

Kate O'Shanter

And where do you suppose, was Kate
When market days were wearing late
While Tam frequented wretched dives
And fooled around with landlords' wives
And rode poor Meg through mud and
ditches

And had an eye for handsome witches,
Played Peeping Tom at Alloway
And yelled and gave himself away
And fled from there, amid the din
And Maggie barely saved his skin??

Not where you think!

Kate slaved away, the livelong day
They had so many bills to pay
The twins just had to have new shoes
And Tammie spent so much on booze.
She bathed and clothed and fed the twins.
She bakes the bread, she knits and spins.
She does the wash, she mends the clothes,
And what all else, God only knows!
She keeps the house all neat and trim,
And makes a lunch for ploughboy Jim-
A neighbour lad, they hire by day,
Who does Tam's work, while Tam's away.

She herds the sheep and cattle, too
Feeds hens, milks cows, and when that's
through
Makes cheese and butter, gathers eggs –
For Tam to sell on market day
And drink the proceeds half away!
In harvest time, from early morn,
Her sickle reaps the oats and corn,
And many a sunny summer day
She and ploughboy Jim make hay.
When they got home, that night, at four
And Maggie'd found the stable door
Tam tumbled, senseless on the floor
To sleep it off, eight hours or more –
He tossed and turned, mid hail and rain
Went through that nightmare ride again.

About the middle of the day
The livestock had a lot to say;
The chicken, donkey, goose and cow
Said *we want food, and want it Now*
Tam stirred upon his lowly bed
And saw Meg's stump above his head.
An awful thought ran through his brain.
Oh Lord! That wasn't hail and rain

Tam struggled slowly to his feet,
He was not clean, he was not neat
He scraped off what he could, but when
He'd found his way, from but to ben
Tam stood dumfounded: '*What the hell*'
Fro Kate was gone, the twins as well.

But Kate had left a note for him:
I've sailed for Montreal, with Jim
And we expect to settle soon
Out on a farm near Saskatoon.
Forgive me Tam, and don't be sore –
I couldn't take it anymore
I had to find a better way
Before I'd slaved my youth away.
I had to try to save myself –
You'll find the oatmeal on the shelf –
Don't fash yourself' about the twins
I might as well confess, they're Jim's....

Written by
Seanair
Melbourne Australia
Published in Scottish Field January 1993