

# Tam Lin

## Ruth Barrett

I forbid you maidens all that wear gold in your hair  
To travel to Carterhaugh for young Tam Lin is there  
None that go by Carterhaugh but they leave him a pledge  
Either their mantles of green or else their maidenhead  
Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee  
And she's gone to Carterhaugh as fast as go can she  
She'd not pulled a double rose, a rose but only two  
When up there came young Tam Lin, says "Lady, pull no more"  
"And why come you to Carterhaugh without command from me?"  
"I'll come and go," young Janet said, "and ask no leave of thee" Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee  
And she's gone to her father as fast as go can she  
Well, up then spoke her father dear and he spoke meek and mild  
"Oh, and alas, Janet," he said, "I think you go with child"  
"Well, if that be so," Janet said, "myself shall bear the blame  
There's not a knight in all your hall shall get the baby's name  
For if my love were an earthly knight as he is an elfin grey  
I'd not change my own true love for any knight you have" Janet tied her kirtle green a bit above her knee  
And she's gone to Carterhaugh as fast as go can she  
"Oh, tell to me, Tam Lin," she said, "why came you here to dwell?"  
"The Queen of Faeries caught me when from my horse I fell  
And at the end of seven years she pays a tithe to Hell  
I so fair and full of flesh and feared it be myself  
But tonight is Hallowe'en and the faerie folk ride  
Those that would their true love win at Miles Cross they must bide  
First let past the horses black and then let past the brown  
Quickly run to the white steed and pull the rider down  
For I'll ride on the white steed, the nearest to the town  
For I was an earthly knight, they give me that renown  
Oh, they will turn me in your arms to a newt or a snake  
But hold me tight and fear not, I am your baby's father  
And they will turn me in your arms into a lion bold  
But hold me tight and fear not and you will love your child  
And they will turn me in your arms into a naked knight  
But cloak me in your mantle and keep me out of sight" In the middle of the night she heard the bridle ring  
She heeded what he did say and young Tam Lin did win  
Then up spoke the Faerie Queen, an angry queen was she  
Woe betide her ill-fard face, an ill death may she die  
"Oh, had I known, Tam Lin," she said, "what this night I did see  
I'd have looked him in the eyes and turned him to a tree?"

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