







And soon on his bosom sweet Ellinor hung;  
And soon to St. Christopher's chapel they ride,  
And soon does Lord Ronald call Ellen his bride.

Days, weeks, and months fly. — "Ding-a-ding! ding-a-ding!" —  
Hark! hark! in the air how the castle-bells ring! 90  
— "And why do the castle-bells ring in the air?" —  
Sweet Ellen hath borne to Lord Ronald an heir.

Days, weeks, and months fly. — "Ding-a-ding! ding-a-ding!" —  
Again, hark! how gaily the castle-bells ring?  
— "Why again do the castle bells carol so gay?" — 95  
A daughter is born to Lord Ronald to-day.

But see'st thou yon herald so swift hither bend?  
Lord Ronald is summon'd his king to defend:  
And see'st thou the tears of sweet Ellinor flow?  
Lord Ronald has left her to combat the foe. 100

Where slumber her babies, her steps are address'd;  
She presses in anguish her son to her breast;  
Nor ceases she Annabell's cradle to rock,  
Till — "one!" — is proclaim'd by the loud castle-clock.

Her blood, why she knows not, runs cold at the sound! 105  
She raises her head; she looks fearfully round;  
And lo! near the hearth, by a cauldron's blue light,  
She sees the tall form of a female in white!

The female with horror sweet Ellen beholds:  
Still closer her son to her bosom she folds; 110  
And cold tears of terror bedew her pale cheeks,  
While, nearer approaching, the Spectre thus speaks. —

— "The Grim White Woman, who haunts yon wood,  
"The Grim White Woman, who feasts on blood,  
"Since now he has number'd twelve months and a day, 115

“Claims the heart of your son, and is come for her prey.” —

— “Oh! Grim White Woman, my baby now spare!

“I’ll give you these diamonds, so precious and fair!” —

— “Though fair be those diamonds, though precious they be,

“The blood of thy babe is more precious to me!” — 120

— “Oh! Grim White Woman, now let my child live!

“This cross of red rubies in guerdon I’ll give!” —

— “Though red be the flames from those rubies which dart,

“More red is the blood of thy little child’s heart.” —

To soften the dæmon no pleading prevails; 125

The baby she wounds with her long crooked nails:

She tears from his bosom the heart as her prey!

— “’Tis mine!” — shriek’d the Spectre, and vanish’d away.

The foe is defeated, and ended the strife,

And Ronald speeds home to his children and wife. 130

Alas! on his castle a black banner flies,

And tears trickle fast from his fair lady’s eyes.

— “Say, why on my castle a black banner flies,

“And why trickle tears from my fair lady’s eyes?” —

— “In your absence the Grim White Woman was here, 135

“And dead is your son, whom you valued so dear.” —

Deep sorrow’d Lord Ronald; but soon for his grief,

He found in the arms of sweet Ellen relief:

Her kisses could peace to his bosom restore,

And the more he beheld her, he loved her the more; 140

Till it chanced, that one night, when the tempest was loud,

And strong gusts of wind rock’d the turrets so proud,

As Ronald lay sleeping he heard a voice cry,

— “Dear father, arise, or your daughter must die!” —

He woke, gazed around, look'd below, look'd above; 145  
— “Why trembles my Ronald? what ails thee, my love?” —  
— “I dreamt, through the skies that I saw a hawk dart,  
“Pounce a little white pigeon, and tear out its heart.” —

— “Oh hush thee, my husband; thy vision was vain.” —  
Lord Ronald resign'd him to slumber again: 150  
But soon the same voice, which had rouzed him before,  
Cried — “Father, arise, or your daughter's no more!” —

He woke, gazed around, look'd below, look'd above;  
— “What fears now, my Ronald? what ails thee, my love?” —  
— “I dreamt that a tigress, with jaws open'd wide, 155  
“Had fasten'd her fangs in a little lamb's side!” —

— “Oh! hush thee, my husband; no tigress is here.” —  
Again Ronald slept, and again in his ear  
Soft murmur'd the voice, — “Oh! be warn'd by your son;  
“Dear father, arise, for it soon will strike — “one!” — 160

“Your wife, for a spell your affections to hold,  
“To the Grim White Woman her children hath sold;  
“E'en now is the Fiend at your babe's chamber door;  
“Then father, arise, or your daughter's no more!” —

From his couch starts Lord Ronald, in doubt and dismay, 165  
He seeks for his wife — but his wife is away!  
He gazes around, looks below, looks above;  
Lo! there sits on his pillow a little white dove!

A mild lambent flame in its eyes seem'd to glow;  
More pure was its plumage than still-falling snow, 170  
Except where a scar could be seen on its side,  
And three small drops of blood the white feathers had dyed.

— “Explain, pretty pigeon, what art thou, explain?” —  
— “The soul of thy son, by the White Dæmon slain;

“E’en now is the Fiend at your babe’s chamber door, 175  
“And thrice having warn’d you, I warn you no more!” —

The pigeon then vanish’d; and seizing his sword,  
The way to his daughter Lord Ronald explored;  
Distracted he sped to her chamber full fast,  
And the clock it struck — “one!” — as the threshold he past. 180

And straight near the hearth, by a cauldron’s blue light,  
He saw the tall form of a female in white;  
Ellen wept, to her heart while her baby she press’d,  
Whom the spectre approaching, thus fiercely address’d.

— “The Grim White Woman, who haunts yon wood, 185  
“The Grim White Woman, who feasts on blood,  
“Since now she has number’d twelve months and a day,  
“Claims the heart of your daughter, and comes for her prey!” —

This said, she her nails in the child would have fix’d;  
Sore struggled the mother; when, rushing betwixt, 190  
Ronald struck at the Fiend with his ready-drawn brand,  
And, glancing aside, his blow lopp’d his wife’s hand!

Wild laughing, the Fiend caught the hand from the floor,  
Releasing the babe, kiss’d the wound, drank the gore;  
A little jet ring from the finger then drew, 195  
Thrice shriek’d a loud shriek, and was borne from their view!

Lord Ronald, while horror still bristled his hair,  
To Ellen now turn’d; — but no Ellen was there!  
And lo! in her place, his surprise to complete,  
Lay Janet, all cover’d with blood, at his feet! 200

— “Yes, traitor, ’tis Janet!” — she cried; — “at my sight  
“No more will your heart swell with love and delight;  
“That little jet ring was the cause of your flame,  
“And that little jet ring from the Forest-Fiend came.

“It endow’d me with beauty, your heart to regain; 205  
“It fix’d your affections, so wavering and vain;  
“But the spell is dissolved, and your eyes speak my fate,  
“My falsehood is clear, and as clear is your hate.

“But what caused *my* falsehood? — your falsehood alone;  
“What voice said — ‘be guilty?’ — seducer, your own! 210  
“You vow’d truth for ever, the oath I believed,  
“And had *you* not deceived me, *I* had not deceived.

“Remember my joy, when affection you swore!  
“Remember my pangs, when your passion was o’er!  
“A curse, in my rage, on your children was thrown, 215  
“And alas! wretched mother, that curse struck my own!” —

And here her strength fail’d her! — the sad one to save  
In vain the Leech labour’d; three days did she rave;  
Death came on the fourth, and restored her to peace,  
Nor long did Lord Ronald survive her decease. 220

Despair fills his heart! he no longer can bear  
His castle, for Ellen no longer is there:  
From Scotland he hastens, all comfort disdains,  
And soon his bones whiten on Palestine’s plains.

If you bid me, fair damsels, my moral rehearse, 225  
It is, that young ladies ought never to curse;  
For no one will think her well-bred, or polite,  
Who devotes little babes to Grim Women in White.

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