

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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West Country Damsel's Complaint

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`WHEN will your marry me, William,
And make me your wedded wife?
Or take you your keen bright sword
And rid me out of my life.'

`Say no more so then, lady,
Say you no more then so,
For you shall into the wild forrest,
And amongst the buck and doe.

`Where thou shalt eat of the hips and haws,
And the roots that are so sweet,
And thou shalt drink of the cold water,
That runs underneath thy feet.'

Now she had not been in the wild forrest
Passing three months and a day
But with hunger and cold she had her fill,
Till she was quite worn away.

At last she saw a fair tyl'd-house,
And there she swore by the rood
That she would to that fair tyl'd-house,
There for to get her some food.

But when she came unto the gates,
Aloud, aloud she cry'd,
An alms, an alms, my own sister!
I ask you for no pride.

Her sister calld up her merry men all,
By one, by two, and by three,
And bid them hunt away that wild doe,
As far as ere they could see.

They hunted her ore hill and dale,
And they hunted her so sore
That they hunted her into the forrest,
Where her sorrows grew more and more.

She laid a stone all at her head,
And another all at her feet,

And down she lay between these two,
Till death had lulld her asleep.

When sweet Will came and stood at her head,
And likewise stood at her feet,
A thousand times he kist her cold lips,
Her body being fast asleep.

Yea, seaven times he stood at her feet,
And seaven times at her head,
A thousand times he shook her hand,
Although her body was dead.

`Ah wretched me!' he loudly cry'd,
`What is it that I have done?
O woud to the powers above I'de dy'd,
When thus I left her alone!

`Come, come, you gentle red-breast now,
And prepare for us a tomb,
Whilst unto cruel Death I bow,
And sing like a swan my doom.

`Why could I ever cruel be
Unto so fair a creature?
Alas! she dy'd for love of me,
The loveliest she in nature!

`For me she left her home so fair
To wander in this wild grove,
And there with sighs and pensive care
She ended her life for love.

`O constancy, in her thou'rt lost!
Now let women boast no more;
She's fled unto the Elizium coast,
And with her carryd the store.

`O break, my heart, with sorrow filld,
Come, swell, you strong tides of grief!
You that my dear love have killd,
Come, yield in death to me relief.

`Cruel her sister, was't for me
That to her she was unkind?
Her husband I will never be,
But with this my love be joynd.

`Grim Death shall tye the marriage-bands,

Which jealousie shan't divide;
Together shall tye our cold hands,
Whilst here we lye side by side.

`Witness, ye groves, and chrystial streams,
How faithless I late have been,
But do repent with dying leaves
Of that my ungrateful sin;

`And wish a thousand times that I
Had been but to her more kind,
And not have let a virgin dye
Whose equal there's none can find.

`Now heaps of sorrow press my soul;
Now, now 'tis she takes her way;
I come, my love, without controule,
Nor from thee will longer stay.'

With that he fetchd a heavy groar
Which rent his tender breast,
And then by her he laid him down,
When as death did give him rest.

Whilst mournful birds, with leavy boughs,
To them a kind burial gave,
And warbled out their love-sick vows,
Whilst they both slept in their grave.

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