

Address to the Deil

By Robert Burns

O Thou! whatever title suit thee—
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie—
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges¹ about the brunstane cootie²,
To scaud³ poor wretches!

Hear me, Auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damnèd bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
Ev'n to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me
An' hear us squeel.

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame;
Far kend an' noted is thy name;
An' tho' you lowin heugh's⁴ thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An' faith! Thou's neither lag⁵, nor lame,
Nor blate, nor scaur⁶.

Whyles, ranging like a roarin lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin⁷ the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my rev'rend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or, where auld ruin'd castles grey
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
Wi' eldritch croon.

¹ Scatters.

² Brimstone dish.

³ Scald.

⁴ Blazing pit.

⁵ Laggard.

⁶ Scared.

⁷ Unroofing.

When twilight did my grannie summon
To say her pray'rs, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
 Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin, thro' the boortrees⁸ comin,
 Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentim⁹ light,
Wi' you mysel, I gat a fright:
 Ayont the lough,
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight,
 Wi' waving sugh.

The cudgel in my nieve¹⁰ did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake;
When wi' an eldritch, stoor¹¹ 'quaick, quaick,'
 Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
 On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags,
 Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirkyards renew their leagues,
 Owre howkit¹² dead.

Thence, countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirm¹³ in vain;
For O! the yellow treasure's taen
 By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's¹⁴ gaen
 As yell's the bill¹⁵.

Thence, mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,

⁸ Elder trees.

⁹ Slanting.

¹⁰ Fist.

¹¹ Hoarse.

¹² Disinterred.

¹³ Churn.

¹⁴ Petted 12-pint cow.

¹⁵ Dry as the bull.

By cantraip¹⁶ wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord¹⁷,
An' float the jinglin, icy boord,
Then, water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction,
An' knighted trav'lers are allur'd
To their destruction.

And aft your moss-traversing spunkies
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkies
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When Masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell.

Lang syne in Eden's bonnie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry swaird,
In shady bow'r:

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawin'¹⁸ dog!
Ye cam to Paradise incog,
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue¹⁹
(Black be your fa'!),
An' gied the infant warld a shog²⁰,
'Maist ruin'd a'.

D' ye mind that day when in a bizz²¹

¹⁶ Witch-like.

¹⁷ Covering.

¹⁸ Crafty.

¹⁹ Trick.

²⁰ Shake.

²¹ Bustle.

Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz²²,
Ye did present your smoutie phiz
 'Mang better folk,
An' sklented²³ on the man of Uzz
 Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hal',
While scabs an' botches did him gall,
 Wi' bitter claw;
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd wicked scaul²⁴—
 Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,
Sin' that day Michael did you pierce
 Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan²⁵ tongue, or Erse,
 In prose or rhyme.

An' now, Auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin,
A certain Bardie's rantin, drinkin,
Some luckless hour will send him linkin²⁶,
 To your black Pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin,
 An' cheat you yet.

But fare-you-weel, Auld Nickie-Ben!
O, wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins²⁷ might—I dinna ken—
 Still hae a stake:
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
 Ev'n for your sake!

²² Smoke-stained clothes.

²³ Squinted.

²⁴ Scold.

²⁵ Lowland.

²⁶ Speeding.

²⁷ Perhaps.