

A minister's daughter in the north
– Hey the rose and the lindsay-o
She's fallen in love with her father's clerk
– Down by the greenwood side-i-o
He courted her for a year and a day
Till her the young man did betray

She leaned her back up against a tree
And there the tear did blind her eye

She leaned her back up against a thorn
And that her bonny boys she has born

She's taken out her little pen-knife
And she has twined them of their life

She laid them beneath some marble stone
Thinking to go a maiden home

As she looked over her father's wall
She saw her two bonny boys playing ball

“Oh bonny boys, if you were mine
I would dress you in silk so fine”

“Oh cruel mother, when we were thine
We didn't see aught of your silk so fine”

“Oh bonny boys, come tell to me
What sort of death I'll have to die?”

“Seven years as a fish in the flood
And seven years a bird in the wood”

“Seven years a tongue in the warning bell
And seven years in the flames of hell”

“Welcome, welcome, fish in the flood
And welcome, welcome, bird in the wood”

“Welcome, tongue to the warning bell
But God keep me from the flames of hell”

Shirley Collins sings *The Cruel Mother*
on the 1960 album *False True Lovers*

There was a lady lived in York – all the lee and loney
Fell in love with her father's clerk – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She loved him up, she loved him down – all the lee and loney
Loved him 'til he filled her arms – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She leant her back against an oak – all the lee and loney
First it bent and then it broke – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She leant her back against a thorn – all the lee and loney
There she had two fine babes born – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She took out her reaping knife – all the lee and loney
There she took those sweet babes' lives – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She wiped the blade against her shoe – all the lee and loney
The more she rubbed, the redder it grew – down by the greenwood sidey-o

She went back to her father's hall – all the lee and loney
Saw two babes a-playing at ball – down by the greenwood sidey-o

“Oh babes oh babes if you were mine” – all the lee and loney
'I'd dress you up in scarlet fine' – down by the greenwood sidey-o

“Oh Mother oh Mother if we were yours” – all the lee and loney
'Scarlet was our own hearts' blood' – down by the greenwood sidey-o

“Oh babes oh babes it's Heaven for you” – all the lee and loney
“Oh Mother oh Mother it's Hell for you” – down by the greenwood sidey-o

10,000 Maniacs sing *Greenwood Sidey*
on the 2015 album *Twice Told Tales*

She sat down below a thorn
Fine flowers in the valley
And there she has her sweet babe born
And the green leaves they grow rarely
“Smile na sae sweet, my bonnie babe
An ye'll smile sae sweet, ye'll smile me deid”
She's ta'en oot her wee pen knife
And twinned the sweet babe o' it's life
She's howket a grave by the light o' the moon
An' there she's buried her sweet babe in
As she was going to the church
She saw a sweet babe in the porch
“O sweet babe, an' thou were mine
I wad cleed thee in the silk sae fine”
“O mither dear, when I was thine
Ye didna prove tae me sae kind”

Barbara Dickson sings *Fine Flowers in the Valley*
on the 1984 album *Parcel of Rogues*

There was a lady near the town
– Low so low and so lonely
She walked all night and all around
– Down in the greenwoods of ivy

She's leaned her back against a thorn
Two little babies she has borne

She took a rope so long and neat
She tied them down both hand and feet

She took a knife so keen and sharp
She pierced it through each tender heart

She buried them under the marble stone
Then she turned and went on home

As she walked out one moonlit night
She saw two babes all dressed in white

“Oh babes, oh babes, if you were mine
I'd dress you up in silks so fine”

“Oh mother, oh mother, when we were yours
You dressed us in our own hearts' blood”

“You wiped your pen-knife on your shoe
The more you wiped the bloodier it grew”

“You buried us under the marble stone
You turned and went a maiden home”

“Babes, oh babes, come tell me true
What death must I die for you?”

“For seven years you shall ring the bell
For seven years you shall wait in hell”

June Tabor sings *The Cruel Mother*
on the 2003 album *An Echo of Hooves*

Aul' Alison Cross she lives in yon tower
The ugliest witch in the North Countrie
Has trysted me day forbore
And mony a braw speech she's made tae me

Chorus (after each verse):

Awa, awa, ye ugly witch
Haud far awa an' lat me be
Afore I'll kiss your ugly mou
I'll raither toddle aroond a tree

She showed me a mantle o reid scarlet
Wrocht wi golden fringes fine
“Gin ye'll be my lemman saw true
This guidly gift it sal be thine”

She showed me a sark o the softest silk
Weel wrocht wi pearls aboon the band
“Gin ye'll be my lemman sae true
This guidly gift at your command”

She showed me a cup of the guid red gowd
Weel wrocht wi jewels sae fair and fine
“Gin ye'll be my lemman sae true
This guidly gift it sal be thine”

She's taen oot her grass green horn
She's blew it three times loud and shrill
Swore by the moon and the stars aboon
She'd gar him rue the day that he was born

She's taen oot her silver wand
She's turned three times aroond the tree
Muttered sic words that my senses failed
And I fell doon senseless tae the ground

Wi silver basin an silver kaim
Tae kaim my heidie upon her knee
High on ilkae Saturday nicht
Aul Alison Cross she comes tae me
But it fell upon last Halloween
When the Seely Courts cam ridin by
The Queen's lichtit on a gowan bank
Nae far frae the tree whaur I did lie

She's liftit me in her milk-white haun
She's strikt me three times on her knee
She's turned me back tae my proper shape:
Nae mair I'll toddle aroond a tree

Alison Cross lives in yon tower
The ugliest witch in the north countrie
She's trysted me ae day 'til her bower
And mony's the braw spreech she made tae me
She showed me a mantle o reid scarlet
Weel wrocht wi gowd and fringes fine
Says, “Gin ye'll be my leman sae true
This gudely gift, it shall be thine”
“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”

She showed me a sark o the saftest silk
Weel wrocht wi pearls abune the band
Says, “Gin ye'll be my leman sae true
This gudely gift's at your command”
“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”
She showed me a cup o the gude reid gowd
Weel wrocht wi jewels sae fair and fine
Says, “Gin ye'll be my leman sae true
This gudely gift, it shall be thine”
“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”

An' she's ta'en oot her grass-green horn
She blew it three times loud and shrill
She swore by the moon and the stars abune
She'd gar me rue the day I ever was born
An' she's ta'en oot her silvery wand
She straiked it three time o'er her knee
She's muttered sic words as my senses failed
I feel doon senseless tae the ground
“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”
It fell upon last Halloween

When the seely coort came ridin by
The queen's lichtit doon on a gowany bank
Says, “Gin ye'll be my leman sae true
Nae far fae the tree whaur I did lie
An' she's ta'en oot her silvery wand
She straked it three times o'er her knee
She's turned me back tae ma proper shape
Nae mare tae toddle aroond the tree

“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”
“Awa, awa ye ugly witch
Haud far awa and let me be
Afore I'll kiss yer ugly mou
I'd raither toddle aroond the tree”

Alison Cross that lives in yon tower
The ugliest witch in the North Country
Has trysted me one day up to her bower
And many a fair speech she made to me

Alison Cross that lives in yon tower
The ugliest witch in the North Country
Has trysted me one day up to her bower
And many a fair speech she made to me

She stroked my head and she's combed my hair
She set me down softly on her knee
Saying, “If you will be my lover so true
So many good things I would give to you”

“Away, away, you ugly witch
Go far away and let me be
I never will be your lover so true
And wish I were out of your company”

Chorus (after every other verse):

Alison Cross, she must be
The ugliest witch in the North Country
Alison Cross, she must be
The ugliest witch in the North Country

She showed me a mantle of red scarlet
With golden flowers and fringes fine
Says, “If you will be my lover so true
This goodly gift it shall be thine”

She showed me a shirt of the softest silk
Well wrought with pearls about the band
Saying, “If you will be my lover so true
This goodly gift you shall command

She showed me a cup of the good red gold
Well set with jewels so fair to see
Says, “If you will be my lover so true
This goodly gift I would give to thee”

“Away, away, you ugly witch
Go far away and let me be
I never would kiss your ugly mouth
For all of the gifts that you could give

She's turned her right and round about
And thrice she blew on a grass-green horn
She swore by the moon and the stars up above
That she'd make me rue the day I was born

Then out she has taken a silver wand
She's turned her three times round and round
She's muttered such words till my strength it did fail
And she's turned me into an ugly worm

Cruel Mother Greenwood Sidey Fine Flowers Cruel Mother

Alison Cross Alison Cross Alison Gross