

Cailliagh ny Groamagh

A poem for Laa'I Breeshey (1 February) by Annie Kissack

Hag of the woodpile, hag of the sulks,
hag of the shivery February weather.

Over the waves from Ireland she skims
in a rickety boat and her rickety limbs
unfold as she crawls up the shore alone.
But leave her to mutter, leave her to moan
and never permit her to wander alone
where driftwood lies or crops are grown.

Hag of the Candlemas, hag of the gloom,
hag of the hithery, thithery weather.

The old grey cailliagh is gathering sticks.
Ice hangs from her nostrils and fingertips.
See how she skulks from hedge to hedge,
head bent, intent on kindling.
Brasnags and bons from hedge and ditch
lie under the arms of the jittery witch.

Hag of St Bridget's day, hag of the spells,
hag of the slippery, drippy weather.

If this morn proves fine, there'll be months of rain
to flood our fields and rot our grain.
If it's bright till noon, winter will cling,
blighting every living thing.
But if today's drowned out in cloud,
spring will follow, green and loud.

Cailliagh ny Groamagh, hag of the spits,
hapless creature of opposites.

Her raggedy dress is tangled with wrack,
her raggedy hair slides down her back.
Cailliagh ny Groamagh of raggedy name
who'd warm her wet limbs with a raggedy flame:
may your wood stay wet and never dry,
may raindrops fall from a furious sky

till all your fires go OUT!