



The Irish Cinderlad (Trophy Picture Books (Paperback))

By Shirley Climo

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“A robust story of courage and danger” (Booklist). “A must for collectors of Cinderella variants” (Kirkus Reviews).

Folklorist Shirley Climo retells an age-old Irish tale that's an unusual twist on the popular Cinderella fairy tale. As Creativiteach.com says: "What would have happened if Cinderella were a man? How might the story be different? An old Irish folk tale provides one answer. Just in time for St. Patrick's Day."

Ever since he was a baby, Becan's only worry has been his big feet—until his widowed father remarries. His new stepmother and her three daughters feed him crusts of bread and banish him to work in the fields. So Becan runs away.

With the help of his only friend, a magical bull, he defeats a giant, slays a dragon, and rescues a princess. But before she can thank him, Becan disappears, leaving behind him one of his enormous boots. The princess scours the kingdom for the owner of the giant boot. Will Becan's feet give him away? And what will his fate be if they do?

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 2?A pleasant but rather bland condensation of a traditional tale. One of the sources cited, Sara Cone Bryant's "Billy Beg and His Bull" from *Best Stories to Tell to Children* (Houghton, 1912; o.p.), is much like Seumas MacManus's wonderful retelling in *In Chimney Corners* (Doubleday & McClure, 1899; o.p.), in which Billy and the Bull are lifelong companions. The old versions have wonderful runs of poetic language and lots of action, a fair amount of which is violent. As well as gentling the story, Climo seems to want to democratize it. The hero is not a king's son but the son of a traveling peddler. He is described as being small in stature with inordinately large feet and the reteller makes much of the fact that he is ridiculed for his appearance. She even names him Becan, or "Little One." There is no magic stick that turns into a sword and gives the lad wondrous strength, and no belt from the bull's hide to make him invincible. Instead, the bull tells Becan to take his tail after he is dead because it will protect him. In fact, the tail kills a giant and the dragon almost on its own accord when the boy unleashes it. The tidy, full- and double-page illustrations are done in pastel colors and look like opaque watercolors. The people's faces are round and simple. It's fine for young picture-book readers and squeamish parents. However, Ellin Greene's retelling, *Billy Beg and His Bull* (Holiday, 1994), is much closer to the early versions, with its spirited text and earthy and humorous illustrations by Kimberly Bulcken Root. *?Marilyn Iarusso, New York Public Library*

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 5^8. Becan, an Irish lad ridiculed for his huge feet, befriends a bull with magic powers who feeds him and bequeaths him his tail as a belt. With the belt, Becan vanquishes a giant, taking his sword and boots. With the giant's sword, Becan slays the dreaded Serpent, saving Princess Finola and losing a boot in his departure. According to the appended note, this "Cinderella" variant is based primarily on Douglas Hyde's "The Bracket Bull" and Sara Cone Bryant's "Billy Beg and His Bull." The retelling is satisfactory but lacks enough cultural detail to give it a distinctive Irish flavor. The illustrations are overly pretty and romanticized. When the text specifies a "blue-green sea," the picture shows a pinkish purple ocean. In a robust story of courage and danger, the dainty illustrations seem incongruous. This will be useful primarily in libraries where Climo's earlier titles, *The Egyptian Cinderella* (1989) and *The Korean Cinderella* (1993), are popular. *Linda Perkins*

From Kirkus Reviews

To her series of retellings (*The Egyptian Cinderella*, 1989; *The Korean Cinderella*, 1993) Climo adds this Irish version featuring a large-footed male character sometimes called Billy Beg and here named Becan. The magical being that aids the cinderlad is a speckled bull that, like the fish in the Chinese variant, Yeh- Shen, dies, leaving Becan with its tail as a weapon of extraordinary power. Becan wins the heart of Princess Finola by rescuing her from a sea serpent in a scene reminiscent of the story of Perseus and Andromeda; the princess traces him by means of his giant-sized boot; they live happily ever after. The sturdy, forthright telling is accompanied by pretty, predominantly blue, green, and purple paintings that show simply drawn human figures surrounded by highly detailed animals and landscape. Thousands of brush strokes render flower-spangled turf, the downy feathers of geese and seabirds, and the shaggy hides of cattle, horses, and donkeys. With an author's note on sources, this is a good addition to folklore collections and a must for collectors of Cinderella variants. (Picture book/folklore. 5-10) -- *Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP.*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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