'Double Tap'. One tae the chest the ither atween the een. They'd found a box o fifty o these specialist bullets but twenty two were missing. The used cartridges hid been found in her rolltop desk each pair taped thegither and a code on each. Twenty two o them. There'd been five hits, one in Fraserburgh, one in Peterhead and three in Aberdeen that accounted for ten bullets so fit happened tae the ither twelve? At this moment the Security Services were trying tae decipher the coded index cards they found in her desk tae find the names o the ither missing bodies.

The man fae MI5 stood lookin oot the Chief Constable's office windae. He turned fin he heard the file being closed and wi a wry smile teen oot anither file but this yin wiz different. It wiz buff coloured and hid a reed line across it wi the words 'Most Secret'. "Divulge what's in here and you'll end your days in the Tower.!" he said tae the Chief Constable. Hesitatingly as if it wid explode in his face the Chief Constable took the file and opened it. He could see richt awa it wiz a service record. The wee photo at the left hand side showed a really bonny lassie smiling intae the camera. But it wiz the title that teen his attention.

Mabel - - - - - S.O.E..

Born Peterhead Scotland 14th June 1923

Recruited April 4th 1943

Special aptitudes languages, firearms and explosives.

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Trained Achnacarry Scotland.

Dropped as 'Moon Strike' France September 1944

Tasked- assassination.

S.O.E. disbanded 1946

Carried out tasks for H.M. Government until stood down July 15th 1958.

Awarded the Military Medal November 1960 for services rendered to the Crown..

The Chief Constable looked up at the MI5 man. "She was Special Operations Executive?" The MI5 man nodded. "Churchill wanted them to set Europe ablaze!" Noddin towards the file he said "She was the very best the S.O.E. ever put into the field with a string of assassinations to her credit longer than my arm! The best of the best!" He snatched up baith files and put them intae his briefcase. "So you'll agree that this story must never get out?" Athoot waitin for a reply he made for the door and paused. "Incidentally if you do find any of the missing bodies just get in touch with us and we'll have a sanitising team up north pronto!" Wi a cheery "Toodlepip old chap!" he left the office leaving the Chief Constable contemplating the wee cottage on the Buchan coast and early retirement.