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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

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*Much of St. Patrick's life is shrouded in mystery, but we do know that at sixteen he was captured by raiders and sold into slavery. After these events, his faith became very important to his survival. But few know that it was also around this time*



*that magic entered his life, forever changing him and making him who he would become. The mythical Morríghna, a Goddess of both the Celts and the Sidhe, when not physically manifest in Ireland as a set of reincarnated twins, was known to make brief visits in the form of a red wolf. This red wolf played a mysterious and crucial role in Patrick's journey. This tale takes place when natural magic was still thick in Ireland the Celtic faeries and druids decided the fate of many, including our hero, Patrick.*

### **The First Magic of St. Patrick**

In the fifth century, long before he was remade into a Saint and people worldwide would raise their cups on his feast day, Patrick's name was known in only a few kingdoms of Ireland. Many believed him to be just another madman washed-up on their shores spouting Christianity.

Patrick knew he was not crazy because he was terrified. True madmen, he felt certain, did not know when to be scared and when not to. He found a certain strength in this thought even as his heart hammered in his chest. He could feel his rough, brown wool robe becoming damp with sweat even in the dawn chill. His sandaled feet shuffled down the barely visible woodland path in the first traces of light.

Christ, his God, had forged Patrick's strength in the crucible of slavery. Taken from Britton at age sixteen by raiders, and left naked in the Irish highlands to tend goats, Patrick learned to make his own clothing and find his own shelter. Before his kidnapping, he had given little thought to the Christianity of his people, but afterwards, it was only fervent prayers that had kept him warm. Having discovered his faith and its strength, God had showed him how to escape Britton — and then led him back to Ireland to spread His word.

Once he returned to Ireland, Patrick stood stoic in the face of indifference, insults, beatings — even an attempted stoning — growing his small following. *But I have become too proud of my holiness*, he chastised himself as he skirted a patch of mud on the path, recalling how rashly he had accepted a challenge leveled at him during the previous night's feast. He had realized too late that it was a trick. The test had been issued by the High Druid of the Kingdom of Munster, one of many compact kingdoms on this island of shifting political landscapes that not even the High King could control.

His sandal caught on a tree root and he fell, picked himself slowly up and brushed the dirt from his robes, sighing deeply. Why hadn't he laughed off the challenge, as he had so many others? Now, he was trapped. He would not survive this day. He had spent the dark hours of the morning alone in the wood in prayer, but a cloud of fear or pride had prevented him from hearing God's whispers. Perhaps it was just his humanity. He did not know.

Through an overcast sky, the faint glow of sunrise brought no lightness to his spirit as he continued on his journey. He wondered if on his death, would his soul find salvation? When consumed by a demon, would his soul be free to soar to heaven? Or would it be bound by the evil former angel, eternally in anguish?

Patrick suddenly became aware of someone walking behind him. He was in no mood for conversation so he increased his pace. *No use dallying toward my doom if it is inevitable*, he thought.

"You know the answer," said a woman in a resonant voice. "The demon will eat you and you will suffer, bound forever into its gut. Unless you are not you."

Patrick stopped and spun around, expecting to see a witch or Celtic faerie who had read his mind. Instead, he stood eye-to-eye with a giant she-wolf, her coat silky and deep red. Somehow, he did not take a step back. He supposed that he was already so full of fear that there was no room for more.

"To survive, you must use magic," said the wolf. "Just as Moses did to defeat the pharaoh's sorcerers in his efforts to free the Israelites."

The creature's biblical reference startled him. But it was the fact that her mouth had not moved that held him rooted. Yet the words were in his ears, as if she had uttered them a half second earlier.

"Are you a messenger of God or Satan? Reveal yourself!" Patrick demanded. He had assumed the wolf was a faerie cloaked in animal form, but now he doubted that.

"Are those the only two possibilities?" Asked the wolf. "You claim an infinite God, yet you put such limits on its being." The she-wolf cocked its head and studied him.

Patrick felt a twinge of hope. "Magic, you...said? I am no exorcist. I know no words of power, no spells."

The wolf padded down the path and Patrick trotted to catch up.

"Do you know why a sorcerer uses words when he works an enchantment?" the wolf asked. "Yet an angel, or demon, or Goddess does not?"

Patrick did not know what to say to that.

"Because a sorcerer has to focus his connection to the Other World, to remind himself of the power residing there, to draw it into this world, and direct its intent." The she-wolf glanced at Patrick and bared its teeth in a smile. "Make up your own words, Patrick of the Christ." Her voice carried a laughing tone. "I sense an Other World connection is already strong in you. Use it."

"Why tell me this, why come to me?"

"One day, some years from now, you are to deliver my message to High King Lóegaire. When you have taken his heart, and survived the last of his schemes, tell him that the woman he turned away from his camp last winter, who died in the sleet without fire or shelter, was bearing my twins, though even she did not know it yet."

A riddle, thought Patrick. *Of course, a giant wolf speaking in riddles, not something I should be surprised at in Ireland.* The trail left the woods and Patrick turned to ask another question, but the creature was gone.

Turing back he looked out beyond the clearing at the low dome of the mountain rising in the distance ahead of him. It was referred to in the annals as Sliabh Ailduin, but was known locally as Mount Elie. Rocky outcroppings were interspersed with clumps of trees, and wisps of mist clung to their upper branches like dragon's breath. Waiting for him on the trail was the druid who had issued the challenge, Cairche the Blue. She was named for the brilliant hue of her eyes and her ever-present matching cloak. Next to her stood King Aengus of Munster, along with a cluster of warriors, lords, ladies, and gawkers.

Talking with Cairche the Blue were three faeries — or Sidhe as the Celts called them— all of them a head taller than any of the humans. Patrick recognized one of the faeries as a Skeaghshee, a tree Sidhe, by his long oak brown hair and sharp features. The other two were women who wore the intense, glowing emerald robes of the Adhene, the current ruling clan of their homeland, the Middle Kingdom.

“Christian,” Cairche called out to Patrick. “All you have to do is walk to the top of the mountain and return.”

Patrick straightened his shoulders. “When I do you’ll owe me a recompense, druid.”

“He’s within his rights to demand it,” confirmed King Aengus. “And it’ll be a bit more fun if you also have something to lose. Your life perhaps?” Laughter rolled through the crowd.

“Of course,” said Cairche. “If you survive, I’ll take your meager God as my own.”

“Fair enough,” agreed Patrick, his heart still pounding.

One of the Adhene Sidhe put her palm to her mouth and whispered across it. The words rolled up into a ball of glowing green light. It leapt from her hand, soaring in a graceful arc before disappearing into the black mouth of a cave close to the summit.

“Be careful Christian, someone may’ve awoken the demon,” said Cairche, with a wry smile.

The Sidhe exchanged what must have been a joke in a language that Patrick did not understand. But the humans present were stealing concerned glances up at the cave. Patrick could tell that many of them were reconsidering the wisdom of being this close to the coming spectacle.

Patrick walked briskly up the slope. Dark clouds thickened around the mountaintop. A malevolent black haze billowed from the cave mouth. *Unless you are not you*, the wolf’s words rang in his ears. Patrick stopped and removed his robe, sandals, and the strip of old white cloth he had wrapped around his loins. He arranged his clothes on the ground in the shape of a limbless, headless man. *Power resides in the Other World*, the wolf had said; home of the Father, thought Patrick, source of the Holy Spirit. *Make up your own words*. Patrick hesitated. A wisp of white mist blew by, momentarily engulfing his naked body. He suddenly noticed the cold and shivered. How could he create words of power?

By now, the black haze had merged with the clouds and an animal shape began to materialize. The demon in that cave was rumored to be Samael. Patrick dearly hoped not, hoped it was some minion that lied about its rank. The wolf’s voice echoed in his head: *a sorcerer has to focus his connection to the Other World, to remind himself of the power residing there, to draw it into this world, and direct its intent*. He concentrated, tried to open his mind to the Holy Spirit. The only word that came to him was “walk,” so he mumbled it to the clothing, then again with more confidence. A third time, “Walk!” he shouted. Following a sudden instinct, he bent and exhaled into the robe. He kept blowing until his lungs were drained and he collapsed heavily onto the ground. When he gathered enough breath to lift his head, he watched in surprise as his clothing took to life and sprinted up the mountain, making a figure that looked very much like him.

Patrick scampered over and hid within a clump of scrubby trees. Peering out, he saw the clouds form the shape of an expansive lion's head, almost half as large as the mountain itself. Lightning snaked through and gathered into brilliant white fangs. The smell of ozone stung his nostrils. The naked Patrick willed himself not to flee; this was no minion, this was an Archdemon. Its red eyes turned toward the robed version of Patrick, which seemed to be intent on charging the creature. Thunder roared from the demon's gaping mouth as rain drooled out.

The demon lunged. The fake Patrick dove into a hole, leaving his robes behind. With a look of surprised fury in its eyes, the creature chomped down on the mountain's face. Its fangs shattering in an explosion of sparks. The demon reared up in pain, ripping out a mouth full of solid granite the size of a hill. The rock tumbled through its broken teeth and fell south, over the horizon. To the squeals of a million wounded rats, the demon streamed back into its cave tearing a hole in the cloud cover.

Patrick stepped out from his hiding place, felt the warmth of the sun on his skin, and for the first time, he allowed himself to believe that he was going to survive. He broke into a run toward the summit; not knowing how long the demon was going to sulk and yet needing to finish his challenge.

After cresting the mountain, he skirted the cave on his way down, noticing a sporadic grumbling emerging from the opening. Patrick allowed his pace to slow to a walk as the countryside stretched out before his eyes, sunbeams dancing between clouds, spots of cattle and sheep, smoke drifting from distant village cooking fires. And there was something else, something underlying it all, in the manner of magma under a volcano. It was as if he had stepped through a doorway into a new land; this was not the Ireland of his slavery, or the Ireland of his evangelism, this was the Ireland of magic. In the past, he had seen Sidhe and druids work enchantments, heard of the Middle Kingdom, and thought it all part of the country's Paganism, separate from the faith he taught. He had been blind to the truth.

Patrick fell to his knees in prayer. He felt his God, stronger than ever, and the Holy Spirit filling him. He felt the Ardor of Ireland with all its power to work miracles. He detected no difference between them.

On returning to the base of the mountain, only King Aengus and the druid Cairche were waiting for him. Patrick wondered when all the others had left – was it on witnessing his victory, or on the appearance of the demon? He was sorry that the Sidhe had gone. There was so much he wanted to ask them.

Seeing that Patrick was still naked, Cairche the Blue whipped off her blue cloak and wrapped it about him, took his hand and kissed it. "Tell me more about your God," she said.

In subsequent years, the mountain came to be known as the Devil's Bit. It was so commonly called such that it appeared that way on maps. The chunk that had been bitten from the mountain by the daemon fell some twenty miles to the south. King Aengus built the principal castle of Munster on top of it, along with a monastery for Patrick. While the King did not convert to Christianity, he declared that he respected any God who allowed himself to be born human just so he could die well. Thus it was known variously as The Rock of Kings, The Rock of Cashel, and to the Christians, Patrick's Rock, though most just called it The Rock.

Cairche the Blue became a loyal acolyte and converted her two sisters, Eithne the Fair and Fedelm the Red. The three of them were the beloved daughters of Ireland's High King Lóegaire, the subject of the giant red wolf's scorn. Just as the she-wolf predicted, they broke their father's heart when they renounced his old Gods, then turned their love from him completely after he

unsuccessfully schemed to kill Patrick. Lóegaire became ill and died not long after Patrick visited his bed chamber, on the night of a new moon, and whispered the words of the she-wolf in his ear.

Lóegaire, seeking his own revenge, left instructions that his body was to be interred within the walls of Tara, the Irish capital, in the hope that his ghost could protect it from the new God.

Patrick went on to become the most powerful Christian sorcerer Ireland has ever known. Perhaps it was his experience on the mountain that inspired him to bind a demon, a junior one, into an iron bell to create a weapon. The Bell of the Blood exists to this day.

*Epilogue: Over the centuries the bell became known simply as the Blood Bell and it plays a significant role in The Last days of Magic. A Reference to the tale of the Devil's Bit appears in chapter twenty-eight, as Liam is journeying to the Rock of Cashel.*

## IRISH CUSTOMS

On what day of the week was it regarded as being unlucky to cut your fingernails?	Sunday
What does the term 'luck penny' or 'luck money' mean?	This means returning a small portion of the sale price to the seller when a deal is made
What feastday is celebrated on February 1st?	Saint Brigid's Day
On St Brigid's Day people went from house to house carrying a straw doll. What was the doll called?	A Brideog
What is St Brigid's cross made from?	Rushes
What was put up into the rafters of a house, on St Brigid's Day, to protect against evil spirits?	A straw from the Christmas nativity scene
If a person drank nettle soup on May 1st, it was believed they would be free of what for a year?	Rheumatism
What day was considered lucky to sow potatoes?	Good Friday
What birds flying directly over a house were considered an omen of death?	Crows
When and what was 'Nollaig na mBan'?	January 6th - 'Little Women's Christmas' when men would take over the housework for the day!
In the west of Ireland what was a 'Foidin Mara'?	A 'stray sod' or 'enchanted' piece of grass whereby a person stepping on it would become disorientated and lost
It was believed unlucky to knit at night until you were certain who were asleep?	The sheep
A stocking filled with hot potatoes and applied to the throat was a cure for what ailment?	Tonsillitis
What was a besom and what was it used for?	A roughly fashioned short-handled sweeping brush made from a clump of birch cuttings, normally used to clean the hearth area of the kitchen
What was a ciseán ('cish-awn')?	A household basket crafted from reeds
What is meant by the term 'keening'?	When women family members would cry and wail over a relative who had died

## IRISH CUSTOMS

What was a 'Banshee'?	A fairy woman reputed to wail and cry at the impending death of members of certain families
Why did unmarried girls place slice of wedding cake under their pillows?	In the hope that they dream of their future husband
What is a Seanachai?	A traditional Irish storyteller/historian
Allegedly what will happen if you kiss the Blarney Stone?	You will get 'the gift of the gab (talk)'
What was the most popular way of finding a husband or wife in Ireland long ago?	Matchmaking
A famous annual matchmaking festival takes place in what county?	Lisdoonvarna, County Clare
Who or what were the 'Straw-boys'?	Groups of uninvited revellers dressed in top hats, masks and skirts of straw who arrived at weddings where they sang and danced
What day are you likely to see 'Wrenboys'?	St Stephen's Day
What is another name for 'Wrenboys'?	The Mummings
What was the significance of a horse or donkey shoe nailed above the door in an Irish house?	To bring good luck
Who would be the preferred first visitor to a house on New Year's Day and why?	A tall dark handsome man would bring good luck
What New Year's Day visitor was believed to bring hardship and grief to a house?	A red haired girl
What benefit was associated with May morning dew?	It was believed to be good for the complexion



## Irish History – March

2nd 1933 - Vote to remove the Oath of Allegiance is carried.

1934 - Wearing of Uniform (Restriction) Bill carried.

3rd 1942 - Gas rationing introduced.

5th 1867 - Fenian rising in Dublin, Tipperary, Limerick, Clare and Cork.

1936 - W. T. Cosgrave again nominated President of Fine Gael.

6th 1988 - The SAS controversially kill three IRA members in Gibraltar.

7th 1887 - The Times publishes the first in a series of article accusing Parnell of being involved in crime.

1957 - Fianna Fáil return to power in the Republic.

1965 - Mass is said in the vernacular for the first time.

8th 1966 - Nelson's Pillar in Dublin is blown up.

10th 1932 - The new Fianna Fáil government releases 23 political prisoners.

1934 - Women banned from National Athletic and Cycling Association events.

1944 - The United States alleges that Ireland's neutrality is acting in favour of the Axis Powers.

11th 1926- De Valera resigns as President of Sinn Féin after one of his proposals is defeated.

13th 1846 - 300 tenants evicted from Ballinglass.

1944 - The British government bans travel between Great Britain and Ireland.

14th 1984 - Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams is shot and wounded.

1991 - The Birmingham Six are freed after 16 years wrongful imprisonment.

15th 1953 - 10,000 civil servants march in Dublin, demanding a just wage.

16th 1939 - De Valera is greeted by Benito Mussolini in Rome.

1953 - President Roosevelt asks the American Congress to support a United Ireland.

1964 - Seán Lemass launches 'Ireland Week' in London.

1988 - Michael Stone kills three people at an IRA funeral.

1991 - Dublin becomes the European City of Culture.

17th 1931 - First St Patrick's Day parade in the Irish Free State.

1933 - Éamon de Valera gives the first State reception since the foundation of the Free State.

18th 1934 - General Eoin O'Duffy addresses 2,500 Blueshirts in the Trim Market Square.

1964 - The Agricultural Ministers of the North and the Republic, Harry West and Charles Haughey, meet.

19th 1969 - Ireland receives its first loan from the World Bank.

20th 1920 - Mayor of Cork Thomas MacCurtain killed by the RIC.

1935 - The army intervenes in a bus strike by providing lorries for transport.

1941 - Bread rationing is introduced.

1979 - Huge anti-PAYE demonstration in Dublin.

21st 2001 - Ireland confirms its first case of foot and mouth disease in many years.

22nd 1949 - The Irish government leases a residence in the Phoenix Park to the United States for 99 years.

1969 - Civil rights demonstrations all over Northern Ireland.

1987 - Irish National Lottery is launched.

24th 1968 - An Aer Lingus plane, St Phelim, crashes near the Tuskar Rock killing 57 people.

26th 1935 - 72 Republicans arrested in the Free State.

29th 1887 - Irish Crimes Act introduced in response to the National Land League's boycott of landlords.

1940 - Fire destroys the upper part of St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

30th 1849 - Doolough Tragedy: famine victims are forced to walk through the night to appeal for famine relief, resulting in many deaths.

1939 - The Treason Bill passes its final reading at Dáil Éireann.

1979 - The Irish government ends the parity of the Irish pound with sterling.

31st 1976 - Sallins Train Robbery.

1978 - 6000 people protest the building of civic offices on a Viking site.

1999 - Irish Land Commission dissolved after 108 years existence.