Barbara Allen

BY ANONYMOUS

In Scarlet town, where I was born,
   There was a fair maid dwellin',
Made every youth cry Well-a-way!
   Her name was Barbara Allen.

All in the merry month of May,
   When green buds they were swellin',
Young Jemmy Grove on his death-bed lay,
   For love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his man in to her then,
   To the town where she was dwellin';
"O haste and come to my master dear,
   If your name be Barbara Allen."

So slowly, slowly rase she up,
   And slowly she came nigh him,
And when she drew the curtain by—
   "Young man, I think you're dyin'."

"O it's I am sick and very very sick,
   And it's all for Barbara Allen."—
O the better for me ye'se never be,
   Tho' your heart's blood were a-spillin'!

"O dinna ye mind, young man," says she,
   "When the red wine ye were fillin',
That ye made the healths go round and round,
   And slighted Barbara Allen?"

He turned his face unto the wall,
And death was with him dealin':
"Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
And be kind to Barbara Allen!"

As she was walking o'er the fields,
She heard the dead-bell knellin';
And every jow the dead-bell gave
Cried "Woe to Barbara Allen."

"O mother, mother, make my bed,
O make it saft and narrow:
My love has died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow."

"Farewell," she said, "ye virgins all,
And shun the fault I fell in:
Henceforth take warning by the fall
Of cruel Barbara Allen."
La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad

By John Keats

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
   Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
   And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
   So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel’s granary is full,
   And the harvest’s done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
   With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
   Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
   Full beautiful—a faery’s child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
   And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
   And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
   And made sweet moan

I set her on my pacing steed,
   And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
   A faery’s song.
She found me roots of relish sweet,
   And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
   'I love thee true'.

She took me to her Elfin grot,
   And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
   With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,
   And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamt
   On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
   Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
   Thee hath in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
   With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
   On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
   Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
   And no birds sing.

Notes:

POL participants and judges: in this poem's third-to-last stanza, recitations that include "Hath thee in thrall!" or "Thee hath in thrall!" are both acceptable.

Source: Selected Poems (Penguin Classics, 1988)