

Andrew Lang (1844-1912)

4 *The Milk-White Doe*

It was a mother and a maid
That walked the woods among,
And still the maid went slow and sad,
And still the mother sung.

‘What ails you, daughter Margaret? 5
Why go you pale and wan?
Is it for a cast of bitter love,
Or for a false leman?’

‘It is not for a false lover
That I go sad to see; 10
But it is for a weary life
Beneath the greenwood tree.

‘For ever in the good daylight
A maiden may I go,
But always on the ninth midnight 15
I change to a milk-white doe.

‘They hunt me through the green forest
With hounds and hunting men;
And ever it is my fair brother
That is so fierce and keen.’ 20

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‘Good-morrow, mother.’ ‘Good-morrow, son;
Where are your hounds so good?’
‘Oh, they are hunting a white doe
Within the glad greenwood.

‘And three times have they hunted her, 25
And thrice she’s won away;
The fourth time that they follow her
That white doe they shall slay.’

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Then out and spoke the forester,
As he came from the wood, 30
'Now never saw I maid's gold hair
Among the wild deer's blood.

'And I have hunted the wild deer
In east lands and in west;
And never saw I white doe yet 35
That had a maiden's breast.'

Then up and spake her fair brother,
Between the wine and bread,
'Behold, I had but one sister,
And I have been her dead.' 40

'But ye must bury my sweet sister
With a stone at her foot and her head,
And ye must cover her fair body
With the white roses and red.

'And I must out to the greenwood, 45
The roof shall never shelter me;
And I shall lie for seven long years
On the grass below the hawthorn tree.'

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