

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Seven Virgins (The Leaves of Life)

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All under the leaves and the leaves of life I met with virgins seven
And one of them was Mary mild, our Lord's best mother in heaven.

"Oh what are you seeking, you seven pretty maids, all under the leaves of life?"
- "We are seeking for no leaves, Thomas, but for a friend of thine."

- "Go down, go down into yonder town and sit in the gallery
And there you'll see sweet Jesus Christ, nailed to a big yew tree."

So down they went into yonder town as fast as foot could follow
And many a bitter and a grievous tear from them virgins' eyes did fall.

"Oh peace mother, oh peace mother, your weeping does me grieve,
But I will suffer this", he said, "for Adam and for Eve."

- "Oh how can I my weeping leave, my sorrows undergo,
While I do see my own son die and sons I have no more."

He's laid his head on his right shoulder and death ha' struck him nigh,
"The holy ghost be with your soul, sweet mother now I die."

Oh the rose, the gentle rose, the fennel it grows so strong
Amen, good lord, your charity is the ending of my song.

recorded by Norma Waterson on the Watsons' "Frost And Fire" (1965)

"This spring-time carol tells a story based on the Apocryphal Gospels, concerning a trip made by Mary to see her son at Calvary, in the company of seven virgins. The opening recalls the handsome illuminations in the Arundel Psalter, showing the sombre tree of death with its dismal birds, and the dazzling tree of life with iridescent leaves. The parallel between the death and resurrection of Christ and the ritual slaying and renewal of the divine kings of pagan belief (echoed in the mumming plays) needs no stressing." - A.L. Lloyd