

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Margery Grey a Legend of Vermont

Margery Grey a Legend of Vermont
(Julia C. Dorr)

Fair the cabin walls were gleaming
In the sunlight's golden glow,
On that lovely April morning,
Near one hundred years ago,
When upon that humble threshold
Stood the young wife, Margery Grey,
With her fearless blue eyes glancing
Down the lonely forest way.

In her arms a laughing baby
With its father's dark hair played,
As he lingered there beside them,
Leaning on his trusty spade,
"I am going to the wheat lot,"
With a smile said Robert Grey,
"Will you be too lonely Margery,
If I leave you all the day?"

Then she smiled a cheerful answer
And the tone of her replying
Was as sweet as any bird:
"No," she said, "I'll take the baby
And go stay with Anna Brown,
You must meet us there dear Robert,
Ere the sun has quite gone down."

Thus they parted, strong and steady
All the day he labored on,
Digging up the fertile acres,
From the stubborn forest won.
Till at length the shadows told him
That the sun was in the west,
On his homeward way he started
Murmuring, "Now for home and rest."

But when he reached the clearing
Of his friend a mile away,
Neither wife nor child was waiting there
To welcome Robert Grey.
"She is safe at home," said Anna
"For she left an hour ago."

"It is strange I did not meet her,"
Came the answer swift and low.

Back he sped, but night was falling,
And the way he scarce could see;
Here and there his feet were guided
Onward by some deep-gashed tree.
But when he reached the cabin
Dark and desolate it stood,
Cold the hearth, the windows rayless,
In the stillest solitude.

With a murmured prayer, a shudder
And a cry of anguish wild,
Thru the forest he went running,
Calling for his wife and child.
Soon the scattered settlers gathered
From the clearings far and near,
And the lonely woods resounded
With their voices rising clear.

Torches flared, and fires were kindled
And the horn's long peal rang out,
But only echoes answered
To the hardy woodman's shout.
All in vain their sad endeavor,
Night by night and day by day,
For no sign or token found they
Of the child or Margery Grey,

Woe! Woe! for pretty Margery!
With the baby on her arm,
On her homeward way she started,
Thinking nothing that could harm.
With a lip and brow untroubled,
With a heart at utter rest,
Through the forest she went singing
To the baby on her breast.

But in sudden terror, pausing,
Gazed she round in blank dismay.
Where were all the white scarred hemlocks
Pointing out the lonely way?
God of mercies! She had wandered
From the pathway. Not a tree
Giving mute but friendly warning
Could her straining vision see.

Twilight deepened into darkness,

And the stars came out on high.
All was silent in the forest
Save the owls low brooding cry.
Round about her at the midnight,
Stealthy shadows softly crept,
And the babe upon her bosom
Closed its tired eyes and slept.

Then a shout! And in the distance
She could see a torch's gleam.
But alas! She could not reach it,
And it vanished like a dream.
Another shout and then another,
But she shrieked and sobbed in vain,
Rushing wildly towards the presence
She could never, never gain.

Oh, the days so long and dreary!
Oh, the nights more dreary still!
More than once she heard the sounding
Of the horn upon the hill.
More than once a smoldering fire
In some sheltered nook she found,
And she knew her husband's footprints
Close beside it on the ground.

Dawned the fourth relentless morning,
And the sun's unpitying eye
Looked upon the haggard mother,
Looked to see the baby die.
All night long its plaintive moaning
Wrung the heart of Margery Grey.
All day long her bosom cradled
A pallid thing of clay.

Three days more she bore it with her,
On her weary toilsome way,
Till she knew that she must leave it
In the forest for to stay.
Till she knew that she must leave it
In the forest for to sleep,
Where the prowling wild beasts only
Watch above its grave could keep.

Down she sat beside that grave
For how long she never knew!
With the prayers her mother taught her,
To the Dear All Father True;
Till the skies turned brass above her,

Till all the earth seemed dim,
And all her prayers and pleadings
Brought no answer down from Him.

Till at length the stern life tyrant
Bade her take her burden up.
To her lips, so pale and shrunken,
Press again the bitter cup.
Up she rose, still tramping onward
Through the forest far and wide,
Till the May flowers bloomed and perished,
And the sweet June roses died.

Till July and August brought her
Fruit and berries from their store;
Till goldenrod and aster
Told her summer was no more;
Till the maples and the birches
Donned their robes of red and gold;
Till the birds were flying southward
And the days were growing cold.

One chill morning in October
When the trees were brown and bare,
Through the streets of ancient Charlestown,
With a strange bewildered air,
Walked a gaunt and pallid woman,
Whose disheveled locks of brown
O'er her naked breast and shoulders
In the wind were streaming down.

Wondering glances fell upon her,
Women veiled their modest eyes
As they slowly ventured near her,
Drawn by pitying surprise.
"Tis some crazy one," they whispered.
Back her tangled locks she tossed
"O kind souls, take pity on me,
For I am not mad but lost."

Then she told her piteous story
In a strange disjointed way,
And with cold, white lips she murmured
"Take me home to Robert Gray."
"But the river," said they, pondering,
"We are on the other side.
How crossed you the rapid water?
Deep the torrent is, and wide!"

But she said she had not crossed it
In her strange erratic course.
She had wandered to the northward,
Till she reached its fountain source
In the dark Canadian forest,
And then blindly tramping on
Thru the steep New Hampshire valleys
Her bewildered feet had gone.

Oh, the joy bells, sweet their ringing
On the frosty autumn air!
Oh, the boats across the waters,
How they leaped the tale to bear!
Oh, the wondrous golden sunset
On the blest October day,
When the weary wife was folded
To the heart of Robert Gray.

Margery Grey A Legend of Vermont by Julia C. Dorr Tune: traditional
As sung by me, Margaret MacArthur, on cs Vermont Ballads and Broad­sides, 1989.
Am now working on cover to have it burnt into a Cd as last pressing of cs is
nearly gone.
Full booklet comes with either cs or potential CD.

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