

The Defence of the Cubbington Pear

(HS2 - and an intended murder)

Inside their tower the sightless men shake hands
and stroke their dragon pet and feed it gold,
worshipping both its armour and its flames
that they will loose to slice the scepter'd isle.

Sharing its hubris, triumphant in their plan
they scheme a map to ease its fearsome way,
grubbing up valleys, scarring gentle hills,
scorching those woods the Conqueror made his own.

Northwards the journey, straight as an arrow flies,
its leather leash unwinding from their hands,
scouring to right and left the demon crawls
until Black Warwick's bear stands in its path

calling to arms from Edgehill's blood-washed slopes
that ghostly army laying where it fell,
mailed horses rear, a whisper passes through,
"The monster comes, is set against our land."

"Unfurl the banners, stir Tiw from his bed,
summon that Guy who slew the Dunsmore beast,
call Leicester, Beauchamp, wake de Montfort now,
rouse Shuckburgh, Astley from their drowsy rest.

For Shakespeare, Drayton, Landor watch our charge,
our sword-blades honed upon their songs' whetstones,
the alarum is raised, come ride for all your life
and gather in the fields of Boddington.

Ringing the ground, they urge to meet their foe
as, in Dasset's hawthorn groves, three matrons bend,
cutting soft blossoms, placing rowan twigs,
a fluttering dove, one plaited osier cross

and, singing low, they weave a haunting spell
around the borders of their native ground,
from north to south, from east to west they spin,
bidding the faerie from enchanted lands.

Then out from Arden's woods the spirits surge
led by Titania, Mab in full array,
on Haselor Hill the Magdalen's waters rise,
Godiva's streets loose coils of shining hair

and Feldon's flowers lift up their swarms of bees,
on Meon Hill a black dog howls the moon,
Editha's tears flow soft from Merevale
Milburga's prayers bestir a lover's tomb.

From warp and weft the old dames charm takes voice
a blackbird plucks it, sings to heaven's roof
then pee-wit, lark and spuggie from the hedge
chorus the patterns that the sibyls dance:

**“Three times round and three times round
we bind our slayers to the ground,
for they who come to scourge with fire
call up the hosts of Warwickshire**

**and they who come to mock our worth
will tumble onto warriors' earth,
and those who come to bring false good
will fall into swift Avon's flood,**

**whilst they who come to fell our trees
will drop bereft upon their knees
and those who come to make their name
will live to see theirs wrapped in shame.**

**So now with blackthorn, keck and may
we stitch this charm to bar their way
and summoning cowslip, bright primrose
obscure the sunlight from our foes.**

**Now, tying speedwell, celandine,
we set a ward to last through time
and sow with cornflowers, buttercups
these fields our forebears leased to us.”**

and so they work whilst, on a hedge-strewn hill,
an ancient pear tree bends, weeps drifts of flowers,
untimely ripped, its plummet to the grass
will still a heartbeat, tear out England's soul.

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