

The Ballad of Angharad's Baby Shoes

I shall tell of Owain Garrad
And his tragic wife Angharad
And the story of the fateful baby shoes.
Let me start at the beginning
When our Owain first was winning
Young Angharad's heart and banished all her blues.

As a child she'd known but sadness
In an orph'nage where no gladness
Ever found its place nor any love was shown;
For Angharad had no mother
And no pa nor any other
Who would take her in and treat her as their own.

But young Owain thought her pretty
And his heart was filled with pity
For this wistful waif who'd lived so sad a life;
And 'twas soon his heart was burning
With true love and he was yearning
For to marry her and take her home as wife.

Then Angharad was elated
With such joy as she awaited
Till the parson joined them twain with sacred rite;
When together they had plighted
That for evermore united
They would love each other truly, come what might.

And they both did live contented
As the passing years cemented
The abiding love each felt within each heart;
For true happiness did bind them
And a mutual love entwined them
And they vowed that naught could ever make them part.

But, alas, there was a sadness
Lying dormant 'neath their gladness
For no children did Angharad ever bear;
But good Owain told her sweetly
That he loved her so completely;
There was none on earth that could with her compare.

Yet this sadness gnawed within her
And it caused there to begin her
Slow decline towards confusion in her mind.
And poor Owain watched with sadness
As she drifted into madness,
Yet his love persisted true and unconfined.

And he oft recalled with pleasure
That in her he'd found a treasure
As to scenes of bygone days his thoughts returned.
But he knew that changed for ever
Was their life and therefore never
Would such scenes recur, however much he yearned.

So our Owain tended duly
His Angharad whom he truly
Would for ever love and hold within his heart.
For no matter what awaited,
Always firm and unabated
Was his will that nothing keep them both apart.

Then one dáy Angharad called him;
But the news noway enthralled him
When she said: "My dear, rejoice, for I'm with child."
For he knew this never could be
Nor at sixty ever should be;
Yet he humoured her with gentle words so mild.

Poor Angharad 'gan collecting
For the babe she was expecting
From the many baby things she did peruse.
And the thing she loved most dearly
And did cherish most sincerely
Was a brand-new pair of light-blue baby shoes.

With those shoes she was delighted
And to Owain said excited:
"Do you like the shoes I've bought our little boy?
"Aren't they just the bootees for him?
"And I know we shall adore him;
"For our Illtyd shall most surely bring us joy."

But our Owain stood there pensive
And became more apprehensive
As he worried just what outcome might ensue.
For he knew there was no baby –
Couldn't be, no chance, not maybe –
Even though she'd named the date when it was due.

In the months and weeks that followed
Our Angharad fairly wallowed
In the things she'd gathered for young Illtyd's birth.
But the shoes it was that daily
She caressed while giggling gaily
And behaving like a schoolgirl full of mirth.

On the day she'd nominated
For the birth so long awaited
Still a-bed she said her travail had begun.
Then she laboured and she panted,
And she cried aloud and ranted
Till a sudden shout proclaimed: "Behold, our son!"

"Such a bonny, little beauty,
"And the sweetest little cuty,"
So she said, and smiled and laughed and gave a sigh.
"Like an angel he is shining,
"And a farewell he is signing,
"For our Illtyd goes to glory in the sky."

But no babe did Owain see there,
And he knew no child could be there;
On a course of action he began to muse,
When Angharad said "I say now,
"Look our Illtyd's gone away now
"Without waiting for his brand-new pair of shoes."

"Oh my Owain, I must leave you,
"And let not my parting grieve you
"As I go to little Illtyd up above;
"Of my babe I'm growing fonder,
"So I'll take the shoes up yonder,
"And I thank you for the many years of love."

She remained in bed a-lying
And 'twas clear that she was dying
And within the week she'd given up the ghost.
And poor Owain, broken hearted,
Did bewail his wife departed,
For 'twas her, 'twas her, he'd always loved the most.

How those dratted shoes he hated!
In his grief he then debated
If to burn the wretched things, or what to do.
Of such thoughts he then repented -
From such pettiness relented;
He would offer them for sale, for they were new.

Now poor Owain on his ownsome
Lives a life that's very lonesome
As he sits beside his fireside all forlorn.
Of his sorrow it was hinted
In the newspaper which printed:
"To be sold: new baby shoes; they've not been worn."

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