

WILLIE OF WINSBURY (Child Ballad #100)

The king has been a prisoner
And a prisoner long in Spain
And Willie of the Winsbury
Has lain long with his daughter Jane

“What ails you, what ails you, my daughter Jane?
Why you look so pale and wan?
Oh have you had any ill sickness?
Or yet been sleeping with a man?”

“I have not had any ill sickness
Nor yet been sleeping with a man
It is for you my father dear
For biding so long in Spain”

“Cast off, cast off your robe and gown
Stand naked on the stone
That I might know you by your shape
If you be a maiden or none”

And she's cast off her robe and gown
Stood naked on the stone
Her apron was tight and her waist was round
Her face was pale and wan

“And was it with a lord or a gentleman
Or a man of wealth and fame?
Or was it with one of my servingmen
While I was a prisoner in Spain?”

“No it wasn't with a lord or a gentleman
Or a man of wealth and fame
It was with Willie of Winsbury
I could bide no longer alone”

And the king has called his servingmen
By one, by two and by three
Saying, “Where is this Willie of Winsbury?
For hanged he shall be”

And when they came before the king
By one, by two and by three
Willie should have been the first of them
But the last of them was he

And Willie of the Winsbury
All dressed up in red silk
His hair hung like the strands of gold

His breast was white as milk

“No wonder, no wonder,” the King he said
“That my daughter’s love you did win
If I were a woman as I am a man
In my own bed you would have been”

“And will you marry my daughter Jane
By the faith of your right hand?
And I’ll make you the lord of my servingmen
I’ll make you the heir to my land”

“Oh yes, I’ll marry your daughter Jane
By the faith of my right hand
But I’ll not be the lord of any man
I’ll not be the heir to your land”

And he’s raised her up on a milk white steed
And himself on a dapple grey
He has made her the lady of as much land
As she can ride in a long summer’s day

WILLIE’S LADY (Child Ballad #6)

King Willie he sailed over the raging foam
He’s wooed a wife and he’s brought her home
He’s brought her home all against his mother’s will
His mother wrought her a wicked spell

And a wicked spell she’s laid on her
She’d be with child for long and many’s the year
But the child she would never bear

And in her bower she lies in pain
King Willie by her bedside he does stand
As down his cheeks salten tears do run

King Willie back to his mother he did run
And he’s gone there as a begging son
Says, “My true love has this fine noble steed
The likes of which you have never seen”

“And at every part of this horse’s mane
There’s hanging fifty silver bells and ten
Hanging fifty bells and ten”

“This goodly gift shall be your own
If back to my own true love you’ll turn again
So she might bear her baby son”

“Oh, of the child she’ll never lighter be
And of my curse she will ne’er be free
But she will die and she will turn to clay
And you will wed with another maid”

And sighing says this weary man
As back to his own true love he’s gone again
“I wish my life was at an end”

King Willie back to his mother he did run
And he’s gone there as a begging son
Says, “My true love has this fine golden girdle
Set with jewels all about the middle”

“And at every part of this girdle’s hem
There’s hanging fifty silver bells and ten
Hanging fifty bells and ten”

“This goodly gift shall be your own
If back to my own true love you’ll turn again
So she might bear her baby son”

“Oh, of the child she’ll never lighter be
And of my curse she will ne’er be free
But she will die and she will turn to clay
And you will wed with another maid”

And sighing says this weary man
As back to his own true love he’s gone again
“I wish my life was at an end”

Then up and spoke his noble queen
And she has told King Willie of a plan
How she might bear her baby son

Says, “You must go get you down to the marketplace
And you must buy a ball of wax
And you must shape it as a babe that is to nurse
And you must make two eyes of glass”

“Ask your mother to the christening day
And you must stand there close as you can be
So you might hear what she does say”

King Willie he’s gone down to the marketplace
And he has bought a ball of wax
And he has shaped it as a babe that is to nurse
And he has made two eyes of glass

He asked his mother to the christening day

And he has stood there close as he could be
So he might hear what she did say

And how she spat and how she swore
She spied the babe where no babe could be before
She spied the babe where none could be before

Says, "Who was it who undid the nine witch knots
Braided in amongst this lady's locks?
And who was it who the leather shoe untied
From the left foot of his wedded bride?"

"And who was it split the silken thread
The spider stretched all beneath this lady's bed?
The spider stretched all beneath her bed"

And it was Willie who undid the nine witch knots
Braided in amongst his lady's locks
And it was Willie who the leather shoe untied
From the left foot of his wedded bride

And it was Willie split the silken thread
The spider stretched all beneath his lady's bed
The spider stretched all beneath her bed

And she has born him a baby son
And great are the blessings that be them upon
And great are the blessings them upon

SIR PATRICK SPENS (Child Ballad #58)

The king sits in Dumfermline town
Drinking the blood red wine
Where can I get a good captain
To sail this ship of mine?

Then up and spoke a sailor boy
Sitting at the king's right knee
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best captain
That ever sailed to sea"

The king he wrote a broad letter
And he sealed it with his hand
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens
Walking out on the strand

“To Norroway, to Norroway
To Norway o’er the foam
With all my lords in finery
To bring my new bride home”

The first line that Sir Patrick read
He gave a weary sigh
The next line that Sir Patrick read
The salt tear blinds his eye

“Oh, who was it? Oh, who was it?
Who told the king of me
To set us out this time of year
To sail across the sea”

“But rest you well, my good men all
Our ship must sail the morn
With four and twenty noble lords
Dressed up in silk so fine”

“And four and twenty feather beds
To lay their heads upon
Away, away, we’ll all away
To bring the king’s bride home”

“I fear, I fear, my captain dear
I fear we’ll come to harm
Last night I saw the new moon clear
The old moon in her arm”

“Oh be it fair or be it foul
Or be it deadly storm
Or blow the wind where e’er it will
Our ship must sail the morn”

They hadn’t sailed a day, a day
A day but only one
When loud and boisterous blew the wind
And made the good ship moan

They hadn’t sailed a day, a day
A day but only three
When oh, the waves came o’er the sides
And rolled around their knees

They hadn’t sailed a league, a league
A league but only five
When the anchor broke and the sails were torn
And the ship began to rive

They hadn’t sailed a league, a league

A league but only nine
When oh, the waves came o'er the sides
Driving to their chins

“Who will climb the topmast high
While I take helm in hand?
Who will climb the topmast high
To see if there be dry land?”

“No shore, no shore, my captain dear
I haven't seen dry land
But I have seen a lady fair
With a comb and a glass in her hand”

“Come down, come down, you sailor boy
I think you tarry long
The salt sea's in at my coat neck
And out at my left arm”

“Come down, come down, you sailor boy
It's here that we must die
The ship is torn at every side
And now the sea comes in”

Loathe, loathe were those noble lords
To wet their high heeled shoes
But long before the day was o'er
Their hats they swam above

And many were the feather beds
That fluttered on the foam
And many were those noble lords
That never did come home

It's fifty miles from shore to shore
And fifty fathoms deep
And there lies good Sir Patrick Spens
The lords all at his feet

Long, long may his lady look
With a lantern in her hand
Before she sees her Patrick Spens
Come sailing home again

RIDDLES WISELY EXPOUNDED (Child Ballad #1)

There were three sisters in the north
Lay the bend to the bonny broom
And they lived in their mother's house

And you'll beguile a lady soon

There came a man one evening late
Lay the bend...
And he came knocking at the gate
And you'll beguile...

The eldest sister let him in
And locked the door with a silver pin
The second sister made his bed
And laid soft pillows 'neath his head

The youngest sister, fair and bright
She lay beside him all through the night

And in the morning, come the day
She said, "Young man, will you marry me?"

And he said, "Yes, I'll marry thee
If you can answer this to me"

"What is greener than the grass?
And what is smoother than the glass?"

"What is louder than a horn?
And what is sharper than a thorn?"

"What is deeper than the sea?
And what is longer than the way?"

"Envy's greener than the grass
Flattery's smoother than the glass"

"Rumor's louder than a horn
Slander's sharper than a thorn"

"Regret is deeper than the sea
But love is longer than the way"

The eldest sister rang the bell
She rang it from the highest hill

The second sister made the gown
She sewed it of the silk so fine

The youngest sister, true and wise
They've made of her a lovely bride

And now fair maids, I bid adieu
These parting words I'll leave with you

May you always constant prove
Unto the one that you do love

CLYDE WATERS (Child Ballad #216)

Willie stands in his stable door
And he's combing his coal black steed
And he's thinking of fair Margaret's love
And his heart began to bleed

“Mother, fetch my hat and coat
Help me tie them on
I'll away to fair Margaret's bower
Before the night comes on”

“Stay at home with me, dear Willie
Tonight there comes a storm
I'll lay the table handsomely
Your bed be soft and warm”

“Your tables, mother, and your beds
They cannot bring me rest
I'll away to fair Margaret's bower
Before the night is past”

“If you go to fair Margaret's bower
My curse will go with thee
In the deepest part of the Clyde Water
Drowned you shall be”

“The good steed that I ride upon
Cost me thrice thirty pounds
I'll put my trust in his swift feet
To take me safe and sound”

He's rode over the high high hill
And down the dewy glen
And the rushing in the Clyde Water
Would have feared five hundred men

“Roaring Clyde, you roar so loud
Your streams are wondrous strong
Make me a wreck as I come back
But spare me as I'm going”

When he came to fair Margaret's gate
He's called to her within
“Rise up, rise up, maid Margaret
Rise up and let me in”

“Who’s that stands at my garden gate
Calling maid Margaret’s name?”
“It’s only your first love, sweet William
This night come to your home”

“Open the door, Maid Margaret
Open and let me in
My boots are full of the Clyde Water
And I’m shivering to the skin”

“My stable is full of horses, Willie
My barns are full of hay
And my bowers are full of gentlemen
They’ll not remove till day”

“Fare thee well, maid Margaret
Fare thee well, adieu
A curse my mother laid on me
For coming this night to you”

He’s rode over the high high hill
Down the dewy glen
And the rushing in the Clyde Water
Took Willie’s hat from him

And he’s leaned him over his saddle bold
To fetch his hat again
And the rushing in the Clyde Water
Took Willie’s coat from him

And he’s leaned him over his saddle bold
To catch his coat by force
And the rushing in the Clyde Water
Took Willie from his horse

The very hour this young man sank
Down in the watery deep
Then up and rose maid Margaret
Out of her drowsy sleep

“Come here, come here, my mother dear
I’ve dreamed a dreary dream
I dreamed my lover was at our gate
And nobody let him in”

“Lie down, lie down, maid Margaret
Your lover’s come and gone
The sport you would have made with him
I’ve played it for my own”

Nimbly, nimbly rose she up
Down to the river's brim
But the louder that this lady called
The louder blew the wind

The very first step that Margaret took
She stepped up to her feet
And "Oh, and alas" this lady sighs
"Your water's wondrous deep"

And the very next step that she went in
She's waded to her knee
Says she, "I would wade farther in
If I my true lover could see"

And the very last step that she went in
She stepped up to her chin
In the deepest part of the Clyde Water
She found sweet William in

"You have had a cruel mother Willie
I have had another
And now we'll sleep in Clyde Water
Like sister and like brother"

GEORDIE (Child Ballad #209)

As I walked out over London bridge
On a misty morning early
I overheard a fair pretty maid
Crying for the life of her Geordie

"Saddle me a milk white steed
Bridle me a pony
I'll ride down to London town
And I'll beg for the life of my Geordie"

And when she came to the courthouse steps
The poor folks numbered many
A hundred crowns she passed around
Saying, "Pray for the life of my Geordie"

"He never stole a mule or a mare
He never murdered any
If he shot one of the king's wild deer
It was only to feed his family"

And then she strode through the marble hall

Before the judge and the jury
Down on her bended knee she falls
Crying for the life of her Geordie

“He never stole, he never slew
He never murdered any
He never injured any of you
Spare me the life of my Geordie”

The judge looked over his left shoulder
He says, “I’m sorry for thee
My pretty fair maid, you’ve come to late
He’s been condemned already”

“But six pretty babes I had by him
The seventh one lies in my body
And I would bear them all over again
If you give me the life of my Geordie”

“Your Geordie will hang in a silver chain
Such as we don’t hang many
And he’ll be laid in a coffin brave
For your six fine sons to carry”

“I wish I had you in a public square
The whole town gathered around me
With my broad sword and a pistol too
I’d fight you for the life of my Geordie”

TAMLIN (Child Ballad #39)

Janet sits in her lonely room
Sewing a silken seam
And looking out on Carterhaugh
Among the roses green

And Janet sits in her lonely bower
Sewing a silken thread
And longed to be in Carterhaugh
Among the roses red

She’s let the seam fall at her heel
The needle to her toe
And she has gone to Carterhaugh
As fast as she can go

She hadn’t pulled a rose, a rose
A rose, but only one
When then appeared him, young Tamlin

Says, "Lady, let alone"

"What makes you pull the rose, the rose?
What makes you break the tree?
What makes you come to Carterhaugh
Without the leave of me?"

"But Carterhaugh is not your own
Roses there are many
I'll come and go all as I please
And not ask leave of any"

And he has took her by the hand
Took her by the sleeve
And he has laid this lady down
Among the roses green

And he has took her by the arm
Took her by the hem
And he has laid this lady down
Among the roses red

There's four and twenty ladies fair
Sewing at the silk
And Janet goes among them all
Her face as pale as milk

And four and twenty gentlemen
Playing at the chess
And Janet goes among them all
As green as any glass

Then up and spoke her father
He's spoken meek and mild
"Oh, alas, my daughter
I fear you go with child"

"And is it to a man of might
Or to a man of means
Or who among my gentlemen
Shall give the babe his name?"

"Oh, father, if I go with child
This much to you I'll tell
There's none among your gentlemen
That I would treat so well"

"And, father, if I go with child
I must bear the blame
There's none among your gentlemen
Shall give the babe his name"

She's let the seam fall at her hell
The needle to her toe
And she has gone to Carterhaugh
As fast as she could go

And she is down among the weeds
Down among the thorn
When then appeared Tamlin again
Says, "Lady, pull no more"

"What makes you pull the poison rose?
What makes you break the tree?
What makes you harm the little babe
That I have got with thee?"

"Oh I will pull the rose, Tamlin
I will break the tree
But I'll not bear the little babe
That you have got with me"

"If he were to a gentleman
And not a wild shade
I'd rock him all the winter's night
And all the summer's day"

"Then take me back into your arms
If you my love would win
And hold me tight and fear me not
I'll be a gentleman"

"But first I'll change all in your arms
Into a wild wolf
But hold me tight and fear me not
I am your own true love"

"And then I'll change all in your arms
Into a wild bear
But hold me tight and fear me not
I am your husband dear"

"And then I'll change all in your arms
Into a lion bold
But hold me tight and fear me not
And you will love your child"

At first he changed all in her arms
Into a wild wolf
She held him tight and feared him not
He was her own true love

And then he changed all in her arms
Into a wild bear
She held him tight and feared him not
He was her husband dear

And then he changed all in her arms
Into a lion bold
She held him tight and feared him not
The father of her child

And then he changed all in her arms
Into a naked man
She's wrapped him in her coat so warm
And she has brought him home