

The Vision of the Lady of the Lake

Strawbs

The boatman rose to the sound of his heartbeat
Loud in the silent approach of the dawn
He glanced through the window at mist on the lake
Which hung like a shroud in the still of the morn
The silver cobwebs spun with the dew
Hung from the bushes in filigree splendour
And water lilies asleep on the lake
Were reflected so delicate, tranquil and tender. The boat man sighed as he strode through the woods
To the place where his boat lay moored to a stake
The hollow sound as his footsteps echoed
Until the sound was lost on the lake
He cast off, poling the boat from the shore
Peering a head through damp clinging haze
He thought that he saw strange swirling shapes
A trick on the eyes that the mist often plays.
So intent was the boatman on crossing the lake
That he failed to notice the current that flowed
Leading his boat from familiar parts
He was firmly, yet somehow unknowingly, towed
All at once the mist seemed to lift
Sufficient to show the boatman a pool
That he'd never seen in the whole of his life
Unnaturally deep, black and silent, and cool. The boatman's shirt clung to his back
He was sweating both from exertion and fear
He had the sensation that someone was watching
He felt the presence of somebody near
An invisible force prevented him moving
The strength of his arms was utterly sapped
The twisted bushes converged round the lake
Like a fish in a net he was trapped.
Suddenly out of the water before him
The wraith-like form of a maiden appeared
Clad in shimmering radiant robes
The maiden materialised as she neared
The hair which finely crowned her head
Was a halo of golden reflecting the sun
All of the beautiful women of time
Were formed all at once into one. She handed the boatman the sword she was holding
Which flashed iridescent before his eyes

Excalibur surely was hardly a match
For a sword that simple description defies
The boatman stood transfixed by her gaze
Which reached to the depths of his very soul
To he who could conquer the evils of life
She offered herself as a whole. The maiden vanished before his gaze
Leaving him clutching the sword in his fist
The hairs on the nape of his neck seemed to stiffen
A creature approached him from out of the mist
It was powerful, huge and yet stupid indeed
For it held right back and failed to attack
The boatman struck at its small stupid eyes
And it crashed to the ground and lay on its back. Without a warning the sky seemed to blacken
As though the sun were in total eclipse
The boatman crouched low as a vast eagle swooped
And a horrified cry escaped from his lips
It strutted before him with pride in its bearing
Admiring its talons both vicious and cruel
Taking advantage the boatman struck fast
And the eagle slid to the depths of the pool. The terrified boatman tried moving his boat
But his pole had grown roots in the watery deep
The bank grew alive with the coils of a snake
And all you could hear was its slither and creep
It cast an envious stare at the boatman
Slid into the water and swam to the boat
He stood hypnotised by its green jealous eyes
As it came from the water and coiled round his throat. As its coils tightened slowly his breath came in gasps
As he choked so he lifted the sword in despair
As the snake was still gloating he severed its head
And in death the snake's coils thrashed wild in the air
The boatman wiped the sweat from his brow
His heart was pounding as never before
His eyes like a lizard's tongue darted around
Not daring to rest for a minute or more. An involuntary shiver went up his spine
As he heard the sound of eerie howls
A wolf appeared on the banks of the pool
Saliva dripped from its loathsome jowls
Hatred smouldered deep in his eyes
Which glowed like coals from Hades fire
It seemed to grow as it crouched and snarled
And watched as the boatman began to tire. It was almost as though the wolf had learned
For it did not attack as the others had done
But bided its time until the moment was right
And sprang as the boatman stared into the sun
But the boatman too had learned to hold back

And holding his sword as though a knife
He plunged it deep into the wolf's heart
Then fell to his knees and prayed for his life. As he felt a hand on his shoulder he whirled
To find the maiden by his side
She smiled and the world seemed to open before him
He tried to speak but his tongue was tied
You must plunge the sword deep into my heart
Lest I should crumble into dust
She offered the boatman the meaning of life
And love, if he could but conquer lust. She bared her breasts before his eyes
The boatman still was stricken dumb
He flung the sword back into the water
Back to the depths from which it had come
The water around him began to boil
The maiden began to wither away
His boat was swamped as the creatures arose
And evil lived for another day.

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