

And all then did die, save only I,
 And I hardly saved my bacon.

“It happed that very hour,
 The Black King, walking by, 130
 Did see me sprawling, on my hands and knees crawling,
 And took to his palace hard by.

“And finding that I was
 A likely lad for to see,
 My bones well knit, and my joints well set, 135
 And not above twenty-three,

“He made me his gardener boy,
 To sow pease and potatoes,
 To water his flowers, when there were no showers,
 And cut his parsley and lettuce. 140

“Now it so fell out on a Sunday
 (Which these pagans never keep holy),
 I was gathering rue, and thinking on Sue,
 With a heart full of melancholy,

“When the King of Achen’s daughter 145
 Did open her casement to see;
 And, as she looked round on the gooseberry ground,
 Her eyes they lit upon me;

“And seeing me tall and slim,
 And of shape right personable; 150
 My skin so white, and so very unlike
 The blacks at her father’s table,

“She took it into her head
 (For so the Devil did move her),
 That I, in good sooth, was a comely youth, 155
 And would make a gallant lover.

“So she tripped from her chamber so high,
 All in silks and satins clad,
 And her gown it rustled, as down she bustled,

With steps like a princess sad. 160

“Her shoes they were decked with pearls,
And her hair with diamonds glistened,
And her gimcracks and toys, they made such a noise,
My mouth watered the while I listened.

“Then she tempted me with glances, 165
And with sugared words so tender,
(And though she was black, she was straight in the back,
And young and tall and slender).

“But I my love remembered,
And the locket she did give me, 170
And resolved to be true to my darling Sue,
As she did ever believe me.

“Whereat the princess waxed
Both furious and angry,
And said, she was sure I had some paramour 175
In kitchen or in laundry.

“And then, with a devilish grin,
She said, ‘Give me your locket’ –
But I damned her for a witch, and a conjuring bitch,
And kept it in my pocket. 180

“Howbeit, both day and night
She did torture and torment,
And said she, ‘If you’ll yield to me the field,
I’ll give thee thy heart’s content.

““But give me up the locket, 185
‘And stay three months with me,
‘And then, if the will remains with you still,
‘I’ll ship you off to sea.’

“So I thought it the only way
To behold my lovely Sue; 190
And the thoughts of Old England, they made my heart tingle, and
I gave up the locket so true.

“Thereon she laughed outright
With a hellish grin, and I saw
That the princess was gone, and in her room 195
There stood old Martha Daw.

“She was all astride a broomstick,
And bid me get up behind;
So my wits being lost, the broomstick I crossed,
And away we flew, swift as the wind. 200

“But my head it soon turned giddy,
I reeled and lost my balance,
So I tumbled over, like a perjured lover,
A warning to all gallants.

“And there where I tumbled down 205
The Indians found me lying;
My head they cut off, and my blood did quaff,
And set my flesh a-frying.

“Hence, all ye English gallants
A warning take by me, 210
Your true love’s locket to keep in your pocket
Whenever you go to sea.

“And, O dear uncle Thomas,
I come to give you warning,
As then ’twas my chance with Davy to dance, 215
’Twill be yours to-morrow morning.

“’Twas three years agoe this night,
Three years gone clear and clean,
Since we sat down at Aunt’s at the wedding to dance,
And our number was thirteen. 220

“Now I and sister Nan
(Two of that fatal party)
Have both gone from Aunt’s with Davy to dance,
Though then we were hale and hearty.

“And, as we both have died 225
(I speak it with grief and sorrow)
At the end of each year, it now is clear
That you should die to-morrow.

“But if, good uncle Thomas, 230
You’ll promise, and promise truly,
To plough the main for England again,
And perform my orders duly,

“Old Davy will allow you 235
Another year to live,
To visit your friends, and make up your odd ends,
And your enemies forgive.

“But, friend, when you reach Old England, 240
To Laure’s-ton town you’ll go,
And then to the Mayor, in open fair,
Impeach old Martha Daw.

“And next you’ll see her hanged
With the halter around her throat;
And, when void of life, with your clasp-knife
The string of her apron cut.

“Then, if that you determine 245
My last desires to do,
In her left-hand pocket you’ll find the locket,
And carry it to Sue.”

The grisly spectre thus 250
In mournful accents spoke,
By which time, being morning, he gave me no warning,
But vanished in sulphur and smoke.

Next day there sprang up a breeze, 255
And our ship began to tack,
And for fear of the ghost, we left the coast,
And sailed for England back.

And I, being come home,

Did all his words pursue;
Old Martha likewise was hung at the 'size,
And I carried the locket to Sue. 260

And now, being tired of life,
I make up my mind to die;
But I thought this story I'd lay before ye,
For the good of posterity.

Oh never then sit at table 265
When the number is thirteen;
And, lest witches be there, put salt in your beer,
And scrape your platters clean.

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