

The Fairy Changeling

There was once a young couple who lived by the coast at *L'Erée* in *St. Pierre du Bois*. They were newly-weds and very soon the wife gave birth to their first baby. One day, whilst the husband was out collecting shellfish and seaweed from the seashore, the young wife placed a dozen large limpets into the embers of the kitchen fire. She then went about her tasks in the kitchen whilst they bubbled and cooked.

Suddenly she heard a voice come from the cradle in which her baby was asleep.

The voice said:

“I’m not of this year, nor the year before,

Nor yet of the time of King John of yore,

But in all my days and years, I ween,

So many pots a-boiling I have never seen!”

The young mother was horrified, because she knew in an instant that the voice did not belong to her own baby. It had come from a fairy *changeling*! She realised what must have

happened. A fairy mother must have stolen into her house and taken the baby from its cradle and left her own fairy child in its place!

Now, the young mother had heard the old folk talking of such things and knew what she had to do. She ran to the cradle and scooped up the imposter in her arms and threatened to throw it into the fire. The fairy changeling let out a high-pitched scream.

Hearing its baby’s screams the fairy mother appeared from the bushes outside the cottage, and leapt over the half-door and into the kitchen. She snatched the changeling from the woman’s arms and set the young mother’s own child safely back in the cradle. Then the fairy mother leapt with her changeling baby back over the kitchen door again, and was gone!



The Folklore Gallery at Candie

Story by Guernsey Museums, adapted from Marie de Garis' *Folklore of Guernsey*