

Current 93, Tamlin

lady margaret, lady margaret
was sowing at the sea
she's all dressed in black
and a thought came in her head to roam in the woods
to pull flowers to flower her hat, my boys
to pull flowers to flower her hat
so she hoisted up her petticoats a bit above the knee
and so nimbly she ran over the ground
and when she came to the merrygreen woods
she pulled those branches down, my boys
she pulled those branches down

suddenly she spied a fine young man
he's standing by a tree
he says how dare you pull those branches down?
without the leave of me, my dear
without the leave of me
well she says this little wood it is my very own
my father gave it to me
i can pull these branches down without the leave of thee, young man
oh without the leave of thee
and he took a by the milk-white hand
and by the grass-green sleeve
he pulled her down at the foot of the bush
he never once asked her leave, my boys
oh he never once asked her leave
and when it was done she twisted about
to ask her true love's name
but she nothing saw
she nothing heard
and all the woods grew dim
and all the woods grew dim

there's four and twenty ladies all in the land
and they're all playing a chess
except it was the lady margaret
and she's green as any glass, my boys
oh she's green as any glass
and these four-and-twenty ladies all in the land
grow as red any rose
except the lady margaret she's pale and wan, my boys
oh pale and wan she goes
up then spoke the little serving girl
she lifted her hand and smiled
she said i think my lady's loved too long
and now she goes with child, my dears
oh and now she goes with child
up then spoke the second serving girl
oh ever and alas says she
that i think i know a herb in the merry green wood
that'll twine thy baby from thee
it'll rip off thy babe from thee

so lady margaret she got herself a comb
she made haste to comb her hair
and then she's away to the merry green woods
as fast as she can tear, my boys
as fast as she can tear
and she hadn't pulled in the merry green woods
a herb that barely won
when by her stands the young tamlin
he says margaret leave it alone
oh margaret leave it alone
why do you pull that bitter little herb

that herb that grows so grey
for to destroy that fine young baby that we got in our play, my dear
oh that we got in our play
well come tell me now young tamling says she
if an earthly man you be
i tell you no lies, says young tamlin
i was christined as good as thee
i was christined as good as thee
but as i rode a-hunting on a bitter bitter night
it was from my horse i fell
and the queen of elvin she caught me
into yonder green hill to dwell
oh into yonder green hill to dwell
but tonight is halloween lady
the elvin caught will ride
and if you would your true love win
by the millbridge you must hide, my dears
by the millbridge you must hide
and first will run the black horse
then will the brown
and then will run the white
you hold him fast, you fear him not
for he's the father of your child, my love
he's the father of your child
they'll turn me on in your arms lady into many a beasts so wild
but you hold them fast, you fear no ill
it's the father of your child, my love
it's the father of your child

so lady margaret, she gets herself a comb
she made haste to comb her hair
then she's away to the old millbrdige
as fast as she could tear, my boys
as fast as she could tear
and about the dead hour of the night she heard the bridles ring
oh my boys, she had her heart more than any earthly thing it did
more than any earthly thing
and first run the black horse
then the brown
and then raced by the white
well she held it fast, she feared it not
for it's the father of her child
it's the father of her child
the thunderoll across the sky
the stars blazed bright as day
the queen of elvin gave a thrilling cry
tamlin's away brave boys
brave tamlin's away
the very first thing they turned him into
is a lion that runs so wild
but she held him fast, she feared him not
he's the father of her child, my boys
he's the father of her child
and the very next thing they turned him into
it was a loathsome snake
he says hold me fast, fear me not
for i'm one of god's own make, my love
oh i'm one of god's own make
and again they changed him all in her arms
to a red-hot bar of iron
but she held it fast, she feared it not
it did to her no harm
it did to her no harm
and the very last thing they changed him into
was like any naked man

she flung her mantle over him
she cried my love i've won i've won
she cried my love i've won

but the queen of elvin she called for a bush
she's red as any blood
i should have taken out your eyes, tamlin
and put in two eyes of wood
and put in two eyes of wood