

Fire Ball by Debbie Hulston Theme: A Tall Tale May 2024

When I was a young girl my Nana, Gwen told me a story. It was one evening in London in 1936 and Gwen was walking home after work with her friend Joan. A thick fog had rolled in making it hard to see where they were going. As they walked down Pritchard Street where they both lived a fire ball suddenly appeared in front of them. It was about the size of a soccer ball with hot orange flames flickering from it. It lit up the footpath a head of them like a lantern. Gwen and Joan didn't think it was Saint Elmos fire as it wasn't attached to anything like a street light. There was no sign of thunder and lightning so it wasn't a fire ball caused by the weather. The fire ball started to make a loud moaning noise. Gwen and Joan ran towards their homes. Joan turned into her house first but the moaning fire ball stayed hovering over Gwen. With her heart racing Gwen ran to her house slamming and locking the door behind her. Breathing heavily she peered out of the window to see the fire ball hovered above the street lamp.

The babysitter who was looking after Gwen's children handed her a telegram. It was from her sister Mair. It read.

"Urgent. Come home. Mother Burnt. Dyeing"

Gwen was very close to her mother who was a great support to her through her divorce. She felt an overpowering need to see her mother before she died. She started organising her trip to her family home in Merionethshire in Wales. A kind neighbour offered to look after her children whilst she was away. With a small travel bag, Gwen walked back through the fog to the bus stop. The fire ball followed her moaning loudly like someone in pain. Was it a sign from her mother she thought? She caught the bus to Victoria Train station. Gwen thought she would miss the train to Wales because of the thick fog but the fire ball hovered above the bus and the fog cleared all the way to the train station.

"You are lucky there is only one ticket left on the overnight train to Cardiff." said the ticket agent and handed Gwen her ticket. She tried to sleep on the train but her mother's face kept appearing every time she closed her eyes. She remembered all the happy times she had with her mum. Outside the train window the fire ball glowed, with a fiery tail flashing behind it as it swerved and twisted above the trees and buildings in the pitch black night. Her mother had told her she had come from a long line of healers who had the ability to foresee the future. A few of her distant relative had been burnt to death as witches. When the train arrived in the early morning at Cardiff station, Gwen managed to just catch the bus to Merionethshire. The fire ball stayed with her but at a distance as it rolled high in and out of sight in the thick clouds that surrounded of the mountains of Wales.

A few hours later Gwen finally reached her mother's house. Her sister Mair and brother Gwilym explained what had happened to their mother. She had been standing near the open fire place in the parlour when her long skirt had caught on fire. A man walking past her house saw her on fire through her parlour window. He broke down the locked front door and rolled her in a carpet to smother out the flames. He saved her but she was badly burnt. The doctor said she was too badly burnt and would die very soon. It was a miracle she was still alive. She had been calling out for Gwen. Gwen went to her mother's bed side. She was heavily bandaged and a morphine drip came

off her arm. A smell of burnt flesh and infection filled the room. Her mother was breathing heavily but she opened her eyes on hearing Gwen's voice.

"The fire ball found you. Its blood runs in your veins and your kin too. Treasure it" she whispered. Then holding Gwen's hand she passed away. A bright yellow light shone through the bedroom window from the fire ball. It flickered and danced outside then faded away. Gwen learnt how to summon a fire ball and passed that magic spell " Magnus Ascedere" onto the following generations.