

The following extract is the opening of a one-act play *Campbell of Kilmohr* by J.A. Ferguson. It is set in a poor cottage in eighteenth century Scotland, where the women are waiting for the older one's son who is a rebel on the run.

MORAG is restlessly moving backwards and forwards. The old woman is seated on a low stool beside the peat¹ fire in the centre of the floor.

The room is scantily furnished and the women are poorly clad. MORAG is barefooted. At the back is the door that leads to the outside. On the left of the door is a small window. On the right
5 *side of the room there is a door that opens into a barn. MORAG stands for a moment at the window, looking out.*

MORAG: It is the wild night outside.

MARY STEWART: Is the snow still coming down?

10 MORAG: It is that then – dancing and swirling with the wind too, and never stopping at all. Aye, and so black I cannot see the other side of the road.

MARY STEWART: That is good.

MORAG moves across the floor and stops irresolutely. She is restless, expectant.

MORAG: Will I be putting the light in the window?

15 MARY STEWART: Why should you be doing that! You have not heard his call (*turns eagerly*), have you?

MORAG (*with sign of head*): No, but the light in the window would show him all is well.

MARY STEWART: It would not then! The light was to be put there *after* we had heard the signal.

MORAG: But on a night like this he may have been calling for long, and we never heard him.

20 MARY STEWART: Do not be so anxious, Morag. Keep to what he says. Put more peat on the fire now and sit down.

MORAG (*with increasing excitement*): I canna², I canna! There is that in me that tells me something is going to befall us this night. Oh, that wind, hear to it, sobbing round the house as if it brought some poor lost soul up to the door, and we refusing it shelter.

25 MARY STEWART: Do not be fretting yourself like that. Do as I bid you. Put more peats on the fire.

MORAG (*at the wicker peat-basket*): Never since I... What was that? (*Both listen for a moment.*)

MARY STEWART: It was just the wind; it is rising more. A sore night for them that are out in the heather.

MORAG puts peat on the fire

¹ peat: turf used as fuel

² canna: cannot (Scottish dialect)

- In what ways does the relationship between the two women help to create the mood of this opening to the play?
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