

DIADEM

(poem by R.A. Briggs)

Our Holy Father says he knows
true love doth presuppose
how stags pursue their does
and boys must marry girls.

Half-hearted, I have sought the hem
of many a skirt at many a fete,
and yet
my wanton self uprose and chose
to light in song upon this churl.

He flares, a flower on upright stem.
He shimmers like Arachne's net
when wet
with dew. His sweet complexion glows
like sunlit bloom upon the merle:

his cheek where wild currant grows,
his eyes like blackthorn sloes,
his mouth, that rarest rose,
the thicket of his curls.

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true love doth presuppose
how stags pursue their does
and boys must marry girls.

He'll take me as his diadem
as stars in firmament are set
and let
the silver of his arms enclose
my body like a precious pearl.

O Father, let me be his gem,
his sweet, his doll, his toy, his pet.
My debt,
though great, I shall discharge. Propose
a breakback task; I shall not quarrel.

We sapling lads who plight our trows
grow green where God bestows
His grace, though blizzard blows
and cruel tempests whirl.

Our Holy Father in heaven knows
within our breasts repose
all creatures: stags and does
and gems and boys and girls.

DIAGRAM

(anagrammatic text by Alex Temple)

Howl of hay. Ornate sky rushes
over our dust. Sheep topple.
Shouts. Outraged whispers.
Rumors bring my last days.

A theme of the harvest hauled high:
ants, tiny foe, may take a farm.
Day ten:
Hymn of pale crows. Unseen toads.
Hilltop night song. Touch ruins.

We help faltering farmhouses rot,
Make them recline. His harness
wet-hewn,
decomposing with the Wessex willow,
pheromones like ill blue mutton.

We grew sick. We thrash our children,
Shake their bones. Soil cell sky
heats its terror mouth ash,
the thick sucrose filth.

Forty unholy seashore hawks
over purple-spotted house
rouse rough twisted shapes:
stormy day-blurring mass.

He had metal milk disease,
fat ears, sinister armaments,
dental
smells of the viscera inshore,
bruised milky polyporaceae.

He felt the somber image.
He stood still with his eyeships.
Debt: my
lighthouse glare got his red approach,
ate his black-bark rat-ankle squalor!

Ripping through owl-swallowed stars,
we were gorged on ghost brews:
ghoulish scherzo, bird bag waltz;
warm, cruel, silent depths!

Eleventh hour rains know of hay,
Issue the rainbows' report,
And rust so-called great seas.
Grand symbols. A sad ending.