

## To a Mouse

by Robert Burns

modern English translation by Michael R. Burch

Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

Sleek, tiny, timorous, cowering beast,  
why's such panic in your breast?  
Why dash away, so quick, so rash,  
in a frenzied flash  
when I would be loath to run after you  
with a murderous plowstaff!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle,  
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion  
has broken Nature's social union,  
and justifies that bad opinion  
which makes you startle,  
when I'm your poor, earth-born companion  
and fellow mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen-icker in a thrave  
'S a sma' request:  
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,  
An' never miss't!

I have no doubt you sometimes thieve;  
What of it, friend? You too must live!  
A random corn-ear in a shock's  
a small behest; it-  
'll give me a blessing to know such a loss;  
I'll never miss it!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!  
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,  
Baith snell an' keen!

Your tiny house lies in a ruin,  
its fragile walls wind-rent and strewn!  
Now nothing's left to construct you a new one  
of mosses green  
since bleak December's winds, ensuing,  
blow fast and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,  
An' weary Winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
Thou thought to dwell,  
Till crash! the cruel coulter past  
Out thro' thy cell.

You saw your fields laid bare and waste  
with weary winter closing fast,  
and cozy here, beneath the blast,  
you thought to dwell,  
till crash! the cruel iron ploughshare passed  
straight through your cell!

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,  
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,  
But house or hald.  
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld!

That flimsy heap of leaves and stubble  
had cost you many a weary nibble!  
Now you're turned out, for all your trouble,  
less house and hold,  
to endure cold winter's icy dribble  
and hoarfrosts cold!

But Mousie, thou are no thy-lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,  
Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,  
For promis'd joy!

But mouse-friend, you are not alone  
in proving foresight may be vain:  
the best-laid schemes of Mice and Men  
go oft awry,  
and leave us only grief and pain,  
for promised joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess an' fear!

Still, friend, you're blessed compared with me!  
Only *present* dangers make *you* flee:  
But, ouch!, behind me I can see  
grim prospects drear!  
While forward-looking seers, we  
humans guess and fear!

