

***La Belle Dame sans Merci: two versions***

John Keats

**La Belle Dame sans Merci (1819/1848)**

I.

1 O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
2 Alone and palely loitering?  
3 The sedge has wither'd from the lake,  
4 And no birds sing.

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

17 I made a garland for her head,  
18 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;  
19 She look'd at me as she did love,  
20 And made sweet moan.

VI.

21 I set her on my pacing steed,  
22 And nothing else saw all day long,  
23 For sidelong would she bend and sing  
24 A faery's song.

VII.

25 She found me roots of relish sweet,  
26 And honey wild, and manna dew,  
27 And sure in language strange she said—  
28 "I love thee true."

**La Belle Dame sans Mercy (1819/1820)**

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,  
Alone and palely loitering;  
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,  
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 cheek 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 set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long;  
For sideways would she lean, and sing  
A faery's song.

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

She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna dew;  
And sure in language strange she said,  
"I love thee true."

VIII.

29 She took me to her elfin grot,  
30 And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,  
31 And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
32 With kisses four.

IX.

33 And there she lulled me asleep,  
34 And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!  
35 The latest dream I ever dream'd  
36 On the cold hill's side.

X.

37 I saw pale kings and princes too,  
38 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
39 They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci  
40 Hath thee in thrall!"

XI.

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

XII.

45 And this is why I sojourn here,  
46 Alone and palely loitering,  
47 Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,  
48 And no birds sing.

She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,  
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—  
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,  
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,  
The latest dream I ever dream'd  
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
Who cry'd—"La belle Dame sans mercy  
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloom  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke, and found me here  
On the cold hill side.

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

**Source for text written 1819 / published 1848:** John Keats. "La Belle Dame sans Merci." *Romantic Circles*. University of Maryland. Accessed 15 September 2015. Web.  
<<https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/poets/texts/labelledame.html>>.

**Source for text written 1819 / published 1820:** John Keats. "La Belle Dame sans Merci." *Representative Poetry Online*. University of Toronto Libraries. Accessed 15 September 2015. Web.  
<<http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/la-belle-dame-sans-merci>>.

**Small emendations to both texts by AFM, following the Broadview Anthology**