

Lugh's light by Gearóid Fitzgerald

There was a rumour that a big dark man with a stoop was staying in a rented house in Cloghane. People talk. Everyone was curious about this hermit who only seemed to come out at night and had no car, not even a bicycle. A stooped figure was seen on occasion going up the road to the old church but no one dared follow. He walked by the light of the moon. The sun his enemy.

The rain pitter-pattered lightly on the roof as Crom Dubh sat by candlelight staring out the window. The moon gave an eerie light to a deserted village. He contemplated about how Cloghane had changed since he had left. Gone were the horses and carts but the rain remained. As the clock struck 12 midnight he gathered himself, creeping as a shadow out the door of the cottage. Hood up, he slithered up the road to the old church in search of his long lost stolen head..

St. Brendan sat on a stool by the fire in Murphy's Bar in Brandon, pint of creamy Guinness in hand, whiskey chaser on the mantel. He stared into the fire and reminisced of stories of times gone by. The crowd hung on his every word;

'So there I was, in the middle of the ocean and all of an instant we landed on this island, sure we were delighted, 'another place to say I discovered' I said,' declared St. Brendan with great gusto.

'We threw out our belongings, lit a fire and settled down for a proper nights rest'

'As we slept by fireside suddenly I felt a rumble, must be thunder I thought, as I drifted back to sleep...suddenly I was thrown 20 feet into the air as I heard a massive groan, sure what was beneath us only a whale!!!'

The crowd gasped in amazement as the barman threw up his eyes to heaven after hearing the 'whale story' for the thousandth time.

Crom Dubh savagely scavenged and shred the ruins of the church apart in search of his precious stone head. With each passing second his hunger and thirst for the stone grew as he knew well the power that it held. That longing was taking over him, eating at him, consumed him. In a furious frenzy he lurched down the pathway, followed the light of the moon dancing in the sky leading him the road out to Brandon.

St. Brendan stood again the mantel for fear it might fall down, the stories coming thick and fast as the pints.

'Did I ever tell ye about the time I discovered America??' slurred St. Brendan as he slightly spilled his pint of stout.

'You did, many times Brendan, now its closing time Brendan you have to go' uttered the weary barman as he tried to shut up for the night.

'*Saint*. Brendan to you my dear man!!' he said as he staggered out the door of Murphy's.

As he reeled the hollow down from the pub something fell from beneath his robes. It tumbled and tossed down the path from the pub. Turning in his sandals in his haze St. Brendan still made sure to hastily pick it up and pocketed it again for fear it would be seen...

Crom Dubh knew he was getting closer to the stone head. He could feel its power getting stronger. He crossed fields, animalistic, eyes bulging, teeth clenched, unable to contain his ferocious hunger for the precious stone head. With every bound he got closer and closer he could feel it almost pulsating in the distance.

St. Brendan staggered his way out towards the point. He drunkenly sang as he walked;

'A boat sailed out of Brandon in the year of 501, twas a damp and dirty morning, St. Brendan's voyage had begun....'

Little did he know what waited ahead of him, lurking in the shadows, waiting for his moment to pounce...

Crom Dubh now followed the path from Sauce Creek along the cliffs, leaping with excitement, the moon overhead as glowing bright as could be, gaining on St. Brendan with each powerful vault knowing that he was getting nearer and nearer...

St. Brendan stood at Brandon point staring out upon the vast ocean to which he had spent many years travelling and exploring. He thought about all he had achieved and the many experiences that he had down through the years. He was about to give his third encore of St. Brendan's voyage, when in an instant Crom Dubh lurched at St. Brendan from the bushes, snarling and grasping him in a deathly hold! Down they tumbled, caught in each other's clutches off the edge off the cliff. Stones rocketed as they collapsed down the face of Brandon point. Spinning, twisting turning at an alarming pace before crashing at ferocious speed into the wild, perilous dark waters below.

A symphony of sound was heard as they tore each other apart in the ferocity of the battering waves. Dragging, pulling, heaving, spluttering, gasping for any bit of air. Crom Dubh's eyes stood live as bright as the moon as he dived for St. Brendan amongst the windswept waves. Down, down, down, they went drowning, bubbling, frothing, lost below the waves in eternal darkness.

That was the last that was seen of St. Brendan and the dark man with a stoop. Some say St. Brendan had too much to drink that night, others say he was gone on another of his 'voyages'. Crom Dubh never returned to Cloghane but it is said that on a stormy night when the moon is full that a dark shadowy figure can be seen walking up the road to the old church.

The stone head was never found and this stage never will be, perhaps lost to the depths of the ocean, but I would like to think that it washed up on some far, distant yet undiscovered land.

'Ní chruinníonn cloch reatha caonach'