

Spring 4-15-1988

The Trees of Elfhome

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Recommended Citation

Reedman, Janet P. (1988) "*The Trees of Elfhome*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 1988 : Iss. 5 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol1988/iss5/5>

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"I can't, Davey. There's a war still brewing along Huntling's borders. He deserves no help, but many others will die if that war breaks out."

"I'll come," Davey began.

"You'll do no such thing. You'll fare straight to Eldale Hill and set your Jeannie's worries to rest. Huntling won't harm me. Though he might with you at my side. Go on, Davey. Go now."

Davey stood uncertainly aside as Thomas swayed to his feet. The Rhymer forced a smile to his lips. Davey looked at him worriedly, but held back the hand that he would have used to steady the Rhymer. Thomas's face had a fierce look on it that would stand no argument.

"Go, Davey."

"Sobe it," the gipsy replied with a sigh. "But when you're done with Huntling..."

"I'll be coming to see you," Thomas finished. "Now go, Davey."

Davey shrugged his shoulders. He looked once about the glen. Gathering up his sword and belt, he buckled them about his waist. His stolen mount was long fled.

"Then farewell, Thomas," he said.

"Farewell, Davey."

Thomas watched the gipsy stride off into the wood. Dawn was lighting in the eastern skies and the birds were awaking in the trees about him. As he set off himself, he heard through the birds' chorus, Davey's whistling.

Rattle for the gipsy, gipsy, rattle for the gipsy Davey...

* * *

"...and so fell Yared," True Thomas the Rhymer finished, "who was neither priest of the New Faith nor holy man. Let his fall be a lesson to us all."

Thomas looked about the smokey interior of Huntling Hall's main keep, his gaze coming to rest on the Lord himself, and his guest the Lord of Addleworth. They stirred uncomfortably under the Rhymer's steady gaze.

"I will have the marriage annulled," Lord Huntling said at last. He turned to his guest. "You understand?"

Lord Addleworth dropped his eyes from Thomas's face.

"Aye," he said, turning to Huntling. A thought flickered across his features and he smiled broadly. "I have a cousin--a first cousin," he said, "whose daughter--fair and of a whole mind, I might add--will be of age before the Beltane fires are lit..."

Thomas shook his head. Already Huntling was nodding in agreement. With a heavy sigh, Thomas slipped from the dais, down the hall and out into the night. Outside, the moon gleamed high above him and his eyes went northward. Buttoning up his jacket, he began the long walk to Eldale Hill.

THE TREES OF ELFHAME

by Janet P. Reedman

Silver maiden, queen of trees,
I sway with boughs in the breeze,
And list the trees I have seen
To keep Elfhame's forests green!

Berried Rowan among the rocks,
In golden broom and hollyhocks,
Give up your beads for my hair--
Berries make elf-maidens fair!

Stately ash upon a hill,
Home to thrush and whipporwill,
Give me a branch for my hand--
Ashwood makes a goodly wand.

Mighty oak deep in the wood,
Since Druidic times you've stood;
Give me boughs of mistletoe,
To make elven knowledge grow!

Prickly holly growing wild,
Give your thorns to this fay-child
So I may forge holly-swords
To present to Elfhame's lords.

Mother Elder, all alone,
Withered ugly forest-crone,
Don't you pinch me as I walk,
Picking rose and bluebell stalk!

Hated blackthorn, dark and gnarled,
Deep in grasses growing snarled,
Keep your goblins far from me
As I pass from tree to tree.

Walking willow on the prow,
Haunted by black bird and owl,
Do not follow on my path
Of you shall feel faery wrath!

Graveyard yew, above the tomb,
Shed not on me ghastly gloom;
Elves need not heed your dark sway--
Only mortals pass away!

Now the listings are complete;
I fly home on elf-light feet,
Bearing knowledge that I need
To keep Elfhame greenly tree'd.