

Young in years and wisdom shy —
 She yearns to venture forth and try
 Her feet on shores not of her birth.

She longs to prove her hidden worth.
 To show that she is ready for
 The great, wide world outside her door.

When she leaves her warm, safe home
 And sets her heart and eyes to roam
 She may find fine adventure, or —

Far more than she has bargained for.



Hush, hush, sleep, my dear.
 Dream you deep and never fear.
 Close your eyes and cease your cry
 Slumber-by, slumber-by.

Stars and moon run a race.
 Owl shows his round, white face.
 In loving arms you safely lie.
 Slumber-by, slumber-by.

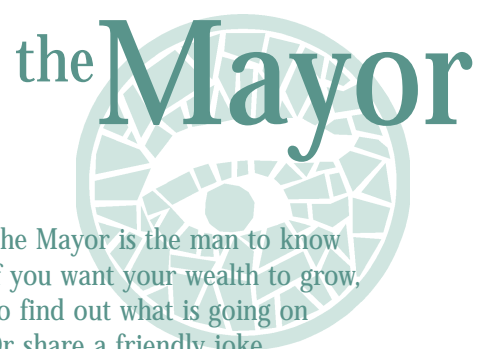
Angels weave a blanket bright
 To guard 'till day is born of night.
 You will wake to dawning sky.
 Slumber-by, slumber-by.



Get it here! And get it now!
 Buy this fine, fat milking cow.
 What? It's dead? Oh. You don't say.
 Well... it's guaranteed not to run away!

Get it here! Let the bidding start!
 Buy this lovely ox and cart.
 It's wheels are gone? Well... that's its pride:
 You'll never have a smoother ride!

Get it here! Before they're sold!
 Buy these chains of solid gold!
 You got it wet? The gold has run?
 Well... so must I. This sale is done!



The Mayor is the man to know
 If you want your wealth to grow,
 To find out what is going on
 Or share a friendly joke.

Leader of our bustling town,
 He walks the streets and alleys round
 To find out what is going on
 And keep in touch with folk.

He strolls the market, checks the stalls
 Stops the guardsmen on the walls
 To find out what is going on
 And help fix what is broke.

the Guard



Honor first and honor last.
Keep the faith and find no chink
In the armor holding fast,
Made of a thousand steel-bright links.

For country! King! And battle fame!
We stand and watch against the night.
Our only comfort is the flame
Of duty burning, burning bright.

Hail the hand that holds the sword!
Hail the eye that seeks out foe!
We live to serve our honor's word
Until the day we stand no more.

the Healer



A soft and caring touch applies
The cool, damp cloth to fevered eyes
While scent of herbs in clouds arise
To calm, soothe and allay

The hurts left by a world not known
For gentleness to flesh and bone.
So here, for comfort, all will come
For healing. They'll away

As soon as they've no need to mend.
They seek to see their sickness end,
Not for a steady, lifetime friend.
None wish here long to stay.

the Hunter



There are no paths between the trees,
And though you look you will not see
The Hunter as he makes his way
Through the shadows of the day.

You will not hear him raise his bow
Nor draw the deadly, sharp arrow.
The only sound a whispered hiss —
And you will never see him miss.

The smallest sign he'll find and track.
And if you've run, he'll bring you back.
There is no hiding from the man
Who knows the forest like his hand.

the Gardener



Warm earth,
Water cool.
Strong but gentle caring touch.
Fern green,
Brown toad-stool.
Speaking little, knowing much,
Vision sees
A slower life.
Breath of years and seasons' sleep.
Sun smile bright,
Rain tears' strife.
Treasures growing, buried deep.

Beneath the sky's wide open room
The Gardener weaves life's silent loom.

the Duke



Royal red reserved for him
Who lays the law and order keeps.
And envy may in many grow
Who know not what upsets his sleep.

Cruel or kind; it's not his choice.
His justice is not swayed for friends.
Though subjects seeking mercy may
Know it if on knees they bend.

A colder code applies to him.
For in his hands the health and hope
Of all his people lives and dies.
His heart is bound with duty's rope.

the Cook



She sings:

Sugar, sugar, butter, milk.
Cakes I bake for babies' tray.
Salt, salt, pepper, beef.
Stew for men who work all day.

Whisk, whisk, ladle, spoon.
Come not in to steal a snack.
Fork, fork, cauldron, knife.
Catch you at it, knuckles smack.

Stay and help or get you gone.
Not to return 'till dinner's gong.

the Soldier



The dust of marching is his food,
Eyes fixed upon a distant place.
He dreams a day when brothers' blood
Will not be spilt. His shoulders ache

With pack and kit and weapons bright.
Ten thousand like him in a line.
Yet none like him. His inner sight
Reveals a lass, a farm, a time

When shoulders ached with hoe and plow.
A pain he'd gladly double bear.
If he could be there with her now.
His marching ended, and his care.

the General



Every man lifts up his sword —
Salutes the General, swears a word
Of stark obedience, and to serve
'Till death o'ertakes the pledged sword.

The General stands atop the hill
To better view the battle still
Enjoined and raging. His troops kill
And rally round the grassy hill.

The battle won, his men at rest —
Some above the ground, the best
Of them beneath the crest
Of hill and under grass they rest.

The General does not sleep.

the Duchess

Having borne her lord a son,
Some think the Duchess' job is done.
Not so, as she must make a home
For all the folk who give their love

To her bright land. Her gaze is clear
As she speaks soft to children dear
Who gather at her hearth to hear
Stories, lessons, words to cheer

Their learning ears. And in her song
Her homeland is made ever strong.
For she has charge her whole life long
Of all her people's girls and sons.

the Woodsman

A trap for bears? A simple thing.
He only needs a piece of string,
And he knows all the ways to make
A suit of clothes from skins of snakes.

He can climb a tree at night
And sleep atop its highest height
And breakfast on an owl's eggs
That he found nested 'neath his legs.

He'll run all week without a stop,
A thousand trees one-handed chop.
At nothing has he ever failed —
Since he's the one who tells the tale.

the Wolf

Dark's friend, shadow bends
Around the swift and silent ones.
Tails sway, black and grey,
Keeping balance on the run.

Eyes of gold, hunter bold
Stalks his prey when others sleep.
Yellow sight haunts the night;
Do not dare to slumber deep.

In pack or lone, the juicy bone
Awaits the wolf when hunt is through.
A fire's smoke may make you choke,
But keeps the wolf from scenting you.

the Bear

He may seem a bumbling clown,
Toy-bright eyes, shag coat of brown,
Rolling, tumbling, bumbling down,
Waving both his paws.

He swats a fish from river's bed,
Catches it by tail or head
And shakes it with a spray of red
Between his powerful jaws.

He is not warlike, does not seek
To fight. He can be gentle, meek
Or even friendly. But don't speak
Without regard for claws.

the Snake



History's scoundrel,
scale-skinned rascal.
Singular sin sower
Knowing no master.

Slow in the sun,
A slithering serenade.
Sprints silent samba
Through thickening shade.

Sometimes a secret
Is worth this assessment —
Is serpent support
Worth a soul's sole investment?

the Dog



Like a long-eared log close to the ground
Is the powerful-nosed basset hound.
She'll search out a truffle,
But give you a scuffle
If you try to take what she has found.

A mastiff is trained to guard gates.
He'll stay there no matter how late.
If you try to get in
You may lose some skin
To the dog who so patiently waits.

Now matter what dog you prefer
You'll be glad for the friend, as it were.
None will love you much better,
And though tongues make you wetter
You can dry yourself off on their fur.

the Cat



Some people love the sinuous cat.
And some find cats a bore.
Cats won't beg, or come when called
Or play dead on the floor.
They seem to some the spirit
Of mystery and suspense.
While others find their silent eyes
A sign of being dense.
They purr and rub your ankle
Then walk, aloof, away.
And if you like them on your lap
That's where they'll never stay.

Love their whiskers, curse their hair —
How you feel, well... cats don't care.

the Wise One



Seek ye to find a favoring wind
Or understand your hand's lined skin?
Perhaps to know if Cupid's bow
Will strike the one you hope to know?

In a secret, hidden place
The Wise One waits.

Why does fame avoid your grasp?
Why does your horse run always last?
What is in the hearts of men
Who seek to do you harm again?

The Wise One waits
To speak your fate.



the Spy

What would you say if your hand turned,
Took an iron from the fire
And pressed it to your own flesh. Burned
By yourself. What could conspire

To make a faithful, serving limb
Twist into an enemy.
Is there any greater sin
Than stewardship warped in treachery?

A spy is like that selfsame hand;
A trusted friend, a confidant
Whose honor spills like worthless sand
Upon the floor of what he wants.



the Teacher

What? Who? How? Where
"What?" That's easy. It's right there.
You can also find out "Who?"
That's his picture; looks like you.

"How?" is just a list of tasks.
All that's needed is to ask.
"Where?" can be found on a scrap
Of parchment scribbled with a map.

But for "Why?" a teacher's best.
"Why?" can be a lifelong quest.
Not in some book upon a shelf;
She leads you on inside yourself.



the Lad

Before the mill grinds down the grain,
Before the plow drags up the stones,
Before the path will need a cane,
Before a tumble bruises bones:

The mill's a place of gears and games,
The plow, a sword that tames the ground,
The path, a road to wealth and fame,
A tumble just a twirl around.

The world is full of work and care.
As men and women all will say.
But boys spin joys from naught but air,
And make a game of darkest day.



the Minstrel

A simple harp of wood and strings,
A quiet voice.
He lifts both up and sings
Of love lost twice
And finally found. Third time around.

Orators move angry crowds
With gripping phrase.
The harp's not loud,
But singing stays
In your mind. A long, long time.

Like spark to dry leaf, stirring song
Catches fire.
You'll remember your life long
The simple choir
Of one man and strumming hands.

the Thief



Some call me rogue! Well, if I am
I owe my woe to roguish men
Who hold their gold and shelve their wealth
For their own stingy, selfish selves.

So what if I dip in the wellspring
Of profits from their marked-up selling?
The rich steal first from honest folk,
And laugh at us as at a joke.

So in I creep, in shadows deep
And tip-toe past them as they sleep.
When morning comes I'll be the one
Who laughs and grasps a larger sum.

the Seer



In a cave above a stream,
Behind a crashing waterfall
There lives one who reads your dreams.
And tells you all.

But not in words you'll understand.
Parables and riddles deep
Are what you'll find in that strange land
Where divination sleeps.

It may be a year, or ten
Before you understand the phrase
Spoke to you in that dark den
Of future days.

the Messenger



Only two things does he know —
What blocks his path; what helps him go.
Another's purpose speeds his way
And lights his nights as bright as day.

What does he carry? Do not ask.
To race it onward is his task.
He will not stop for ice or dark
Until his message finds its mark.

Kings have fallen when he's late.
In his pouch the hand of fate
Waits to write another line
If he should just arrive in time.

the Ancient



All things seen. All things done.
If you need wisdom seek the one
Who's worn so long the worldly flesh
That of its bondage is bereft.

Nothing troubles, nothing shakes
The mind of one whose body aches
From journeying on life's hard road
A million miles, a thousand loads.

No poke, no prod of future needs.
Reaping done, and done with seeds
Of what may come. But if you ask
You may find help with your own task.



the Cart

Yea! Haw! Step to the side!
One horse, two horse, three horse, four.
Be ye potato — then ye can ride!
One mile, two mile, three mile more.

Shay! Shaw! Clear the road!
One horse, two horse, three horse, four.
Out the way for a heavy load!
One mile, two mile, three mile more.

Hay! Straw! Feed for the team!
One horse, two horse, three horse, four.
Wine for the driver in a sweet, red stream!
One cup, two cup, three cup more.



the Hollow Oak

From an acorn to the sky —
A hundred years to grow so tall.
Then lightning strikes! It does not fall
But loses leaves, no longer shy
To show its bare, black limbs to all.

Look deep within a glade of green,
Ringed round with lively, younger wood.
You'll find a heart where something could
Be hidden deep and never seen.
Reach inside — for ill or good.



the Boat

The ice may have frozen your beard off,
But the snow of the winter's now gone.
If your kit's not a-dockside at daybreak,
You'll be left on the shore all alone.

Aboard! Aboard! We're off at the first sign of dawn!
Aboard! Aboard! We sail at the first sign of dawn.

The cook will make muffins from leather,
The captain's two hundred years old.
The mate is as blind as a fruit bat,
But the sun on the sea's all a-gold.

Aboard! Aboard! We're off at the first sign of dawn!
Aboard! Aboard! We sail at the first sign of dawn.



the Horn

“To me! To me!”
The shout blares loud.
The horn is proud

And only knows
One song. It blows,
“To me! To me!”

Who does it call?
One ghost or all
The army's men to fight on through?
That's up to you.



a Mirror

Look into
And look in two
Eyes of brown or green or blue.

Look into
And look in you.
You can't hide from the glass bright view.

Look into
To see what's true.
Hidden once but now come through.

Look in
To something new.



a Boulder

Placed above a cavern's hole,
Keeps something in and something out.
Twenty men it takes to roll
Away the stone.

Blocks the valley's only way,
Stops the path you need to take.
Letting through the light of day
But travelers none.

Climb upon, though, and you'll see
Farther than you ever could.
Your problem ceases then to be,
When victory turns bad to good.



the Sword

Two brothers play with blades of wood,
Pretending they are noble knights.
They dream of when they'll prove their might
And help see evil crushed by good.

Winters freeze and summers warm,
Now grown men, they leave their toys
And practice not the games of boys
But train for war and force of arms.

Blades of steel in hand they smile
When battle takes the place of play.
And on a sunny summer day
One comes home an only child.



the Banquet

Burn the logs and candles all,
Drive the shadows from the hall.
Pack the tables high with fare,
Banish worry, woe and care.

Raise a song! Eat well! Drink deep!
We'll be merry err we sleep.

Clear the tables, strike the band,
Hike your skirt and clap your hands.
Join the circle, boys and girls,
Raise your arms and have a twirl.

Eat well! Drink deep and raise a song!
We'll be merry all night long.



a Basket

Woven wicker, tight and strong
A basket's life can be quite long.
Passed, at first, a gift to hold,
Then saved to store a cloth of gold.

The cloth is sold, the basket makes
It's way to market. Inside are placed
Potions rank with sulfur stink.
The basket shakes, the bottles clink.

Then out they come. And placed within
A letter from a lover's pen.
The basket travels far and wide.
A thousand stories tucked inside.



Ink

A well, a blot, a smudge, a jot
All hold the black blood to one spot
Which otherwise would flood the page
An incoherent, spreading rage.

Drip, drop. Morning dew.
I think I'll write a poem for you.

(A thread will snap when pulled a bit.
And two or three won't last a whit.
But thousands, woven, make a sail
To drive a ship before a gale.)

Scratch, scratch. Thread thin lines
When sewn together change men's minds.



a Horse

Eyes like diamonds, mane of fire!
Crashing through the bush and briar.
You're carried safe above the ground
And thunder sounds

From steel-bright hooves on sand and rock.
Muscles bunch and saddle rocks
With every gallop. Hang on tight
All through the night.

Dawn breaks, you're home and passed the test.
But first, before you take your rest,
Care for the friend who
Carried you.



Gems

Close your eyes —
They could be simple stones.
No warmth within them lies.
Yet kingdoms owe
Their future and their health
To earth-dug wealth.

Emeralds green,
Strung with rubies red,
Decorate the throats of queens,
The crown upon the head
Of a king who knows
That by such stones his power grows.



a Staff

The road is long, the road is hard.
From dawn to dusk it leads away.
And life is hard, and life is long.
And long the dark from dusk to dawn.

You walk the night, and walk the day
And lean upon your staff's smooth wood.
Against the tests of life and road,
A solid comfort, sinewed stay.

Some say magic flows within,
And can be called when need is great
From vein of grain and bark of skin.
You walk. You live. And need await.



The Fireplace

Smells of spice and frying fat,
Tang of smoke and dancing tongues
Of flame that licks the shadows back
And heats the hearth for everyone.

Draw a chair to linger there,
Beside the cookpot and the logs
Stacked beside the chimney where
The heated stones treat sleeping dogs

To dreams of summer. "Come and stay,"
The flames they call, and to you speak
Of comfort, ease at end of day.
And, like the dogs, you drift to sleep.



Treasure

What is treasure? Hordes of gold?
Heaps of coins and diamonds cold?
Perhaps a crown from ages past,
Buried deep and found at last.

A sword with hilt of solid jade,
A scepter of bright silver made,
A pile of rubies ten feet tall,
An orb of pearl, a jewéléd ball.

For every woman, every man
The word holds different, subtle rings.
Find it, hold it. Then you can
Move on to other, warmer things.



Bow & Arrows

Test the wind, and squint the sky.
Away, away to find the mark.
Draw the string and lock your eye.
The mark to find, away.

Your arm the strength to gauge the rise.
Away, away to find the mark.
The head and shaft before you flies.
The mark to find, away.

Your will the bending, and the strike.
Away, away to find the mark.
Your fate to shoot, it's fate to lie –
The mark is found today.



a Scroll

Lamp light yellow on faded ink,
Smoothed soft with years.

Fighting flatness, edges curl.
Take care, for tiny, ripping tears.

Words whisper to your reading mind,
Delve deep in missing meaning there.

Seeking something? Fortune? Fate?
You yearn for it to yield your stare.

Priceless paper. Secret skin.
A map or mystery now laid bare.



a Wagon

A home on wheels. A stretched-cloth roof
Covers father, mother, child.
All day the sounds of wind and hoof
Soothe the bumpy, swaying ride.

Once piles of turnips for market sat
Where now the cradle gently rocks.
Potatoes, gone. And turkeys fat
Replaced by loom and spoons and socks.

Where is the house of stone and wood?
Where is the yard and barn and well?
Have they left it all for good?
Time only knows, and time will tell.



a Blanket

Spring sheep are shed their summer dress
To give the loom its autumn feast
Of yarn to weave a warm retreat
From winter's breath on frozen feet.

A tapestry of legend bright,
Or plain, brown wool to quiet lie
Upon the bed of little ones
Who seek some heat when sinks the sun.

Swaddled babe and ancient crone
Find soft folds when day is done.
From birth to death we lie within
A wrap that holds what life's wheel spins.



a Statue

You wandered off the path one day
Into the woods, some time to pass.
A chilly, autumn sky of grey
Bleaches color from the grass.

Far from where you'd been before
You found a glade where once a town
Lived and breathed. It is no more
Since fire razed it to the ground.

In what was once the village green
A statue of a man stands tall.
He looks so proud and so serene.
A ghost of stone unknown to all.



a Ring

'Round and 'round and 'round again.
You will not find the circle's end.
The ring ne'er ends nor e'er begins,
A wheel time slowly spins.

'Round and 'round and 'round about.
When you go in you must come out.
The ring's a door that goes both ways
A wheel of nights and days.

'Round and 'round and 'round at last.
Is you ring a precious cast?
Will your heart be true and show
Itself like gold that marks a vow?



Poison

Make you sleep,
Make you die.
Make you deep and frozen lie.
Just one drop
In your cup
And you can give the ghost up.

In a bowl,
On a spoon,
Feel the icy fingers soon
Of the draught
That I make
Your days to take.



a Spyglass

Far make near,
And blurry clear.
Strengthen eye,
Bring distance near.
Give long sight
Of moon at night
Or at noon-high
The coming fight.
Distance bends.
The glass can send
What would have taken
Days on end.

Are you wiser when you instantly know
What once took days to show?



Boots

I bought them from a village hag
Whose hair was tied with dirty rags.
She told me they were magic. "Yep,
You'll cross a desert in two steps
And ring the world in ten," she cried.
And so I bought them. But she lied.
They're only boots of darkened leather.
They've seen some walking and some weather.
Hole in heel and hole in toe.
And so I brought them back. You know
I couldn't find her anywhere.
Just the rag that tied her hair.
And a note in faded ink —
"Today you've traveled far, I think.
You won't be prey for such a tricker."
Those boots, it seems, have made me quicker.

Abandoned

Left alone. Why?
No one knows.
By whom?
They've gone.
Can't ask. Who goes
away and leaves
behind
something here
for you to find?

Cast aside by someone else
You must seek its worth yourself.

Silliness

Fish in your hat,
Beard on a cat.
A dinner of feathers and deep-fat-fried bat.

Dancing a jig,
Your dog wears a wig
And shares a cigar with his boss, Mr. Pig.

Live in a tree,
Charge birds a fee
To build little nests in the crook of your
knee.

Don't read this rhyme!
Give up! There's no time!
If you don't stop right now it's a crime!

Storm

In a gale wind's unseen wake
Water parts and branches break,
Grasses bend and shutters shake.
Beware what eyes will never see.

Less the time it takes to blink
Lightning silvers sky's black ink
Painting yellow, red and pink —
The colors fire wants to be.

One day here, the next day gone,
Never long the stay of storm.
But like a strong and moving song,
Changes all for you and me.

Lies

Hide the dark deeds from their sight.
Keep transgression from the light.
All it takes is one or two
Words not true.

They don't need to hear the facts.
What they don't know can't bite you back.
Let truth lie in smoky sleep
Buried deep.

What's the harm if they don't know
What you've done and where you'll go?
You must pay a price in sin
To win.

Found

Seek ye far and seek ye wide
To all corners of the earth.
At sunset, desperate, you may find
What was lost beside your hearth.

Key to door or key to heart
May rest in darkness, hidden deep.
To find these things your mind's dark art
May unearth them while wreathed in sleep.

For though you may possess a crown
And knowledge deep or riches grand,
Until what's lost is finally found
You'll walk with sorrow hand-in-hand.

Betrayal

The world, my friend, is full
Of disappointment, tragedy and all
Manner of random, natural
Harm to your person and your will.

But nothing wounds like blows
From an unexpected source.
A person trusted, held close
Can easily exploit your flaws.

You must trust or else die cold.
But trust can be a one-way road.
And when you turn yourself around
You'll find that you are now alone.

Twinning

One may be good. But double
Double dangerous trouble
Twice the burden, twice the space is
Not always best. Best rest the spaces
Where the natural and only
Only need the one and lonely
Maybe. May we tell the first
From the last and best from worst?

Break the mirror, keep the sight
For good or ill, for wrong or right.
What once was one is changed to two.
Too bad? Too good?
That's up to you.

Transformation

Water to ice.
The same, but not.
Fire to ash.
Now cold, once hot.
Alive in the air,
The pheasant's wings beat.
Now it feeds children
A dinner of meat.

Butterflies born of worms take flight.
Sun bleaches bones until perfectly white.
Wolves become dogs if treated just right.

Change makes life a hide-and-seek game.
Blink once — and you're never the same.

Night

Just as flame can cook or burn,
So night is bad or good in turns.

Darkness comforts, soothes the soul
And eases sleep. But none controls
The creatures who in blackness stroll.

For just as you in daytime play,
And go your gladsome, sunlit way,
So other — things — at midnight may
Make their shadowed, haunting way.

Angels guard your sleep, my friend.
Night is bright as day for them.

Surprise

Up jump crack turn
Spin duck cringe cry
Here gone nerve burn
Touch shock flash sky

Corner turning instinct burning
Finger tremble danger gamble
Goosebump rising courage hiding
Never knowing danger growing

Blood pound
cry sound
out get
away
it

Winter

Sleep, earth, and under white
Blankets sleep, drifting deep.
Summer's greens steal from sight
And secrets keep
For cold, dark nights of rest.

Weave the evenings long and test
Patient men. Time for them
To practice craft. For the best
Try again
Their hand at hearthside trade.

Winter's coin has often paid
For what a skilled man's hours made.

Autumn

Coal dies a diamond to become —
So autumn burns bare summer's bones
To winter white. But first a time
Of brilliant light and gold sunshine
And harvest days where chilly air
Blows paper leaves from branch laid bare.
Soon will come the snow and ice.
Work now, or pay a long night's price
For wasted, precious hours of light.
But, still, you linger at the sight
Of forest all aflame with gold,
And red. The colors will not hold
For very long. Time rushes past
As autumn's embers fade to ash.

Summer

Long day, long light.
Hoe the row and mow the hay.
Short sleep, short night.
Wake at dawning of the day.

Sky blue, yellow field.
Soon the sun and gentle rain
Will coax the seeds to secrets yield
Of flower, petal, fruit and grain.

Warm breeze, summer breath,
Lift our cares and wants away.
From the earth a harvest birth
Will keep the winter wind at bay.

Spring

Where are you hiding,
My fine little bloom?
You know I will find you
Soon.

Where are you sleeping,
Sun's bright ray?
Come out from the clouds
Today.

Why are you melting,
Cold, hard ice?
Winter is over?
Nice.

Switch

You put some apples in a sack
And slung it right across your back.
You started down the market track
Whistling a song.

You stopped to rest upon the street
And let the bag lay at your feet.
You dreamed of something good to eat,
Then woke, and carried on.

But when you reached the market town
You found your bag was not your own.
Not filled with apples — but with stones.
Now — where did you go wrong?

EScape

I hear them coming through the wood;
Breaking branches as they search.
I pray my hiding place is good,
And press my face into the earth.

Thrust into a game of kings, a pawn
I was. A breeze of fate
Pulled me up, drew me along
Until, for me, it was too late.

Young and innocent? I was both.
A man unjustly kept a-cage.
Yet now I swear a vengeance oath:
That they will one day fear my rage.

Ignorance



Something is happening over there.
You can't see it, you can't hear.
If you go looking, it will move.
That's what makes it funny, dear.

She told him, and he told her.
But she did not know she knew, too.
So she might think that someone new
Might one day tell it all to you.

But you are here. And will proceed
As if nothing new is up.
You can pretend you're in the know.
But frankly, friend, you're out of luck.

Sleep



Sugar in a bitter cup,
The water arid dirt soaks up,
Cool hand upon a fevered brow,
Shade beneath a perfumed bough.

Like death. Not quite as final, though.
A new room every night. You go
Most willing to the block
Where time abandons time's slow clock.

Are your dreams as real as day?
The people there, what do they say?
Do they sing you off to wake
When you leave them at daybreak?

Friendship



No greater gift did God give Man
Than hand clasp of a loyal friend.
And if you find a hill of gold,
But forfeit friends who once you held,

Then you have lost the dearer prize.
And shame on your benighted eyes
For you have spent another's coin.
Your friendship, too, is lost to them.

Friendship saved does interest earn,
As all who hold a friend will learn.
No better place your heart invest
Than in a friend who loves you best.

Discovery



Drive onward and upward
My strong-hearted allies,
Have courage and faith
In tomorrow's bright sunrise.

Give no thought to failure,
Think victory only.
A soul who is seeking
Will never be lonely.

What new horizons
Await for our pleasure?
The thrill of fresh pastures
More precious than treasure.

Restoration



Taken or lost,
Now regained at a cost.
What's broken is mended,
The chasm is crossed.

A time to rejoice,
Raise glasses and voice!
For what's been returned
Did not leave us by choice.

For though you may treasure
A thing beyond measure,
When returned after absence,
It is dearer than ever.

Prophecy



You may think you want to know
What you'll do and where you'll go,
But this I say —
In present stay.

Words of prophets do not preach
Easy ways your ends to reach.
Puzzling pieces,
Certainty ceases.

You'll never know until it's past,
By then it will have slipped your grasp.
It's chief constraint —
Clairvoyance feints.

Broken



A simple pot upon the shelf
Falls —
Do not berate yourself.
Made by hand, in oven baked.
No matter
If a dozen break.

A simple pot upon a rope
Falls —
And you may lose all hope.
Dry and nearly dead of thirst
You watch
It tumble, fear the worst.

You'll get no water from this well
If it breaks — in dust you'll dwell.

Mended



Nature breaks,
Snaps, leaks.
All
Falls.

Mighty men,
With wisdom
Do chaos brave
To order save.

Or a child,
With a smile
And some string
Can fix a thing.

Cathedral

Raise your voices to the sky
As light surrounds the gathered kin.
Here we seek a moment's peace,
Safe from worldly cares within.

Learning's lodge and wisdom's door,
Candles burn a steady light.
All who seek will find within
Sanctuary from the night.

Evil may not enter here,
Have ye faith and do not fear.
Keep the peace while in these halls,
Anger leave without the walls.
Go and sow the seeds you take
From this holy, blessed place.

School

One, two, three, four —
Marching in the classroom door
Four, three, two, one —
Reading, writing, doing sums.

A, B, C, D —
Learn to listen, think and see.
D, C, B, A —
Pay heed to what your teachers say.

Fire, water, earth and air —
Here we play and sing and share.
Sun, moon, land, sky —
School is done so say, "Goodbye."

the Kitchen

Pound of butter, shake of salt.
Barley bread and barley malt.
Butter churn and oven burn,
Give the roast another turn.

In winter warm, folks gather round.
Hot in summer, can't be found.
Always full of simmer smells —
Don't touch! 'Till rings the dinner bell.

You may travel all the earth
Before returning to this hearth,
But this will always be heart's home.
Sit. Breathe deep. Your journey's done.

the Castle

Strong stone wall
Rampart tall
Moat deep
Surrounds all.

Flag flown high
Trumpet cry
Proud rock
Will never die.

Hope or doubt?
Success or rout?
Depends if you
Are in or out.



a Hut

Home is where they wait for your return.
And though a king's might be a castle tall,
For others, where a tiny fire burns
Is home enough when evening's curtain falls.

The winding path beside the humble plot
Where garden grows and daisies line the bend
Leads to cherished treasure, but will not
Yield up gold or silver at its end.

As sunset nears you'll see her at the gate,
Waiting for the one who shares her hearth.
Her smile is his beacon. His, its mate.
And perfect matched the two in all the earth.

Walls of wood and mossy roof above,
The inside furnished richly with their love.



Mountains

As you climb your eye is drawn
To the bright, white snow-bound peaks.
They pierce the purple morning dawn
And give the gusts a throat to speak --

"Soon you'll know," the wind will say,
"Will your will withstand what you desire?"
Every night and every day
You'll hear the whisper, "Higher. Higher."

Will you stand atop the world?
How will end your proud, brave quest?
Whether made of stones or words,
The mountains test you to your depths.



a Town

Here the baker, there the well.
Pies to buy and scarves to sell.
Mother, father, young and old
Live within our walls. Behold

Our main street, paved in native stone.
At the tavern tales are sung.
On market day the street's alive
With a thousand wares to buy.

Not too big, and not too small.
Our gate is open — welcome all!
We hope while here your spirits lift.
Visitors are treasured gifts.



a Cave

Cold and wet.
Smells bad, I bet.
Does the bear live there?
I forget.

We left a mark
On a piece of bark,
Our way to find. Do you mind
This dark?

Off the track...
It's totally black...
Yes! There! I swear!
You go first. I'll head back.



the Market

Down from the hills with a fine, fat sow.
Come to market at break of day!
Up from the valley for a milking cow.
Come to market, come to stay!

A brand new dress made of sky-blue silk.
Come to market while the sun is high!
Boots for father and a quart of milk.
Come to market, come for awhile.

A jug of whisky and a fine, pearl comb.
Come to market when the sun is low!
Pack it all up and head for home.
The market's closed, it's time to go.



the River

You sit and watch the dancing flow —
A silver swath cut through the earth.
You sit still, like rock, upon the shore,
But seem to move, your senses go
To the river's mountain birth,
To where the water was before.

And on you slip, flow past and far
Unto a place where rivers end.
All your journey in between
You see at once, for rivers are
Both racing, rushing 'round the bend
And still. Quite still. So it would seem
To you, who sits, and watches still.



a Road

Do you cross it on a dare?
Or walk its length to find a "where"
That isn't here, but might compare
To what came last?

A road can be a daily grind
Of boredom numbing to the mind
But keep on walking and you'll find
Where future severs past.

Not just a link between two towns,
The road has stories of its own.
And when you walk its dusty ground
Your tale flies fast.



Camp

Gathered 'round a tiny flame,
All here known by more than name.
Travel-mates who share a dream
Of high adventure. By a stream
You pitch a tent and wait for dawn
To light the path you travel on.
Here is pause for rest and talk
After pains of dirt and rock
Have blistered feet and bent your back.
Take off your shoes, put down your pack.
Night will pass. In peace? Who knows.
Let's hope, and deep in slumber doze.
We'll wake with morning sun's first ray
To share our travel's newest day.



the Theatre

A place that's not. A building where
Though in it you are never there.

A ship's proud sail, the curtain red,
Drawn high above your watching head.
Though this sail must be tightly furled
Before it draws you through its world.

And as the players play their parts,
You laugh. Or weep with broken heart.
You know they say the writer's lines.
They've said them all a hundred times.
But still you cry. And still you go
Again to see it. For you know
That though the story is not real,
What is true is what you feel.



an Island

A paradise of sea and sand
Where azure blue meets fertile land
And rainbow birds eat from your hand
The berries ripe and red.

Gentle rains caress the dunes
As rainbow birds sing lilting tunes
While you regard the waning moon
From your hammock bed.

One night the wind your hammock rocked,
The rainbow birds, they loudly mocked
You with their chirping, cackling talk —
"Your stuck with us," they said.

No boat, no flare. They've got you there.



the Ocean

The glassy slate lies still.
Gentle valleys green and grey
Undulate with sleeping strokes
Of rest and ease and sleep.

The glassy slate lies. Still
Believe, if you will, the yellow day
Lights that lightly coax
Reflections from the deep.

Tumult beneath the slate lies. Until
Wind rips the veil away.
Vast waves crash and soak
What land and hand would keep.



the Cellar

Once when this house was still a home
To more than mice and brazen birds
The cellar was a cozy place
For storing tools and fruit preserves.

If you could travel back in time
You'd see a mother put up pots
Of jams and soup. Now only rats
Chew on food long gone to rot.

The sun can't reach this mildewed hole,
Though it is host to rain and wind.
If you visit, bring a torch.
To light the dank, dark, drudge within.

the Library

A quiet home of books and dust.
"Learning" its mistress. "Study" your host.
Worlds of words ring round the walls.
Be silent. Hear the call

Of knowledge earned from lifelong toil.
Writers weeded rocky soil
And kept the best, most precious fruit
For you to loot.

More power in this room of ink —
If you take the time to think —
Than in a general's marching steel.
Just as real

This power to remake your mind.
Seek. And find.

the Tower

Aloof, the tower's height.
It's walls not thick,
Not meant to keep out might,
But to play a simple trick.

A prisoner held fast,
A sorcerer of power,
A watchmen at his glass
All owe this to the tower:

Isolation.

Inside it are raised up, for good or harm,
Those outside the norm.

the Forest

Yellow, dusky sun will fall
Between the paper leaves
To spatter on the path's dirt hall.
Overhead the branches weave
A pattern on the pale blue sky
Of black bark and needle green.
Squirrel skitters, crow cries;
Heard, but not often seen.
Soft, the forest, in the day.
Smells of pine and moss and earth.
Come the dusk, best be away.
From the shadows creatures stir.

What shelters you in light
Hides enemies come night.

the Fork

Your Granda told you, "Head out west.
Find fame and set yourself a test
Of your own merritt. Do some good.
Win respect. Go west. It's good."

So you set off. Your only pack
A knotted blanket on your back,
Dreaming of honor you would earn
When, one day, you returned.

Each day walking toward the setting sun.
As had your Granda. Then you come
To a river fierce and deep and wide.
No way to reach the other side.

That old man knew when you set forth
One day you'd need to choose yourself:
Go south or north?

the Crag



Hear the wind whisper,
Hear the wind blow.
Up on the mountain
Where only ice grows.

Hear the wind whisper,
Hear the wind sing.
The cliff's edge a knife-blade,
Sharp as a sting.

Hear the wind whisper,
Hear the wind roar.
Mountain behind you,
The abyss before.

Hear the wind whisper. What does it say?
"Go back or step forward. Here do not stay."

the Mine



Grip hammer, grip pick,
Swing both of them strong.
Bring down the peak
With force of your song.

Coal for the furnace,
Iron for steel.
Your muscle will bend
The rock to your will.

Under the mountain,
Under the stone,
Dust is your mistress,
Darkness your home.

a Beach



A lovely place of sea and sand.
Let waves lick salt upon your hand.
The morning sun bakes woes away
If you can spare a careless day.

Waiting for a ship to come,
A beach becomes a lonesome home
Of gulls who cry like startled babes,
Frightened by the crashing waves.

And when a wreck upon the shoals
Washes up a ship's burst hold
The beach becomes a treasure trove
For those who fortune dearly love.

Unless that ship once held a friend.
Now's the beach a mourners end.

a Barn



Smell of fur, smell of hay,
Home to horse and sheep and cow.
Play hide-and-seek and spend the day
With your friends, throwing straw

And tumbling down the slippery slide
That loads the wagon up with grain.
Race around, come back inside,
Climb the ladder, slide again.

Even when, one day you're grown,
And sweat to fill that wagon's bed,
You'll pause a moment, look around,
Skip the climb and slide down instead.



One card you've chosen, put it back
Anywhere inside the stack.
Replace it with a new one now.
It's up to you to tell us how.



Hand to Eye or Wind to Land
Make the change and make it stand.
A prop will gain a person's face
Or circumstance becomes a place.



When your tale is at its end
You must take some time, my friend,
To add another hidden card
And tell how it completes your yarn.



Stop right now, your fate reverse.
What is best now turns to worst.
Start your tale again. It's hard —
Change plot, but keep your current cards.

