

The Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer

2011

Part 1

As west I went this day on earth,
Nature's wonders to behold,
On a morning in the month of May,
A time when spirits are brave and bold.

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The sound of bird-song filled the glade;
The Mavis, Thrush, and Jay.

I paused to rest beneath a bower,
In quiet repose, there I lay.

I saw a lady, noble and fair
Astride a mount of dapple grey,
Come riding down from Eildon hill,
To Huntly Bank, she made her way.

If I should sit 'til eternity,
To describe her fine array,
Or illustrate that wondrous sight,
No pen or ink could ever portray.

Her stirrups were of crystal clear,
Her saddle carved from finest bone,

With diamonds and pearls from orient grand,
Inlaid with rubies, and precious stone.

Three silver bells hung either side
On a bridle of burnished gold,
Her girths were made from purest silk,
With buckles adorned with wealth untold.

Her eyes were of the clearest grey,
Her hair round her head did hang.
She had many an arrow under her belt,
Awhile she whistled, awhile she sang,

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She led three grey-hounds on a leash,
Seven blood-hounds ran by her side,
A horn was slung around her neck:
As ever closer she did ride.

As Thomas viewed this splendid sight,
These words were said by he;
“Yonder is Mary who bore the child
That suffered and died on a cross for me.”

Thomas thought his heart would break,
If he did not speak with that lady fair,
He ran like the wind to Eildon tree,
So the story goes; he met her there.

Underneath that green-wood spray,
Thomas knelt down low upon his knee,
Said, "Queen of heaven you surely are,
Today I fear you will rue on me."

She answered in a gentle tongue;
"That name does not belong to me,
Although I am from another world,
I never took such high degree."

"Oh give me leave to lie by you,
Fair lady, from afar.

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I pray thee Thomas let me be,
Or else, this day, you will me mar."

"Of this, you must be made aware,
If you must have your will,
And of my body you must take,
You will surely do me ill."

Down from her mount the lady came,
All underneath that Green-wood spray,
According to the age-old tale,
Seven times by her he lay.

She said, "Thomas you must like this play,
What bird in bough may deal with thee?
Thou marrest me this earthly day,

I pray thee Thomas, let me be.”

When Thomas beheld that lady fair,
As he stood up with fear and fright,
One leg was black, the other grey,
Thomas said, “This is indeed a dullful sight.”

“You have now fallen from my grace,
Your fine attire, no more you wear,
The sun has faded from your face,
And grey now hangs your golden hair.”

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On every side Thomas looked about,
But nowhere could he flee,
Her eyes were out that once were grey,
The devil himself, she must surely be.

Thomas knelt to the Lord in prayer,
His heart was filled with fear and fright,
He begged the lady to leave him be,
And go forever from his sight.

She said, “Thomas, there is no need,
For the devil I am not,
For now I am full of great disease,
Many ills, now have I got.”

“Take one last look at sun and moon,

And leaves of green that grow on tree,
For twelve months you must go with me,
And middle earth no more you'll see."

Thomas knelt down on his knee,
Saying, "Lady but you rue on me,
O Queen of heaven, or of hell,
Alas," he said, and "woe is me."

"My wicked deeds have cost me dear,
My soul I place in Jesus' care,
And in his hands I put my trust,
This cross, alone, I now must bear."

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She led him in at Eildon hill,
Beneath that hidden lee,
Where shone no moon, neither sun, nor star,
But raging rivers came to the knee.

For forty days and forty nights,
He heard the roaring of the sea.
And nearly faint for want of food,
"Alas," he said, and, "Woe is me."

She led him to an orchard fair,
Where damson, apples, figs and pear,
Ripely hung on every tree,
The sound of bird-song filled the air.