John Keats (1795-1821)

1 La Belle Dame sans Merci

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

II.
Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel’s granary is full,
And the harvest’s done.

III.
I see a lilly on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV.
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.

V.
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.

VI.
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.
VII.
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.
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.

IX.
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.

X.
I saw pale kings, and princes too,
  Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry’d — “La belle Dame sans merci
  Hath thee in thrall!”

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

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

1819