

George Colman, the Younger (1762-1836)

1 *The Maid of the Moor, or the Water Fiends*

On a wild moor, all brown and bleak,  
Where broods the heath frequenting growse,  
There stood a tenement antique,  
Lord Hoppergollop's country house.

Here silence reign'd with lips of glue, 5  
And undisturb'd maintain'd her law;  
Save when the owl, cried — "whoo! whoo! whoo!" —  
Or the hoarse crow, croak'd — "caw! caw! caw!" —

Neglected mansion! for 'tis said, 10  
Whene'er the snow came feathering down,  
Four barbed steeds, from the Bull's-head,  
Carried thy master up to town.

Weak Hoppergollop! Lords may moan,  
Who stake in London their estate,  
On two small rattling bits of bone, 15  
On little figure, or on great.

Swift whirl the wheels, — he's gone; — a Rose  
Remains behind, whose virgin look,  
Unseen, must blush in wint'ry snows;  
Sweet beauteous blossom! 'twas the Cook! 20

A bolder, far, than my weak note,  
Maid of the Moor! thy charms demand:  
Eels might be proud to lose their coat,  
If skinn'd by Molly Dumpling's hand.

Long had the fair one sat alone, 25  
Had none remain'd, save only she;  
She by herself had been, if one  
Had not been left, for company.

'Twas a tall youth, whose cheek's clear hue  
Was tinged with health and manly toil; 30  
Cabbage he sow'd, and when it grew,  
He always cut it off to boil.

Oft would he cry, — “Delve, delve the hole!  
“And prune the tree, and trim the root!  
“And stick the wig upon the pole, 35  
“To scare the sparrows from the fruit!” —

A small mute favourite by day  
Follow'd his steps; where'er he wheels  
His barrow round the garden gay,  
A bob-tail cur is at his heels. 40

Ah man! the brute creation see,  
Thy constancy oft need to spur!  
While lessons of fidelity,  
Are found in every bob-tail cur.

Hard toil'd the youth, so fresh and strong, 45  
While Bob-tail in his face would look,  
And mark'd his master troll the song,  
— “Sweet Molly Dumpling! O, thou Cook!” —

For thus he sung: while Cupid smiled,  
Pleased that the Gard'ner own'd his dart; 50  
Which pruned his passions, running wild,  
And grafted true-love on his heart.

Maid of the Moor, his love return!  
True love ne'er tints the cheek with shame;  
When gard'ners' hearts, like hot-beds burn, 55  
A cook may surely feed the flame.

Ah! not averse from love was she;  
Though pure as heaven's snowy flake;  
Both loved; and though a Gard'ner he,  
He knew not what it was to rake. 60

Cold blows the blast, the night's obscure:

The mansion's crazy wainscots crack,  
The sun had sunk, and all the moor,  
Like ev'ry other moor, was black.

Alone, pale, trembling, near the fire, 65  
The lovely Molly Dumpling sat;  
Much did she fear, and much admire,  
What Thomas gard'ner could be at.

Listening, her hand supports her chin, 70  
But ah! no foot is heard to stir;  
He comes not from the garden in,  
Nor he, nor little bob-tail cur.

They cannot come, sweet Maid, to thee;  
Flesh, both of cur and man, is grass:  
And what's impossible can't be, 75  
And never, never, comes to pass!

She paces through the hall antique,  
To call her Thomas, from his toil;  
Opes the huge door: the hinges creak,  
Because the hinges wanted oil. 80

Thrice on the threshold of the hall,  
She — "Thomas" — cried with many a sob;  
And thrice on Bob-tail did she call,  
Exclaiming sweetly — "Bob! Bob! Bob!" —

Vain Maid! a gard'ner's corpse, 'tis said, 85  
In answers can but ill succeed;  
And dogs that hear, when they are dead,  
Are very cunning dogs indeed!

Back through the hall she bent her way, 90  
All, all was solitude around;  
The candle shed a feeble ray,  
Though a large mould of four to the pound.

Full closely to the fire she drew,  
Adown her cheek a salt tear stole;

When, lo! a coffin out there flew, 95  
And in her apron burnt a hole.

Spiders their busy death-watch tick'd;  
A certain sign that fate will frown;  
The clumsy kitchen clock, too, chick'd,  
A certain sign it was not down. 100

More strong, and strong, her terrors rose,  
Her shadow did the maid appall;  
She trembled at her lovely nose,  
It look'd so long against the wall.

Up to her chamber damp and cold, 105  
She climb'd Lord Hoppergollop's stair,  
Three stories high, long, dull, and old,  
As great Lords' stories often are.

All nature now appear'd to pause;  
And — "o'er the one half world seem'd dead;" — 110  
No — "curtain'd sleep," — had she; because  
She had no curtains to her bed.

Listening she lay; with iron din,  
The clock struck twelve, the door flew wide,  
When Thomas grimly glided in, 115  
With little Bob-tail by his side.

Tall like the poplar was his size,  
Green, green his waistcoat was, as leeks;  
Red, red as beet-root, were his eyes,  
And pale as turnips were his cheeks! 120

Soon as the spectre she espied,  
The fear-struck damsel, faintly said,  
— "What would my Thomas?" — he replied,  
— "Oh! Molly Dumpling, I am dead!

"All in the flower of youth I fell, 125  
"Cut off with healthful blossom crown'd;  
"I was not ill, but in a well,

“I tumbled backwards, and was drown’d.

“Four fathom deep thy love doth lie,  
“His faithful dog his fate doth share; 130  
“We’re fiends; this is not he and I,  
“We are not here, for we are there.

“Yes! two foul water-fiends are we;  
“Maid of the Moor, attend us now!  
“Thy hour’s at hand, we come for thee!” — 135  
The little fiend-cur said, — “bow! wow!” —

“To wind her in her cold, cold grave,  
“A Holland sheet a maiden likes,  
“A sheet of water, thou shalt have;  
“Such sheets there are in Holland dykes.” — 140

The fiends approach; the Maid did shrink,  
Swift through the night’s foul air they spin,  
They took her to the green well’s brink,  
And, with a souse, they plump’d her in.

So true the fair, so true the youth, 145  
Maids, to this day, their story tell,  
And hence the proverb rose, that truth  
Lies in the bottom of a well.

1801

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