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And to the glorious Scots language and those who keep it alive, thank you!

to listen to an audio version search YouTube for “Carey Morning Neeps and Tatties”

NEEPS AND TATTIES
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Neeps and Tatties

a morality tale for vegetables
and other living things

(servit in Scots wi a wee tait o English)

written by Carey Morning

illustrated by Anna York
for Jack and Amos and Gwen
ma bonnie bairns
CM

for Oliver
with tender love
AY
Fair fa’ your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin’ race!
Aboon them a’ ye tak your place...

Rabbie Burns, Address to the Haggis
Listen, wee yins, and ye shall hear a tale o wae, a tale o cheer. Jist open yer lugs as weel’s yer hert and when ye dae ma tale can stert.
Noo there wis a time,  
as I will tell -  
and I can hardly  
believe it masel -  
when neeps and tatties  
(such freends o late)  
widnae lie doon  
upon the same plate.
We aften see them side by side
cooryin in like groom and bride.
But in days lang syne they were aw maleecious,
argle-barglous, rump an stump veexious!
Hoo it began
is a mystery
awa in the mist
o history.
But yince the cairry-on
had commenced
the neeps and the tatties
lost aw sense.
Noo it’s true a tattie tends tae the broon, and a neep has bits o pink aroond.

And tatties are baldie fae whit I hae seen, while neeps dae sproot a spring o green.
But their roots aw drink fae the same guid groond. On aw their heids wan sun shines doon.

But fear and hate got in the heids o thae cantie spuds and couthie swedes.
They were that fou o fear,
and likewise o hate,
that despite aw they shared
at the haund o fate
( like life and breath,
the dour, dreich weather)
the twa tribes widnae
come thegither.
Nleep mums scaulded
their bonnie wee neeps,
"Dinnae hing wi nae tatties!
They're keelies and cheats!"
And tattie dads hissed
in their tottie weans' lugs,
"Steer clear o thae neeps!
They're snauchles and dugs!"
They screeved a line across the earth – which side ye were on wis a chance o birth. Tatties steyed east and neeps steyed west, each tribe shair it wis the best.
They flung fierce words
and sometimes worse,
a stick, a stane,
a sneisty curse.
Yin might yell,
"Haw! Feartie breek's!"
then a rammie wid stert
and rin for weeks.
Next came a fence on the boundary line, and then a wacko strang design. They built it hie, they built it wide 'til nane could see the tither side.
They spla irged! They sclavered!
They tellt such lies!
Mithers sang
ill-willie lullabies.
And in the herts
o young and auld
something grew hard
and very cauld.
Bairns grew crabbit and spylt. They spat, and made a coup o their habitat. Coorsely they threw things up ower the wa, kennis naethin aboot wha bade there at aw.
They trauched in the shadder
o the wa they’d made.
It cast a gruesome,
doolsome shade.
And the soond o girnin,
spite and pain
wis the ainly music
they cried their ain.
Then the Haggis came ridin
across the land,
stridin the hills,
a wan-man band,
wi pipes and drum,
a fiddle tae,
and jooglin fire-
a braw display!
(Did onybody ken him?
Naebody, nay!)
He pitched his tent
on tap o the wa,
and his sangs sailed doon
on yin and aw.
They shut the windaes!
They slammed the doors!
Aw ye could hear
were the faithers' roars:
"Dinnae gang oot!
A scunner's in toon!
Some maukit, mingin,
ootland loon!"
"It’s a trick o the neeps!"
the tatties cried,
"Get the bairns
and stey inside!"
The neeps cawed oot,
"It’s a tattie plot!
Tak up your claymore!
Grab your slingshot!"
But the sonsie Haggis jist sat and played, and the sun gaed doon and he never strayed. The neeps and the tatties they sneevilled and shook and didna daur tae tak a look.
But yin wee tattie
that couldna sleep
got up in the nicht –
and sae did yin neep.
The sang o the Haggis,
sae tender and sweet,
drew them oot o their beds
and ontae the street.
Yin wee younklin
each side o the wa,
baith mither’s wee pouties,
lithesome and sma,
crept through the mirk
without a word,
lured by a soond
they’d never heard.
Each stood ablow
and stared above.
The Haggis sent doon
his sangs o' love.
Then he took a lang raip
and cast it wide
sae yin end landit
on ilka side.
The neep and the tattie
took haud o the line.
No wice tae each ither
they stertit tae climb.
The upstaunin Haggis
jist joogled and sang.
He finished three verses!
The wey up wis lang!
Noo imagine whit happened:
the weans reached the summit,
c caught sicht o each ither
and stertit tae plummet.
"Dinnae lowse!" cried the Haggis.
"Haud ticht or ye'll faw!
Ye depend on each ither
tae conquer this wa!"

Sae they held, but they grummled,
they grinned and they craik
while the auld Haggis laughed
'til his squishy sides ached.
"Up here we can play,
we can sing, we can dance,
but ainly if ye
gie each ither a chance."
They were danglin' richt up at the tippety-tap, gettin ready tae spit, but decided tae stap. The Haggis said, "Look, Ye'll drap doon if ye falter. Gravity's somethin' that nae wan can alter!"
"Thegither ye'll manage,
jist sing as ye treid.
Noo smile at each ither -
Dinnae lose yer wee heid!"
Then the neep and the tattie,
they ettled tae staund
by giein each ither
a shy helpin haund.
Then they felt that geegly and grateful and free, they clapped and they laughed and the Haggis made three. They sat doon thegither in dumfooneded delicht and sang and teltt stories aw through the bricht nicht.
Sae by mornin' the soonds
comin doon tae the street
were that blithe and joyfu'
they made tatties greet.
The neeps tae were bubblin,
aw herts were burst open –
jist whit the Haggis
had ayewis been hopin'!
Ye ken then whit happened?
They aw speeled up!
And drank fae the Haggis's
braw lovin cup.
They danced and sang,
and jined every game:
no a neep nor a tattie
steyed ginnin at hame.
A new toon grew up
on the tap o the wa
and famed wis its welcome
tae yin and tae aw.
Joy hackum-plackum
tae share and tae keep,
be ye muckle great Haggis
or tattie or neep.

Happy thegither
(and tasty) thae three.
And is that no the wey
that we’re aw meant tae be?
Oor roots aw drink
fae the same guid groond!
On aw oor heids
wan sun shines doon!
Sae here's the hail gist
oor glib-gabbit sang:
aw guid vegetables
should get alang!
Noo be a guid tattie!
Or be a guid neep!
Sloosh aboot in the gravy,
then hae a guid sleep!
the end!
A
ablow - below
abooin - above
ain - own
ainly - only
argle-bargrous - quarrelsome
ayewis - always

B
bade - lived
bairns - children
baldie - bald
blithe - glad
bonnie - beautiful
braw - splendid
bricht - bright
broon - brown
bubblin - weeping

C
cantie - cheerful
coorsely - wickedly, naughtily
cooryin in - cuddling in
couldna - couldn't
couthie - friendly
cowp - rubbish dump
crabit - angry, bad-tempered
craik - groused

D
daar - dare
delicht - delight
dinnae gang oot - don't go out
dinnae hing - don't hang around
dinnae louse! - don't let go!
doolsome - melancholy, sad
dreich - dreary
dumfoonered - bewildered

E
fae - from
fae - befalls, is
fau - fall
feartie brees! - scaredy cat!
fou - full
freends - friends

F
ettled - managed

G
geegly - giggly
giein - giving
girned - complained
girnin - complaining, grumbling
glib-gabbit - silly, nonsensical
gratefu - grateful
greet - cry
grummed - grumbled

H
hackum-plackum - equal in every way, totally fair
hail - whole
hert - heart
hie - high
hoo - how

I
ilka - either, each
ill-willie - mean

J
jined - joined
jooglin - juggling
joyfu - joyful

K
kelies - rascals, rogues
ken - know
kennin naethin - knowing nothing
Nobody even remembers why or when the trouble started, but the poor Neeps and Tatties are stuck in a miserable, age-old animosity. Things only get worse and worse – until the wise old Haggis comes to town, singing his songs of healing.

Neeps and Tatties is a fun and heart-warming tale of how our courage and innocence can lead us beyond enmity and into the delights of togetherness.

(written in rhyming Scots – but fear not! - a glossary is included)