

# TAM LIN

a play in 5 acts

by Nancy G. McClerman

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## CHARACTERS

<b>Tam Lin</b>	Age 18 – 25 Beautiful young consort of the Faerie Queen
<b>Janet</b>	Age 18 – 25 Daughter of a Scottish nobleman
<b>Faerie Queen</b>	Ageless. Reigning spirit of Carterhaugh. Loves human jewelry and fine clothing
<b>Margaret</b>	Age 30s – 40s Janet's lady-in-waiting
<b>Lord Aberdeen</b>	Age 30s – 40s Friend and political ally of Dunbar
<b>Lord Dunbar</b>	Age 50s – 60s Janet's father, lord of Dunbar Castle
<b>MacDougal Sullivan Thompson</b>	Elven Knights - consorts of the Faerie Queen. Ageless, but better younger than older.
<b>Lady Roxbrugh</b>	50s - 60s Matriarch of the Roxbrugh clan
<b>Sterling</b>	Roxbrugh knight
<b>Douglas MacTavish</b>	Aberdeen soldiers
<b>A Servant</b>	Of Lord Dunbar
<b>Knights</b>	Of Lord Dunbar

## TAM LIN

### Time

Medieval Scotland

### Places

- Forest of Carterhaugh
- Inside Roxburgh castle
- Just outside Dunbar castle
- Inside Dunbar castle
- Janet's room
- Miles Cross

Most scenes in this play need only a minimum of props – for example, a rosebush can suggest Tam Lin's haunts at Carterhaugh.

### About Tam Lin

This play is based on the Scottish folk ballad Tam Lin. There are many different versions of the ballad because it existed for hundreds of years as part of a non-literate folk tradition. The versions were finally collected and committed to paper by folk lore scholar Francis James Child.

This play is mostly based on a combination of Child Ballad #39A and the version recorded by Fairport Convention on their 1969 album *Liege & Leif*, which is how I first heard of Tam Lin.

As of this writing, June 2003, a good resource for information on the Tam Lin ballad is available on the Internet at [www.tam-lin.org](http://www.tam-lin.org).

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**ACT I****SCENE 1**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. The Faerie Queen and her Elven Knights enter.)

FAERIE QUEEN

Halloween is waning and our duty is done.  
The Dark Lord seven years more content.  
But so Carterhaugh remains unmolested  
Our dear sacrifices are well-spent.

MACDOUGAL

Righteous Queen, I attend your will assiduously.

SULLIVAN

You attend nowhere near assiduous as me.

THOMPSON

But I attend the most ass – ass – what they said, of us three.

FAERIE QUEEN

Thank you Thompson, Sullivan and MacDougal.  
Let us - but what is this? Tam Lin I see  
Has blossomed into a bonnie young man  
And I am a captivated Queen bee.  
Go and knock him off his horse.  
And then send him this way.  
I'll have him for my very own  
On this momentous day.

MACDOUGAL

I go my queen!

SULLIVAN

You two stay.

THOMPSON

No, I must go.

FAERIE QUEEN

Go all three! He's getting away!  
(The Knights exit.)

FAERIE QUEEN

Now Tam Lin is unhorsed  
And has hurt his wee head.  
I will cure his sad ailment  
Ere I put him to bed.

(TAM LIN enters pursued by the Elven Knights.  
When Tam Lin sees the Faerie Queen he thinks she  
is a human woman, and so he stops to defend her –  
he turns around and draws his sword to face the  
Elven Knights.)

TAM LIN

(bravado)

Don't be afraid, good lady! I won't let these bandits harm you,  
although they are a desperate lot. They jumped out of the trees  
and threw me head-first from my horse. But I am not so ailing that  
I can't send at least one of these bastards to hell!

(He threatens them with his sword. The Elven  
Knights prepare to strike back.)

FAERIE QUEEN

My Elven Knights you have done well  
Now put your weapons aside  
I thank you for your good offices  
And this new stallion to ride.

(The Elven Knights fall back.)

TAM LIN

Excuse me, but... you know these... gentlemen?

FAERIE QUEEN

I do young Tam Lin of the house of Roxbrugh.  
By the stars, you are a strapping fine man.  
I've watched you group up from a wee little sprout

To the finest young birch in the land.

TAM LIN

My lady, I was thrown off my right senses as well as my horse.  
Forgive me,

(He kisses her hand as a proper courtly gentleman  
would.)

TAM LIN

...but I don't believe we have ever met in this world. And my  
name is not called Tam Lin.

FAERIE QUEEN

Tam Lin is a proper name  
For a royal Elven consort  
Oh look at your lips, your sparkling eyes  
You will be my constant escort.  
Come away with me boy  
You'll have no more aching.  
The unearthly pleasures  
Are yours for partaking.

TAM LIN

My lady, I must implore you – speak plain, I can't decipher your  
meaning for the pounding in my head.

(The Faerie Queen casts a spell on Tam Lin so that  
his headache is cured.)

TAM LIN

My headache is cured! How did you accomplish this wonder?

FAERIE QUEEN

Greater wonders awaiting  
Will make this mundane.  
Come go with me now,  
You cannot disdain.

TAM LIN

But my lady, I can't go with you. I must be getting home, you see...

(She waves another spell and Tam Lin is enchanted.)

Yes my lady. I submit to your will

FAERIE QUEEN

You are my own now and naught can be ill.

(The Faerie Queen jumps into his arms and they exit.)

THOMPSON

I don't like the look of this.  
She treats him like a wee precious gem.  
We are Elven folk, he but a mortal -  
She can't forsake us for one of *them*!

SULLIVAN

She's taken a laddie or two in her day.  
She never retains them long.  
I'll wager she throws this one over tout suite.  
Thrash me if I'm proven wrong!

MACDOUGAL

This mortal is much too presumptuous  
Of our great Lady's affection  
But for now we will look upon him  
As a brief human infection.

(Thompson, Sullivan and MacDougal exit.)

**SCENE 2**

(One week later, in Roxbrugh castle. LADY ROXBRUGH enters.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

(speaks with increasing bitterness)

How often have great families fallen into ruin through greed, foolishness, and failure to plan for all the likely misfortunes in the offing? My husband and I saw much of that, and so we worked our entire lives to profit from the errors of the fools who have gone before us. We made war against our neighbors only if it was absolutely necessary – a matter of self-preservation. Greed was never our motive. We raised our sons with no doubt about their succession, for warring between brothers is the greatest blight in Scotland today. And we insisted that they each take a wife who was healthy, industrious and virtuous, and not just a painted dolly for pompous display. All this careful planning and yet I find myself widowed and racked with the infirmities of age, with half my family carried off by plague or other misfortunes, and the one last remnant of the tattered shreds of this careful planning, my final hope, my grandson Thomas, has vanished like a will o' the wisp on All Hallows' Eve. There are malicious spirits that hover over my life, laughing at my plans, and plotting to wrest every last bit of happiness from me by the bitter end.

(STERLING, a Roxbrugh knight who is proud of his own eloquence, enters.)

Sterling! Have you found him yet?

STERLING

Madame, seven days and seven nights have crept mournfully by since young Thomas was last seen by mortal man. None but yourself alone sustains the hopeless hope of his safe and happy return.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Perhaps I'm the only one who wishes for his safe and happy return.

STERLING

My lady?

LADY ROXBRUGH

The rust of old age hasn't yet blasted my mind to a pulp. With no Thomas there is no limit to the ambitions of you and your cousins.

STERLING

Madame, your suspicions greatly dishonor us.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Do you expect me to believe this story? He was riding on his horse, when suddenly as if through a hole in the sky he was vaporized. And like a simple-minded old ninny I should thank you for that?

STERLING

I told you the story as it was told to me. And you may see for yourself how our hounds, baying and jumping at the sound of the hunt, fall over one another as crashing waves upon a rocky shore when they reach the very spot where last he was seen. And try as we might, they will not be removed from that very place.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Did you try digging then?

STERLING

Aye. But the only treasures buried in the sleeping earth were rocks and stones and gnarled and ancient roots.

LADY ROXBRUGH

No doubt you buried the body elsewhere.

STERLING

I do beseech you my lady, hold off these harsh words, unless you have proof that my cousins and I are any less than your good and loyal kinsmen. You must believe that we never could be so envious and cruel as to dispatch young Thomas to such an ignoble fate.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Never mind the silvery speeches, Sterling. I will see to it myself.

(Lady Roxbrugh attempts to stride forth, but can't go very fast, and then is stopped by a coughing fit. Sterling assists her to the exit.)

**SCENE 3**

(Seven years later. Janet's room. JANET enters with a bow and arrow. MARGARET, her lady-in-waiting enters after.)

MARGARET

Have you finished sewing your 50 rows?

JANET

The air is much too fresh for sewing anything but my wild oats.

MARGARET

You must learn to make tapestries, Janet. You can't keep a castle warm with a bow and arrow.

JANET

But you can't catch your supper with even the most elegant tapestry.

MARGARET

Since when have you needed to catch your own supper? And certainly not today, when a great feast is being prepared for your father's guests. Have they arrived yet?

JANET

Margaret dear, this is the third time you asked about our guests. My father has had visitors for dinner before. Why are these individuals so noteworthy?

MARGARET

If Lord Aberdeen is not worthy of note then a sunrise at midnight would pass by without comment.

JANET

Lord Aberdeen? I have heard the name before. One of my father's old knights from battles long past.

MARGARET

Old? You can't be speaking of Aberdeen and "old" in one breath. When I was a lass all the ladies and their maids were enamored of the bonnie Lord Andrew. He was the most handsome and stout-hearted gentleman in all of Caledonia. They say he could defeat ten men with only himself and the mighty Murgatroyd.

JANET

What is Murgatroyd? His horse?

MARGARET

His sword - the finest in all of Scotland.

JANET

Meg, if I did not know you better, I would say that you were in love with this Lord Aberdeen.

MARGARET

I would not be a natural woman if I was not. He broke a hundred score hearts when he married at last.

JANET

And who is this paragon of a creature who won him for herself?

MARGARET

She died many years ago, poor lady. They say he was so broken-hearted he vowed he would never marry again.

JANET

He is a sensible fellow. Marriage is a silly state of existence.

MARGARET

Is that so? And just where do you get your learned information about marriage?

JANET

From my own observations. Why should I spend my time trying to love a man? Men care for nothing but honor and battles and whacking each other to pieces. Love is wasted on such excitable creatures.

MARGARET

So in all your great wide knowledge of mankind, you've decided there is nothing to differentiate one man from another?

JANET

How does that old saying go? "You don't need to gather all the acorns in the forest to understand the nature of an acorn."

MARGARET

Men are not acorns. Do you plan to remain unmarried the rest of your life? And have no children? Babies are the greatest blessing of a woman's life.

JANET

Such blessings are puking and screaming to be fed when you'd rather be practicing archery.

MARGARET

One day you may meet a man who will make your heart ache with longing. On that day you will gladly trade all the archery practice in the world for having his babies.

JANET

On that day you may take me to the forest and leave me for the fairies to steal away, for surely then my mind would be a useless sponge.

MARGARET

Would you rather be the bride of an Elven Lord than your own kind? I promise you, when you see Lord Aberdeen you will form a different opinion of men altogether.

JANET

Good, solid, sensible Meg, I have never heard you lavish such praise on any being – Elven Lord or human.

(teasing)

Margaret, would you like to have Aberdeen's baby?

MARGARET

Hold your tongue missy! Where do you get the cheek to ask me such a question? I am far too old to be thinking such thoughts.

JANET

My aunt Mary is older than you and yet she had a bonny healthy baby last June.

MARGARET

If Aberdeen ever takes another wife she will be a fine young lady of a noble family, not an old and discarded serving woman.

JANET

But Margaret, you are as pretty as any fine young lady I have ever known, and your cleverness surpasses them all.

MARGARET

Quit your flattery. You still need to work your tapestry this afternoon.

JANET

But Margaret, our guests have arrived. If you hadn't been chattering on about having Lord Aberdeen's babies I could have told you so.

MARGARET

You should have spoken up right away you brazen wench. Oh, but never mind now, let's hurry.

(Margaret and Janet exit.)

**SCENE 4**

(LORD DUNBAR enters along with several knights. LORD ABERDEEN, an old friend and political ally of Dunbar enters.)

DUNBAR

Aberdeen! You're tardy man.

ABERDEEN

What, have I missed supper?

DUNBAR

You couldn't miss it, because it waits upon you. What's your excuse?

ABERDEEN

I was riding by the forest at Carterhaugh and I came upon a young lady in a screeching brattle. She said that a ghost had taken her mantle.

DUNBAR

What would a ghost need with a mantle?

ABERDEEN

That is exactly what I said to her. And she said if she did not give the ghost her mantle he would have her maidenhead.

DUNBAR

Oh yes, she must have seen the ghost of young Tam Lin.

ABERDEEN

Tam Lin?

DUNBAR

Aye, that's the name they give him. He's supposed to be the grandson of old Roxbrugh. He's gone missing for seven years.

ABERDEEN

I always thought it was bandits that got him.

DUNBAR

Aye, it's a lot of clishmaclaver. My guess is that it was his kin from the North, clearing the way for their own succession. But you know how the lasses must have romance. They say he dwells by the rosebush at Carterhaugh, and if a maiden picks a rose from that bush, up jumps young Tam Lin, demanding a gift. If they refuse him, he takes their maidenhead.

ABERDEEN

A very peculiar sort of ghost.

DUNBAR

Yes, and no doubt if their maidenhead is taken by the local shepherd, they have their story ready-made – ‘mother, I did not lay with young Donovan - it was ghostly Tam Lin who had his way with me.’

(The assembled knights laugh.)

ABERDEEN

Even so, I could not leave the poor lass go off without her mantle so I gave her my coat, and then she made me stop in at her cottage because her mother would want to meet me.

DUNBAR

You're a tolerant man Aberdeen. Well, to the point - what do you have to say to my proposal? Shall we unite the house of Dunbar and the house of Aberdeen in marriage and rule together in peace and prosperity?

ABERDEEN

There is only one thing that concerns me. I would prefer to marry Catherine.

DUNBAR

You can't have Catherine, she is promised to Lord Munro. What the devil is wrong with my youngest?

ABERDEEN

She is a very pretty girl, I'm not complaining about that - but when I come home from the campaigns, I want a quiet evening by the fire with my quiet little wifie at my side doing those cozy wifie things. Your youngest is too high-spirited for me.

DUNBAR

She can do cozy wifie things for you if you tell her to, man! I grant you she is not overly found of womanly activities. But the youngest is apt to be spoiled in a big family, and she lost her mother at birth you know. But she'll give you many good strong sons and if that isn't enough, you'll never be satisfied with an earthly lass.

ABERDEEN

She is a fine healthy one, that is true. Well Dunbar, I thank you for your friendship and your daughter.

DUNBAR

Well said. There she is now. I'll give her the happy news in a moment.

(Janet and Margaret enter but stand aside.)

MARGARET

Is he not the very flower of Scottish knighthood?

JANET

And yet it seems the bloom is off the rose.

MARGARET

He is every bit as handsome and dashing as he was in his younger days.

## DUNBAR

I'd like to say a word to you all about the current sad state of affairs here. This castle, indeed, all of Selkirk is in peril. I've had an eye on the comings and goings of the Roxbrugh clan, and it's not a pretty sight. By my count at least three Roxbrugh cousins are quarrelling over that parcel of good forest land known as Carterhaugh. Since Old Roxbrugh has died, true ownership has been a point of contention and ill-will in the clan. Now I hear that at long last, Lady Roxbrugh is on her deathbed, and the disputation is heating up. My friends, this will not do. We cannot have our lands engulfed by a Roxbrugh civil war. Therefore, as a boon to poor, widowed, dying Lady Roxbrugh, I do hereby annex the lands in and around Carterhaugh as a security measure, and I give these lands over to the protection of Andrew, Lord Aberdeen. Or rather, to Aberdeen and his new wife. For even though he swore a thousand oaths that he would never marry again, I have persuaded him to take on my youngest. Janet, come and stand by your fiancé.

(Janet is in shock and doesn't move. Margaret leads her to Aberdeen.)

## DUNBAR

My friends, I give you the lord and lady of Carterhaugh!

(The knights applaud.)

## ABERDEEN

What does my Lady Aberdeen say? Do you like the sound of that? Lady Aberdeen?

(Janet silently exits.)

**SCENE 5**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Tam Lin enters. He holds an ornately embroidered cape. The Faerie Queen enters, followed by the Elven Knights.)

## FAERIE QUEEN

What have you there my fair Tam Lin  
From the giddy mortal lass  
Who dares commit in Carterhaugh  
Most bold and brazen trespass?

## TAM LIN

This mantle here my queen,  
With fine embroidered whimsy  
The maiden has abandoned it.  
Accept this present from me.

## FAEIRE QUEEN

Thank you my courteous knight  
I like this mantle well.  
T'was a fortunate day indeed  
I brought you here to dwell.  
But tell me now and tell me truly  
Does it not sadden thy heart  
To see a bonnie lassie,  
And you must stand all apart?

## TAM LIN

While the Queen is my love  
No common lass will do.  
Not one of them can compare  
With the enchanting likes of you.

## FAERIE QUEEN

You are the jewel of all my knights  
I'll never let you leave me.  
And she who tries to take you  
Will sore regret it keenly.

(The Faerie Queen and Tam Lin exit.)

THOMPSON

Sullivan, was it not seven years ago  
You made that brave prophesy:  
"The queen will stale and tire soon  
Of the pretty mortal laddie?"

SULLIVAN

And you never disputed it!  
How full I am of loathing!  
The bastard gives her jewelry  
And all the lassie's clothing.

MACDOUGAL

I'd like to thrash that laddie  
With a fearsome nine-tailed cat  
That creature is her only plowman,  
We'll no longer abide that!

(Elven knights exit.)

**SCENE 6**

(Somewhere in Dunbar castle. Margaret enters, dragging Janet.)

MARGARET

Lord Aberdeen's been calling for you. You must come to him.

JANET

Leave me be. Why must you torment me? Why don't you mourn the loss of Aberdeen for yourself?

MARGARET

And what good would that do?

JANET

Why can't he marry you? You want him and I detest him!

MARGARET

Are you really such a baby? He is marrying you in order to unite his house with the house of Dunbar. I have no important house to unite with. In time you will learn to care for him. You could do far worse for yourself than Bonnie Lord Andrew. You must learn to accept your place in the order of the world.

JANET

My place. Am I just a placeholder? Nothing more than the marriageable girl at Dunbar castle? Why do they even bother to give us names?

(Dunbar and Aberdeen enter.)

DUNBAR

Here now missy. There's no time for your girlish pouting. I'm off to aid your brother – the Roxburgh wars in the north are threatening to engulf our holdings as well as their own. While I'm gone, Aberdeen will be lord of this castle, and you'll obey him as you would obey me. And when I return you will be married to him.

JANET

Father, what have I done to deserve this treatment?

DUNBAR

Deserve this treatment? A betrothal to the finest lord I know?  
There are thousands who would feel the deepest gratitude for such  
“treatment.”

JANET

But perhaps there are other lords who would make an even better  
political alliance. Why not take me down to the marketplace  
square and bargain for me like a common whore?

DUNBAR

What? How dare you speak to your father that way?! For shame!  
And in front of your fiancée.

ABERDEEN

Angus, I'm sure she is not normally so poorly spoken.

DUNBAR

There's no excuse for a lord's daughter to speak that way. I do  
partly blame myself, I have allowed her too many liberties. Well  
it's never too late to learn, and you, your ladyship, will learn  
obedience and seemliness by the time I return from the war. And I  
never wish to hear another word against this marriage, or my  
choice of a husband, ever again, or you may discover for yourself  
just how wretched is the life of the marketplace wench. Now go to  
your room.

(Janet exits, followed by Margaret. Dunbar hands  
Aberdeen a book.)

Aberdeen, the world is different than it was in our youthful days.  
These newfangled lassies would have us throw out every last  
tradition and tried and true custom and replace it with confusion  
and anarchy. Here is a book that will help you, written by a very  
wise Swede. It is full of useful rules and devices, and is  
particularly helpful on the topic of mending the ways of a  
rebellious wife. Read it.

ABERDEEN

I will give it my most earnest attention.

DUNBAR

Very good. And now I take my leave of you. I ride before dawn  
and need whatever sleep I may get.

(Dunbar exits. Aberdeen reads from the book.)

ABERDEEN

(reads)

“Disciplines for an unruly wyfe. Discipline the first:  
fasting. You must keep the unruly wyfe without bread,  
without meat, and without any other foods, such as  
pudding, cheese, porridge, venison, haddock, wine, nor  
starry gazy pie”

Oh for some of that excellent starry gazy pie.

(reads)

“When she is famished almost to fainting, you must bring  
food to her, but you must tell her that you will not let her  
have the food unless she thank you most humbly.”

The deliberate starvation of a lass seems unnecessarily cruel to  
me... but then I am certainly no scholar on the subject of women,  
and I suppose I must abide by this book, no matter how  
unpleasant.

(Margaret enters.)

ABERDEEN

Margaret, please go and tell Janet she will have no supper tonight.  
And she may not have anything to eat until my say-so.

MARGARET

And how long will it be until your say-so?

ABERDEEN

That is unknown at this time.

MARGARET

Do you mean to starve her to death?

ABERDEEN

No indeed, I only mean to make her a new role. I am relying on this book to help me do it. It contains a smorgasbord of good advice. It was written by a Swede.

MARGARET

A Swede you say? Well I never heard that roles for Swedish girls would prove nutritious for a Scotswoman.

ABERDEEN

Margaret, do not misunderstand me. I don't wish to impose foreign ways on our Janet. But I am not an authority on the husbandry of woman. I have spent the greater portion of my life on the field of battle, not dallying in the grove of Venus. I am too rusty to go onto this battlefield without a weapon, and this book, good woman, is what I must wield. This is my Murgatroyd of love.

MARGARET

But my lord, what has my lady to wield in battle?

ABERDEEN

She has her pretty face, and that is more than enough. In fact, see to it that she stays in her chambers. If I see her I may take pity on her and be sorely tempted to repent of these methods. I thank you for your trouble good Margaret. And Margaret? You need not suffer even if your lady must. I will ask the cook to make some starry gazy pie. Will you join us at supper?

MARGARET

Aye my lord.

(They exit.)

**SCENE 7**

(Janet's room. Janet's bed has a canopy with a curtain all around and a bench next to the bed. Margaret enters. Janet peeks out from behind the bed curtains.)

JANET

We are treated with less respect than a stray dog and then we are commanded to love the very creatures who abuse us!

MARGARET

Lord Aberdeen has been reading a book on the Swedish method of marriage, and the book says that you are not to have supper today, nor any day until he consents to it.

JANET

The ladies in Sweden must be very thin. Margaret did my father not say, and in front of all those witnesses, that I was the lady of Carterhaugh?

MARGARET

Aye, he did.

JANET

And so there is no impediment to my going to live in Carterhaugh.

MARGARET

No impediment except your own good sense!

JANET

Margaret, my own good sense says that I may eat when I am hungry and not only when I am given permission.

MARGARET

That may be, but Janet, you are a maiden and you cannot go to Carterhaugh alone. You know very well that young Tam Lin is there!

JANET

Oh Margaret don't tell me that you believe in this ghostly Tam Lin! He is a fantasy created by the old country folk to frighten their wenchies.

MARGARET

He is no fantasy, and you will bring upon you the wrath of the faerie folk if you venture into Carterhaugh alone.

JANET

If you say so Meg.

MARGARET

Now you stay here and rest while you are fasting. I will bring you some food as soon as I may.

(Margaret exits. Janet comes out from behind the bed curtains wearing her green mantle and bow and quiver of arrows.)

JANET

I will be denied food until I learn to love, as if I need to be tamed like a wildcat. I will not stay and beg for a few scraps. I will go and live in Carterhaugh until my father calls off this hateful wedding! And if I find any young man in Carterhaugh who desires my maidenhead, it is *I* who will decide whether to give it to him, and not the marketplace.

(Janet exits.)

**SCENE 8**

(Roxbrugh castle. Sterling enters.)

STERLING

I dare not tell her. A dragon's hoard of silver cannot line this monstrous thunderhead.

(Lady Roxbrugh enters. She is feeble, but angry.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

The unmitigated gall! The inconceivable effrontery! Has the reputation of the House of Roxbrugh descended so far into the pit that Dunbar feels he can rob us blind in the broad daylight?

STERLING

Not our honor but Dunbar's mad ambition, my Lady. But calm yourself, I do beseech you. Look on this with as much consequence as a wee laddie's prank.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Calm myself? I haven't felt so hale since before young Thomas was lost. The very brazenness of Dunbar is a tonic. To give our lands to his daughter and Aberdeen. He's so cocky you cannot help but laugh at it.

STERLING

His son has joined forces against our northern kinsmen. But it goes badly for them, and Dunbar has gone to their aid.

LADY ROXBRUGH

The rash fool. He is his own worst enemy. We will oppose him and if we don't regain Carterhaugh and most of his own lands as well, we're not worthy of the name Roxbrugh.

STERLING

Aye my Lady. But may I remind you that our forces are not yet assembled, and Aberdeen watches over Dunbar's affairs.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Aye, Lord Aberdeen. We may win against Aberdeen but at a dear cost. But there may yet be a way to avoid such a fate. Come with me and we'll sort out the particulars.

(They exit.)

**SCENE 9**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Janet enters.)

JANET

So this is Carterhaugh, my new home. I will set up camp here, where the roses sweetly scent the air, and the setting sun gives the woods a soft and dusky glow. I could almost believe that I might be transported to the fairy lands in such an enchanting glen. And surely the fairy lands are better, be they ever so eerie and unnatural, than the castle Dunbar and the hateful, ancient, old Aberdeen. These are not times for a young lady to sit and wait for her kinsfolk to bargain for her fate – these are times when a woman of courage and fortitude must make her own way in the world. The country folk say that if you pluck a rose in Carterhaugh, you will see the ghostly young Tam Lin. I'd rather see a fat young rabbit, roasting on a spit. Maybe Tam Lin knows where there is good hunting.

(She picks a rose from the nearby rosebush.)

There. That's as loud as any flower has ever been picked. But where is this fearsome great ghoul with such a love of ladies apparel? Tam Lin? Yoo hoo! You'd better come quickly, before there's any more clamorous deflowering.

(Tam Lin enters. Janet is startled – she did not actually expect to see him.)

TAM LIN

Why did you pick the rose, and  
Summon me forth, heedless lass?  
And what will you offer to appease me  
In order that you may pass?

JANET

I did not summon you, fair young gentleman. Are you a native of these parts?

TAM LIN

None may go by Carterhaugh  
Without command from me  
Nor pluck off even a single rose  
Without a penalty.

JANET

Carterhaugh is my own, my daddy gave it to me – and I'll do whatever I wish - without asking for your permission.

(She picks another one.)

TAM LIN

Now that you have done this deed  
A payment you must render  
You will never leave this place  
Without a gift to tender.

JANET

Why speak so rudely? Your dangerous beauty will surely compel any wee lassie to offer you whatsoever you desire. I am camped here tonight - let us become better acquainted. You must tell me how the bonniest young man in all of Scotland happened to be in Carterhaugh at this happy time.

TAM LIN

Your mantel, lady, or your golden chain,  
Either one would be more than sufficient.  
Your payment is now overdue  
And your chatter is sadly deficient.

JANET

My acquisitive poet, what is your name?

TAM LIN

I am Tam Lin.

JANET

Shameless impersonator of phantoms! I am not an ignorant peasant you can bamboozle with tales of ghosts and Elven Lords. I will keep my green mantle and my gold chain, and I will find another place to camp tonight. As pretty as you are, you are too greedy and too dishonest to be good company. Farewell.

(Janet attempts to leave, but Tam Lin waves a spell and she can't go any further. She pulls out a knife and turns to face him. He uses magic again, to make her drop the weapon. He draws her to him.)

TAM LIN

If you would keep your maiden virginity.  
End this foolish resistance.  
Withhold not your possessions  
Or face carnal insistence.

JANET

And yet is maiden virginity something you yourself may take  
Tam Lin? Are you yourself made of solid flesh?

(She steps towards him to try to touch him.)

TAM LIN

Come no closer lady, if you would see tomorrow.  
Another step will prove to be the cause of gravest sorrow.

(Janet takes off her cape.)

JANET

But Tam Lin, what of this pretty green mantle? See how cleverly  
it is made? My lady Margaret is very skillful with her needle.

(Tam Lin approaches Janet, and she holds the  
mantle out of reach. As he steps forward to take it,  
she touches him. Her touch awakens the human  
warmth that the Faerie Queen's influence has  
suppressed. He is literally brought to his senses.)

TAM LIN

Your hand is too warm.

JANET

Beautiful Tam Lin, if you live in Carterhaugh then I am your lady,  
and you are mine to command. In return for your allegiance you  
may have from me, most willingly, this vexatious possession.

TAM LIN

Your touch has awakened my dream-clotted senses, and I find  
myself in the tangible world once again. Fearless lass, I will  
pledge my allegiance and anything else you desire for another one  
of your silken caresses.

JANET

I accept your sweet offer, my dearest Tam Lin.

(They embrace and exit.)

**SCENE 10**

(Janet's room. Margaret enters with a candle and a bundle of food.)

MARGARET

Janet, I have your supper here. Janet? The poor child's probably gone off in search of food. I should not have tarried at the table for so long, but I was mesmerized by that bonnie blithe devil. How I love those tales of his, of those mighty battles of the past: The battle of the Twelve Oaks. The battle at the Pass of Killiecrankie. The battle of the Ford at Clackmannanshire. I could sit and watch my Andrew for hours and think that only seconds had passed. And unless I flatter myself out of all reckoning, I do believe he enjoys my company too. Oh why could I not have been born a lady of a mighty house? Well, it is a woman's lot to endure and not to prevail. But the enduring is so damned unendurable.

(Aberdeen can be heard through the door)

ABERDEEN

Janet? Do you hear me?

MARGARET

I am asleep.

(She jumps behind the bed curtains and blows out the candle. Aberdeen enters with some food and his Swedish book. He sits on the edge of the bed.)

ABERDEEN

Janet? I'm sorry to bother you, but I brought you a little something to eat. You must be very hungry by now. Where are you? Oh, here you are. Yes, take the bread. You must understand Janet, that it must be this way, but only for a little while. Some day you will thank me for this, I promise you. Give me your hand. It is so small and neat. I would be honored, fair Janet, if you would allow me to kiss your hand. Now I will leave you to dine. I hope tomorrow that we... Janet that is my leg you rest your hand upon. Do you think this is proper behavior for a lady?! Janet? Are you quite yourself this evening? But no matter, this change in your disposition to me is most remarkable, and most gratefully welcome. Oh thank you, you ingenious and thrice-blessed Swede!

(He kisses his book, then goes through the bed curtains.)

**SCENE 11**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Janet and Tam Lin are standing together by the rose bush in Carterhaugh.)

JANET

Oh to go from the dungeons of despair to the citadels of ecstasy in one day! Before today I did not truly understand the purpose of my life – but I know now that it is to love and to be loved by my divine elven lord Tam Lin.

TAM LIN

You must leave this place.

JANET

How now, Tam Lin? Am I not the Lady of Carterhaugh?

TAM LIN

The Queen of Faeries is my mistress, and she is a jealous queen. If she finds you here, your life, your very soul will be imperiled.

JANET

And why, pray tell, does this envious Queen give you leave to stand here accosting lassies for their maidenheads?

TAM LIN

The Queen craves luxury from the mortal world, and nothing pleases her more than to receive a trinket of gold or a cunning arrayment. She is certain that no lass in all of Scotland would willingly give up her maidenhead if she could tender anything else. And no lass has proven her wrong, until today.

JANET

Have you never known a mortal woman then, Tam Lin?

TAM LIN

Never until you sparked the fire in my blood.

JANET

But the Queen...?

TAM LIN

Aye - she is very fond of me.

JANET

Well we must tell her that you are no longer her country stallion. The next time she casts her lust-gleaming eye on you, you must tell her “no.” Now that you have known a mortal woman, no other kind will do.

TAM LIN

When I am in her presence, I can deny her nothing that she demands of me. And she does not need to demand – a mere hint of her desire and I must surrender to her. And that is but a small part of her great powers. Janet, I beg you, if you care for me in even a small degree, you must leave Carterhaugh now.

JANET

But when will I see you again?

TAM LIN

Return on the Autumn Equinox. The queen will not miss me during her revelry.

JANET

But dearest Tam Lin, that is two weeks away. I will never last for so long parted from you.

TAM LIN

Nor I, parted from your warm touch, but she spends many long hours in my company and I have little time alone. Meet me on the night of the Equinox my dearest lassie and heat my blood again with your mortal caress. The faerie folk approach - go now and live to see me again!

(Janet exits. Thompson, Sullivan and MacDougal enter.)

THOMPSON

Tam Lin, you are transformed.  
Your face is red as a rose.

SULLIVAN

Have you gotten for our Queen  
Another maiden's clothes?

TAM LIN

My Elven brothers your senses  
Have sorely been betrayed  
I have not seen even so much  
As one wee giddy maid.

(MacDougal picks a hair from Tam Lin's  
shoulder.)

MACDOUGAL

Do not dissemble to Elven folk  
Our senses never fail,  
And this stray hair upon your shoulder  
Tells us another tale.

TAM LIN

I beg you brothers all,  
Never mention this to our queen  
Tell her whatever you wish,  
But not this night what you have seen.

SULLIVAN

Our queen is no fool either  
And your sin blares like a trumpet  
You have betrayed our Faerie Queen  
With a common mortal strumpet.

MACDOUGAL

You know Tam Lin that each seven-year  
On the night of Halloween  
The Lord High Demon demands a tithe  
From our most beloved Queen.

SULLIVAN

Before you came she had a laddie  
Handsome and strong and brave.  
She gave him to the Darkest One  
As his eternal slave.

MACDOUGAL

And when she learns of your betrayal  
You have made her choice dead easy  
She will be pleased to give you up

TAM LIM

No more. I am sore queasy.

(Tam Lin exits.)

SULLIVAN

Let's go and tell the Queen  
What this laddie's been doing.  
This sad and tawdry tale  
Will surely be his ruin.

MACDOUGAL

Our doting queen will never believe it  
We must devise another plan  
To rid ourselves and our dear sovereign  
Of this blasted, troublesome man.

(MacDougal exits.)

THOMPSON

Soon you will know Old Sully  
That I am her favored one  
We'll spend our time alone together  
And we will never be done.

SULLIVAN

You'll sooner be a slave  
To the Demon Lord  
And if you do not stop your mouth  
I'll do it with my sword.

(Sullivan draws his sword.)

THOMPSON

I am the best swordsman  
The Queen has proof of that

(Thompson draws his sword.)

SULLIVAN

And yet I am your better still  
You mewling puke-faced brat!

(They exit brawling.)

**SCENE 12**

(Janet's room. Margaret is waiting for Janet. Janet enters.)

MARGARET

There you are! What do you mean by scaring me to death?

JANET

All's well now Margaret. The world is transformed. You spoke truly, you clever lady, there is a Tam Lin who dwells in Carterhaugh. I have met him this very night.

MARGARET

And yet you still are in possession of your green mantle.

JANET

He did not care for my green mantle.

MARGARET

And yet if it was Tam Lin, he wanted something. I see you are wearing your gold chain.

JANET

I gave him something which I was glad to part with, and wonder now why I waited so long to be rid of it. You would have too if you had seen him. Oh Margaret, he is the most exquisite being ever to breath the air.

MARGARET

If he breathes the air!

JANET

If he be not human then the Elven knight's your only man for la bella amoré.

MARGARET

I am ashamed of you. All these years I've been teaching you right from wrong and you go and give yourself to a... to... I don't even know what. You disgraceful and worthless wench! What will your father say?

JANET

Don't tell my father!

MARGARET

What kind of world are we living in when women give themselves to men who are not their own husbands? Have you no honor? No sense of shame?

JANET

Promise me you won't say anything. Margaret! Please Margaret, speak to me!

(Aberdeen knocks on the chamber door)

ABERDEEN

Good morning my sweet lady. Will you join me for breakfast?

JANET

Go away!

ABERDEEN

Janet, it is I, Lord Aberdeen. Have you no words of kindness for me this morning?

JANET

Indeed my lord – kindly go away.

ABERDEEN

Janet! How can you say this to me? What of the many and happy hours we spent together in your very room? Was it only last night?

(Janet turns sharply to look at Margaret)

MARGARET

Hello! Is that you Lord Aberdeen? You may enter.

(Aberdeen enters.)

ABERDEEN

Ah, Margaret. I mean nothing by that last remark. A flight of fancy to beguile this wee Janet here.

JANET

Lord Aberdeen is fanciful indeed. But I am tired and would rather sleep now. Margaret may dine with you in my place.

ABERDEEN

But Janet, I thought that things were well between us.

JANET

They are as well as they will ever be.

ABERDEEN

Very well. I will come and visit you tonight then. What do you say to that, my good lady?

(Janet looks at Margaret before choosing what to say.)

JANET

If you must.

ABERDEEN

Well then. Good day... until the night.

JANET

Good day.

(Aberdeen exits.)

JANET

Margaret? I think it might be best if I slept in your bed tonight, and you slept in mine.

MARGARET

Thank you dear, sweet Janet.

JANET

But Margaret, let's have no more talk of women who give themselves to men who are not their husbands.

MARGARET

I have always thought it a tiresome subject.

(Margaret exits.)

## JANET

“Meet me on the night of the Equinox my dearest lassie and heat my blood again with your mortal caress.” Oh Tam Lin - but what of this Queen of the Faeries? Is he truly the prisoner of a great and malevolent power or is he but one more common faithless man? Oh never, or this world is too horrible to endure. Autumn Equinox, pull out all stops and bring Tam Lin into my arms again.

**ACT II****SCENE 1**

(A room in the castle one week later. Aberdeen and Margaret enter.)

ABERDEEN

Margaret, you are a woman.

MARGARET

I think so my lord.

ABERDEEN

Can you counsel me on the subject of women?

MARGARET

Do I dare set my counsel up for comparison against your mighty book?

ABERDEEN

It is a good book, Margaret, there is no denying the Swede his due. But you are a more local source of advice. Tell me, please, why would a woman lead you to believe that she hates you, and then lead you to believe that she loves you passionately, and then in a little while behave as if she hates you once again?

MARGARET

Young women's moods wax and wane with the moon.

ABERDEEN

So the moon has something to do with this lunacy?

MARGARET

I mean that a young woman's moods are changeable.

ABERDEEN

Changeable indeed. For the past week I have been driven to utter distraction by our lady Janet – if I happen upon her by night, she is sweet, tender and kind, although at those times she has very little to say. But in the light of day, she is exactly the opposite: hard, flinty and cruel, and has all too much to say. What can I do to make her be good and sweet all the time, and not only part-time?

MARGARET

When I was a very young lass my grandmother told me that lilac may help you win your true love.

ABERDEEN

Lilac? It's early autumn and there is no lilac to be had at this time of year.

MARGARET

All summer I have dried flowers from our garden to bring good cheer to the dark days of winter. I have some lilac – I will give you a silken satchel.

ABERDEEN

Thank you good Margaret.

MARGARET

You are welcome, good sir.

ABERDEEN

If only Janet would learn to behave as you do. It does me good to talk to you. It has been so long since I have spent time in conversation with a lady. Since my dear wife passed on.

MARGARET

They say she was a bonnie lass.

ABERDEEN

She was - and more than a pretty face. She could cook. She could sew excellent well. I could speak to her for hours at a time and never grow tired of her.

MARGARET

(a slight touch of sarcasm)

What a sorry fate for the world to lose such exquisite perfection.

ABERDEEN

She was a wonderful woman Margaret, but I would not go so far as to say she was perfect. For example, she was a very poor dancer. Sitting by the fire or cantering in the field she was the portrait of grace. But she could not keep time in a festive hall.

MARGARET

Very much like our dear Janet.

ABERDEEN

Tell me you jest. I was counting on Janet to guide me – I do not want to play the spasmodic fool at our wedding.

MARGARET

Shall I teach you then, my lord?

ABERDEEN

If you can I will owe you a debt that can scarce ever be repaid.

MARGARET

It is not such a rare treasure as that.

(She does a brief series of dance steps.)

ABERDEEN

You are a wonder, good Maggie. But that is far too fantastical for an old soldier to master.

MARGARET

It needs no more skill than what it takes to drive your enemy back.

ABERDEEN

That skill I have.

MARGARET

Then I will teach you.

ABERDEEN

Yes, you must teach me. We will go to it directly after supper.  
Will you join me for supper again?

MARGARET

Yes indeed.

ABERDEEN

Very good. And bring the lilac as well.

MARGARET

I will my lord.

(Aberdeen exits. Margaret pulls up a lilac silken  
satchel she is wearing around her neck.)

MARGARET

And may lilac help you win your true love. Though you do not  
know who she truly is.

(Margaret exits.)

**SCENE 2**

(A week later outside Dunbar's castle. Two soldiers, MACTAVISH and DOUGLAS are standing watch. Sterling enters.)

STERLING

Salutations on this most excellent of Autumnal inaugurals.

MACTAVISH

What did you say?

DOUGLAS

I think he's speaking in French.

MACTAVISH

Oh, well then – let me speak so he can understand me:

(loudly and slowly)

What – did – you – say?

STERLING

This evening I have most urgent and expeditious affairs with the resident Lord of this manor - I greatly desire to have intercourse with him.

DOUGLAS

You filthy French bastard!

STERLING

Nay, good sirs – the term intercourse refers simply to a parley-

MACTAVISH

Lay off that Frenchie babble and speak like a man, man!

STERLING

...concerning terms and conditions regarding the superintendency of this formidable keep --

DOUGLAS

Let's take him to Aberdeen. Maybe he can sort him out.

(They all exit.)

**SCENE 3**

(Janet's room. Margaret is waiting for Janet. Janet enters.)

MARGARET

Good evening Janet. Your bed is all made up.

JANET

I won't be sleeping in your room tonight Margaret - my love waits upon my long-delayed return.

MARGARET

Janet, I beg you, go no more to Carterhaugh.

JANET

Two weeks have passed since I have seen Tam Lin, and I could not wait another hour to save my life.

MARGARET

I am sorry, but I cannot let you go.

JANET

Very well. I suppose I must sleep in my own bed tonight.

MARGARET

And yet... I can see you are in the throes of love, and I know too well what distracted things a woman will do in such a sorry state. But if you must go to Carterhaugh and mix with the supernatural folk I will give you what protection I may. Hand me your mantle.

(Janet hands Margaret her green cape.)

I am fastening angelica inside the lining. It will make it very unpleasant for the fey folk to touch – even its scent may be enough to keep them away.

(Lord Aberdeen bursts in.)

MARGARET

Lord Aberdeen! Is it the fashion nowadays for a gentleman to burst into a lady's chambers?

(Aberdeen holds up a small silken satchel)

ABERDEEN

Margaret, this lilac you gave me has been no help in the cause of love, and now I see why – this person here is not the real and true Janet. Each morning this bitter, ill-tempered she-thing drives away the good Janet and takes her place. I grant you some folk are changeable, and maybe wee lassies more than most, but this is a case of true transmogrification!

MARGARET

My dear Aberdeen, you have been drinking. I beg you, go and sleep, and in the morning you will feel better.

ABERDEEN

No indeed Maggie. I plan to stay right here all evening and watch for it to happen right before my eyes.

MARGARET

Truly this is a breech of your good honor and this lady's.

ABERDEEN

Fear not for the honor of this lady – if that is what she is. You may wait with me Margaret. We will witness the miracle together.

(MacTavish's voice from without.)

MACTAVISH

Lord Aberdeen?

ABERDEEN

What is it?

MACTAVISH

There's a Frenchman here to see you.

ABERDEEN

A Frenchman? What does he want?

MACTAVISH

Begging your pardon sir... he said he wanted intercourse.

ABERDEEN

I will be back immediately. Margaret, see to it that she does not effect the change before I return.

(Aberdeen exits.)

JANET

I can't be shut in! I have to leave now! Oh Tam Lin, when will I see you again?

MARGARET

Silly girl, there's more to the world than you and Tam Lin!

JANET

No of course, Margaret! We must not forget our valiant Aberdeen and his late night visits to our bedchambers.

(Aberdeen enters.)

ABERDEEN

Come the both of you. You need to hear what this "Frenchman" has to say.

(They exit)

## SCENE 4

(A room in the castle. Sterling and Douglas enter.)

STERLING

I swear upon the bonny bonny banks of Loch Lomond, I am no Frenchman!

DOUGLAS

That's exactly what you would say if you were! No normal man talks like you, Frenchie.

STERLING

I am as good a Scotsman as you! I've gone with streaming banners, where noble deeds are done; run about the braes, and pulled the gowans fine; seen silver tides run up the Firth of Forth and marked the rustic, haggis-fed -

DOUGLAS

Have you ever put snails in your haggis?

STERLING

Snails in my haggis? Why would anyone ruin a good and true haggis with something so disgusting?

(Aberdeen, Margaret and Janet enter.)

Lord Aberdeen. I come as a gentle courtesy for your honor. The Roxburgh clan has no quarrel with you. But we have been seriously aggrieved by Lord Dunbar. And soon, with many a stout man and our mighty engine of war, our trebuchet, we will be victorious over this castle. If you surrender to us now, we will give you leave to return to your home.

ABERDEEN

So this is your gentle courtesy – this insult? Do you think the name Aberdeen means “traitor?” Good Lord Dunbar left me to care for his hearth and home, and I will never do anything less except that I am carried lifeless from this place.

(To Douglas)

Get ready to ride. Lord Dunbar must know of this.

(Douglas exits.)

ABERDEEN

And I must return you, devalued Sterling, to Lady Roxbrugh with this message: Dunbar's friends are true and cannot be bought like common trade.

STERLING

I go with great regret. Although our cause is just, all of Scotland will mourn the loss of Lord Aberdeen

(Sterling exits.)

ABERDEEN

Janet, you must go to your room. I will have guards posted at your door and by your window. You may rest easy tonight.

JANET

I will rest as though I was sent to my grave!

(Janet exits.)

ABERDEEN

If Lord Dunbar does not return immediately, I fear this castle is lost.

MARGARET

What of your own army?

ABERDEEN

Ah, Margaret, you don't understand the way of it. I'm not as wealthy as Dunbar and I cannot afford to keep an army at the ready all year long. I keep a small regiment and I brought those men with me. But until I have need, the main army is back on their farms scattered across the countryside. No, our hope lies with outlasting the Roxbrughs until Dunbar returns.

MARGARET

We need more provisions then. I will go for them tonight.

ABERDEEN

And what if you are taken by the Roxbrughs?

MARGARET

It is no great matter if a lady's maid is taken.

ABERDEEN

Margaret, you are no common lady's maid. Your counsel is indispensable. And I would greatly miss your pretty smile.

MARGARET

Thank you my Lord. But if I don't go we may soon be wanting.

ABERDEEN

Well, you must go then, but I will send some men to defend you. Take great care, Maggie. What would I do without you?

(He spontaneously hugs her, then awkwardly breaks off.)

MARGARET

Farewell.

(Margaret exits.)

ABERDEEN

How I've come to depend on that gentle lady. It is well that I will have her company to stay me through the moody changes of our Lady Janet. If only I could... ah, but there's no point in wishing for the stars, and especially when there's preparations for war to be made.

## SCENE 5

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Tam Lin waits for Janet by the rosebush. The Elven Knights enter.)

MACDOUGAL

Alas Tam Lin, you poor little bluntie,  
No lassie appears on this night  
All aflame with romantic intention  
And some mortal love to requite.

THOMPSON

How long is it, Sullivan, til All Hallow's Eve,  
The time of the Queen's sacrifice?

SULLIVAN

It's still more than a month from today,  
But for him it comes in a trice.

MACDOUGAL

How I love All Hallow's Eve,  
When the curtain is pulled aside  
Between natural and unnatural worlds,  
When the mortal and fey collide.  
But Tam Lin cares not for its coming,  
And there is little wonder why.  
But he may yet save his wee mortal self  
If he give it an earnest try.

TAM LIN

I beg you, Elven Brothers, tell it to me.  
My heart is so heavy and sore  
I like our Queen as well as you  
But I fear my destiny more.

SULLIVAN

Tell your lassie that on that dread night  
Her task will be fearsome and great  
If she would defy our own mighty Queen  
And call off your damnable fate.

FAERIE QUEEN

(off)

Tam Lin my bed is cold and lonely,  
Stop blathering with those boys  
All that bickering brattle  
Makes a most harrowing noise

TAM LIN

We will talk more at length anon  
Thanks for this hope to hang upon.

(The Faerie Queen enters.)

FAERIE QUEEN

Tam Lin come away, the air is too heavy  
And rain will soon drown the new days.  
Let us retire to my cozy sweet bower  
And beguile the time with our ways.

(The Queen and Tam Lin exit.)

MACDOUGAL

A plague on that chronic malaise!  
That execrable hominid swine!

SULLIVAN

It matters not Mackie, his leaving is coming  
By the full moon the Queen will be mine.

THOMPSON

If I ever tire, and you are in line.

SULLIVAN

Brave words need brave deeds, let's have them now!

(he draws his sword.)

THOMPSON

I'm ready with both, you stupid cow.

(He draws his sword.)

MACDOUGAL

My true Elven brothers, put down your arms  
Our first task is that pestilent blight  
Once this is done then all will be well.  
Halloween we will set all aright.

(They look up because it has begun to rain.)

SULLIVAN

I see that it's already trinkling  
And before those blackening clouds pass  
The moistification will seem an eternity.

THOMPSON

It looks ill for Tam Lin and his lass.

MACDOUGAL

What's a little bad weather to true mortal love?  
But our plan needs to be better  
If she doesn't appear by All Hallow's Eve  
We three will go forth and get her.

SULLIVAN

Well done MacDougal you're always thinking,  
If only Thompson had half your brain  
But you're a verified half-wit compared with me  
I know when to come out of the rain.

(Sullivan exits, followed by MacDougal and  
Thompson.)

**ACT III****SCENE 1**

(A room in the castle, two weeks later. It is dawn.  
Aberdeen enters.)

ABERDEEN

Oh this is a great day! So the Roxbrughs have a mighty engine of war? Their so-called “trebuchet.” Is that what they call that mass of rotting timber and rope? It is a revelation to observe the humble elements of water and dirt transform the high and mighty into a soggy brown bog.

(Margaret enters)

Maggie, good news! The sun is rising on a dry new morning, and Dunbar’s army is less than half a day’s march from here. It’s a race between his army and the sun, but unless the Roxbrughs can devise another “fearsome engine” to drag their sodden catapult out of the mud then we have won the day.

MARGARET

This is a good fortune. If the siege had lasted even a little longer, we would have been driven into their arms by privation.

ABERDEEN

It’s thanks to you that we made it so far, sweet lady. I may be driven into your arms with admiration.

(He tries to hug her but she ducks away.)

MARGARET

My lord, what of your betrothal?

ABERDEEN

Ah Margaret, it is all my fault. I starved the good Janet away, and we are left with the nasty wee changeling.

MARGARET

Be kind my lord, she has been feeling very poorly these past few days.

ABERDEEN

But Maggie, it does not do a man well to be treated like a rare and fatal contagion. You do not treat me in such a disheartening manner.

MARGARET

But Lord Dunbar will not persuaded.

ABERDEEN

I will persuade him, or he may be damned. Now let's be happy and enjoy our good fortune against our enemies. Give us a kiss of congratulations.

(Douglas calls from offstage.)

DOUGLAS

My Lord, Dunbar is coming over the hill.

ABERDEEN

That's the news I have longed to hear for two weeks.

(To his sword)

Your day has arrived Murgatroyd!

(Aberdeen exits. Janet enters.)

MARGARET

How are you feeling this morning?

JANET

Worse than ever. The very sight of breakfast makes me retch.

MARGARET

Well here's news to cheer you – your father and his army have arrived.

JANET

There is no good cheer for me in that, for I am too ill to go to Carterhaugh!

MARGARET

You should be offering thanks that you have not been taken prisoner by the Roxbrughs.

JANET

The Roxbrughs! Why do we claim their land and cause all this strife in the first place?

MARGARET

How dare you question your own father's wisdom? He's been dealing in these affairs since many years before you were born.

JANET

He wants to marry me to your beloved Aberdeen, Margaret! How can you defend him? Oh, I will be sick!

(Janet runs off to vomit.)

MARGARET

I fear she has the malady that carried her mother off – and in truth I am not feeling well myself.

## SCENE 2

(The fields around Dunbar's castle. Dunbar enters, sword drawn in pursuit of an unseen Roxburgh soldier.)

DUNBAR

And keep running all the way back to Broxmouth, you presumptuous scoundrel!

(Aberdeen enters.)

Aberdeen! Let's have a look at you!

(Dunbar embraces Aberdeen.)

ABERDEEN

Look at them running! They're leaving their mighty engine of war behind, all stuck up to the axles.

DUNBAR

Aye, we'll have a mighty bonfire with it come Halloween.

ABERDEEN

Let's run them down before they get a chance to catch their breath! I've sat on my rump for two weeks, I'm raring to go!

DUNBAR

Aberdeen my lads are tired now. We all but catapulted back here ourselves when we got news of the siege. I should have known better than to trust the skeevy Roxburgh gang. But have no fear, my old crony, the Roxburghs haven't heard the end of it. But before we go traipsing across the dales of Selkirk we need to get you married to my wee lassie. How have you and Janet been getting along? Has she been paying you mind?

ABERDEEN

I'm afraid Janet is feeling very poorly now.

DUNBAR

We'll see to Janet as soon as we can. But first let's see to our wounded.

**SCENE 3**

(Janet's room)

MARGARET

Janet, you must try to come to breakfast. You'll dishonor your father if you don't show your face while the men are celebrating.

JANET

I will not be able to stand the sight of so much food.

MARGARET

I'm not saying you need to eat. You need only to make an appearance.

(Dunbar and Aberdeen enter.)

DUNBAR

Good morning Margaret. Janet, your daddy's made it back from the wars! Let's have a look at you. You don't feel warm, but you look a bit green around the gills. How long has she been like this?

MARGARET

Just a week or so.

DUNBAR

She's been cooped up in her chambers for a fortnight. She needs to get a change of scenery and a little festivity. Come on girl, we're having a feast today and you don't want to miss it. We're having a great strapping haggis.

(Janet runs out of the room to throw up.)

It's worse than I thought. What kind of a lassie gets ill at the mention of haggis? Margaret, what is ailing her?

MARGARET

I am not entirely certain, my lord.

DUNBAR

Well think on it woman. Her nose isn't running, she doesn't have a fever, yet she's sick at the sight of food, she's moping about, I hear she's wakes up late and goes to bed early...

(He suddenly realizes what it is)

DUNBAR

Aberdeen, I asked you to watch over my daughter.

ABERDEEN

And so I have. But you can't expect me to keep her safe from every ailment in the world. I make no claims to medical knowledge.

DUNBAR

I asked you to watch over her, but you've been doing a bit more than watching!

(Janet enters.)

DUNBAR

Janet... are you having a baby? Well? Are you?

JANET

I don't know.

DUNBAR

But you cannot categorically rule it out, is that what you're saying? What have you been doing in my absence, missy? Running wild? I should thrash you!

ABERDEEN

Dunbar leave her alone, it's not her own fault. I came to her at night, and I was very persistent.

DUNBAR

So you had your way with my daughter?

ABERDEEN

But in my defense, she gave in to me with much enthusiasm!

DUNBAR

Is that so? Well my lady, so your wailing and skirling about marrying Lord Aberdeen was all a play show put on to fool your old dad, eh? You couldn't wait to get him alone with you, could you? And you, Margaret. Where were you while all this was going on?

ABERDEEN

Don't be hard on that good lady. Janet's a healthy young lass and she has the natural desires that we all have. And I remind you that I am her fiancée.

(Dunbar pauses to consider.)

DUNBAR

Well now, I suppose you have a point. I guess there's no great harm in it... Aberdeen, I did not think it would happen so soon, but you're going to make me a granddad.

(Dunbar shakes Aberdeen's hand.)

Let's be hasty about this wedding then, we have to make an honest man of the little bastard.

JANET

He is not the father!

DUNBAR

What did you say? I must be losing my hearing.

JANET

My love is not a broken down old man – my love is an Elven knight, not Aberdeen or any knight in all your hall.

DUNBAR

If it wasn't for this "old man" the Roxbrughs would be dragging you by the hair through the mud back to their camp! You wretched sharp-tongued harpy, you tell your lord you're sorry you opened your great yap!

JANET

My lord and the father of my baby is Tam Lin!

DUNBAR

Tam Lin? The wee ghost that haunts the rosebush in Carterhaugh? You must be ill after all, and the fever is making you delirious! Or Aberdeen has driven you out of your wits! What have you done to her?

ABERDEEN

Nothing unnatural!

JANET

No, he is completely natural. But my love is celestial. He is shod in silver and gold, and rides a white horse that flies swifter than the wind. He is a creature of light and heat and his uncontestable beauty makes all the dazzling stars in the sky hide their shining faces in shame.

(Dunbar and Aberdeen look at each other, dumbfounded.)

ABERDEEN

Now Janet, you and I were together many a night right here in your very room. Do you deny it?

JANET

I deny it vehemently!

ABERDEEN

Well then tell me, if it wasn't you, who could it have been?

(A servant calls from offstage.)

SERVANT

The haggis is served my lord.

DUNBAR

Indeed. I can smell it from here. I love the smell of haggis in the morning!

MARGARET

Excuse me my lords.

(Margaret is nauseous and exits before she vomits.)

ABERDEEN

Margaret? Where are you going?

**ACT IV****SCENE 1**

(One month later in Dunbar's castle. Dunbar and Aberdeen enter.)

DUNBAR

Hello... son! How do you like the sound of that?

ABERDEEN

Not until the wedding, I beg you.

DUNBAR

But that's coming tomorrow. What ails you, Aberdeen? Wedding jitters? How can that be, you've already had the honeymoon. You'll need to lose all fear, man and quickly - tomorrow we march on that hive of Roxbrughs camped out at Yarrowford – directly after the wedding.

ABERDEEN

Directly after?

DUNBAR

Aye. I let the word get around that we'll be feasting and flinging all day tomorrow - they'll never suspect that we'll attack the minute you both say 'I do.' Between our two armies we'll drive them right back up to the top of Scotland. Have you quartered your men?

ABERDEEN

Aye, though there's a bit of grumbling.

DUNBAR

Well they won't be in the stables long. And tonight we'll have a bonfire with that mighty engine of war to take their minds off their troubles.

ABERDEEN

There's nothing like a roaring great fire to give the lads a cheer... How does my lady fare these days?

DUNBAR

She's stopped raving about that wee ghostly laddie who shall remain nameless.

ABERDEEN

I promise you I'll do my best by her and the baby.

DUNBAR

I know you will Aberdeen.

ABERDEEN

I'm going to go pay a visit to Janet and see how she's doing.

DUNBAR

You do that. But I want to see the both of you at supper. You've had enough romancing before the wedding.

(Dunbar exits. Margaret enters.)

ABERDEEN

Good Margaret, how are you this afternoon?

MARGARET

Well enough, Lord Aberdeen.

ABERDEEN

Who is Lord Aberdeen? Andrew is my name, sweet Meg.

MARGARET

Who is this Meg? I only know that Lord Aberdeen will soon be my lady's lord, and I will be a servant in his house.

ABERDEEN

Is that so?

(He kisses her. Margaret slaps him.)

MARGARET

If you touch me again, I will scream loud enough for the entire castle to hear it. How dare you betray your fiancée in that manner?

ABERDEEN

Margaret, do not forsake me. I have been thinking of nothing but you these last few weeks. Tell me the truth Margaret – was it you and not Janet I spent those happy evenings with?

MARGARET

Of course it was not!

ABERDEEN

But when we kissed just now it was the sweetest sensation that I have ever known, and yet it was not unfamiliar. I know your lips too well Meg, they have given you away while your tongue was lying. Don't deny me dearest Maggie, now that I have you by day I will not give you up.

MARGARET

And what will you tell your good friend Lord Dunbar? That you prefer a serving wench to his own daughter?

ABERDEEN

Tomorrow, directly after the wedding, we do battle against the assembled clan of Roxbrughs. I will be at the head of my army and if luck is with me, I will not survive long into this marriage.

MARGARET

Those are fine brave words. Will you leave your child fatherless?

ABERDEEN

You are right, dearest Maggie. But you must keep with me to remind me of my impending paternity.

MARGARET

No, we must stay apart. If we master our passions we may yet bring this horrible chapter to an end.

(Margaret exits.)

## ABERDEEN

How can I live on as the husband of that wretched girl while my own true love keeps me at arm's length every day? If I know Maggie, she will not let me lay a glove on her. A statue of ice made in her likeness would give more warmth than the original. No, I will fight bravely and hope that I die bravely and not live to endure this loveless hell.

(Aberdeen exits. Janet enters)

## JANET

Go your ways, you silly fool. You will never be my lord.

(Margaret enters, holding a cup.)

## MARGARET

There you are. I have this for you.

(Margaret hands a cup to Janet.)

Drink it. Do you want to wait until it appears with cloven hooves and ears like a goat?

## JANET

The father of my baby is no demon!

## MARGARET

And what is he then? Is he a man?

## JANET

I can't say for certain what he is, other than a thing of divine incarnation.

## MARGARET

Well then, what will become of us if you present the spawn of an evil spirit to Lord Aberdeen? No, you must stop the demon while you can. When my time comes you must take my baby and present it as the natural child of yourself and Aberdeen.

## JANET

Margaret, you would give up your own child?

MARGARET

What else can I do? Me, an unmarried lady to be discovered in such a condition - I'll be cast out of this place, and both the child and I will be doomed to a life of misery. No, it is right for the baby to be raised by its own father.

JANET

Oh Margaret, how bitter is this wicked world.

MARGARET

Nobody said it was a dance around a maypole. You and I have thought of nothing but our own unlawful pleasures and so we have brought your father's house to the very brink of disgrace and scandal. We must do all we can now to make this right no matter how unpleasant that may be.

JANET

Before I drink this, I must know for sure if Tam Lin is an earthly man or no. I must see him again.

MARGARET

You must never see him again! You must accept that you will be married tomorrow to a man that your father has chosen for you, and you must give up this elven fantasy.

JANET

To see Tam Lin is my righteous cause. My time with him was so brief – just long enough to entwine our souls and make a third.

MAGARET

That's enough of your fancy phraseology and your lofty sentiments. I know why it is you wish to see him again and it is not to entwine your souls. You wish to enjoy his fulsome lips, his ardent caresses, and the quickening desire that strains the threads of silken elven tunics. I have not lately fallen off the turnip cart, so don't play the Vestal with me.

JANET

And what if I do wish to enjoy the carnal graces of my most exquisite paramour? What is your excuse Margaret? You, who are old enough to know better, have risked your life, your health, and your good name for a masquerade with an all too resistible old man. It should be easy to say “no” when circumstances are so little compelling.

MARGARET

At least Aberdeen is a natural man.

JANET

And no less irresistible to you for his wretched common state. Tell me Margaret, did he bring the lofty Murgatroyd to our bed every night?

MARGARET

Bite your tongue you wicked strumpet.

JANET

Did you allow Aberdeen to bite yours?

MARGARET

Oh such a foul mouth you have now!

JANET

The meekest creature will become savage and foul if denied what nature compels.

(Janet tries to exit.)

MARGARET

It is too dangerous.

(Margaret blocks her way.)

JANET

No mortal being has the power to keep me from my transcendent Elven Knight.

(Janet gets by Margaret and exits.)

MARGARET

Help! Somebody stop her!

(Aberdeen enters.)

ABERDEEN

Good Margaret, was that your voice I heard, crying for help? I am at your service, noble lady.

MARGARET

Janet has run off again to see Tam Lin. She is possessed by demonic obsessions and will not listen to reason.

ABERDEEN

There are Roxbrughs marching throughout the countryside and it is sure they have thoroughly infested Carterhaugh!

MARGARET

The Roxbrughs are a trifle compared to what else awaits. Tonight is Halloween, the very time of the year when there is no divide between our world and the world of the spirits. On this fearful night, cursed among all others, the wraiths may cross over and drag us back to their own strange and eerie land.

ABERDEEN

Do not fear, sweet lady. I will go and fetch her.

MARGARET

I must come with you.

ABERDEEN

It is not my habit to lead ladies into danger. But I so dearly treasure these last few hours with you that I go against my better judgment.

(They exit.)

**SCENE 2**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Tam Lin is standing by the rosebush. The Faerie Queen enters.)

## FAERIE QUEEN

Tam Lin you look so brooding and dark,  
Come here my cranky lad  
And tell your own dear queen,  
What is making you sad.

## TAM LIN

Tonight, the seventh Halloween,  
brings that journey of the Elven clan  
To pay a tithe to the Dark Lord,  
And myself the only mortal man.

## FAERIE QUEEN

My pretty one you need not fear.  
Your fond Queen will be with you there.  
He will never lay a claw on you  
When we accost him in his lair.  
But the faerie folk are strong compelled  
To appease him each seventh year,  
Or he would become restless and rise up  
And in Carterhaugh would appear.  
Then no mortal nor even the faerie folk  
Could curb his insatiable desire  
And the world of both faerie and mortal  
Would grow foul and all full of hellfire.

## TAM LIN

My gracious Queen I well understand  
The present situation.  
But what have I done to make you desire  
To cast me from my station?

## FAERIE QUEEN

Say again, Tam Lin, for I do not know your meaning.  
How often have I said I will never leave you?  
I will never so much as nudge you from your station.  
What station do you think I mean to cast you to?

TAM LIN

You speak fairly my Queen  
But I have suspicion  
That you'll give me to the Dark Lord  
Of your own volition.

FAERIE QUEEN

Well cast those sorry thoughts aside  
I plan to sacrifice a young ram.  
I'd be a fool to give you up  
As hard smitten with you as I am.

TAM LIN

I beg your forgiveness my queen for these thoughts,  
For you are royally just and true.  
My error was in thinking you capable  
Of faults that mortals are partial to.

FAERIE QUEEN

It is true that mortals are inclined that way  
You can't trust them farther than you can spit  
They are always most constantly inconstant.  
I know not how you ever endured it.

TAM LIN

The lassies especially are forsworn  
Even one with an honest face.  
They pretend they feel the tenderest love  
But have no honor, faith, or grace.

FAERIE QUEEN

You speak so proud and passionate  
Your mouth so pouty, your eyes shine so bright  
This mood becomes you Tam Lin.  
We shall woo before we travel tonight!

(The Faerie Queen jumps into Tam Lin's arms and  
he carries her off. Thompson, Sullivan and  
MacDougal enter.)

MACDOUGAL

There they go again!  
This is a most troublesome habit.

SULLIVAN

Is he truly a mortal man,  
or some kind of gigantic rabbit?

MACDOUGAL

His memory like a bad dream will fade  
And we'll be back to our former position.  
But we need patience and careful cunning  
To effect the necessary transition.

SULLIVAN

I'm beginning to have my doubts about this plan  
The chances grows dimmer by the hour  
No stalwart male would forsake celestial love  
For the most exquisite earthly flower.

THOMPSON

And furthermore, where is the lass?  
She made love to him and never returnt.  
Lighting in him all the fires of love  
And leaving his heartie all black and burnt.

SULLIVAN

Maybe he was too much for a wee mortal lassie  
You see how he sports with our queen.  
Maybe she found him too lecherous,  
Too salacious and too obscene.

THOMPSON

You could see that she has turned his head -  
It was more for our wart than a romp in the hay  
Now he swears that if she ever shows up  
He'll go huffing and puffing and stalking away.

MACDOUGAL

I heard that too, and it smelt of sour grapes,  
But I'll wager you the Lammas Moon  
Once we get them together again  
He will dance to his wee lassie's tune.

THOMPSON

Let's go now and perform this brave enchantment  
I cannot bide sitting so still.

SULLIVAN

Thompson you idiot, now's not the time  
The sun's not yet over the hill.

THOMPSON

Let's give it some help, I'll go out and kick it.

SULLIVAN

Who ever heard of kicking the sun?

THOMPSON

We can sneak up on it.

SULLIVAN

Any fool knows it cannot be done!

MACDOUGAL

I believe Thompson speaks metaphorically.  
Sullivan, please let it pass.

SULLIVAN

He would not know a metaphor  
If it up and bit his ass.

THOMPSON

If it bit me I'd kick it down with the sun.  
You see, I'm clever as a wee fox.

SULLIVAN

It's a wonder the Queen ever let you near her  
You are dumber than the dumbest ox.

THOMPSON

When she needs conversation she comes to you.  
But she calls her wee oxy to plow.

SULLIVAN

A wee oxy? That would be you – an oxy-moron.  
But there's scant talk between us I vow.

THOMPSON

And none in French when you're there.

SULLIVAN

Kiss my Londonderry aire!

(He draws his sword. Thompson draws his sword.  
MacDougal draws his sword and knocks both of  
theirs down.)

MACDOUGAL

You'd both rather fight than do the thing  
While you've been fighting about the sun  
It's been setting and we go to it now,  
If not now then it cannot be done.

(MacDougal exits.)

SULLIVAN

You have not heard the last of this Thompson,  
None dare talk to Sullivan so rude and surly.

THOMPSON

I dare every day, and with no great concern  
It's well known that Sullivan fights like a girly.

(Sullivan chases Thompson around the stage and at  
one point Thompson bangs his head. Sullivan  
laughs and Thompson chases Sullivan off stage.)

**SCENE 3**

(Lady Roxbrugh enters.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

Dunbar burnt our poor old trebuchet to the ground. The billowing grey smoke covers the hills down to Carterhaugh and demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that any flaming fool can make a huge fire with large planks of wood.

(Sterling enters.)

STERLING

Aye, and Dunbar is being made to look like a fool by others as well as his own sorry self. In the middle of this dense fog, Lord Aberdeen was lately seen entering the forest of Carterhaugh with a lady – but that lady is not the daughter of Dunbar.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Aberdeen? Good and honorable Lord Aberdeen? This cannot be – it is surely a man who resembles Aberdeen.

STERLING

But if it is Aberdeen, his capture in the act of betraying Dunbar's trust will be a supreme strategic advance for the Roxbrughs.

LADY ROXBRUGH

No, we must not waste our time on such improbable events. We may rely on the fact that Aberdeen will be married tomorrow to Dunbar's daughter. But we do not need to idly wait for that moment. Dunbar will never suspect that I would dishonor a wedding. And normally I would never do such a disgraceful thing, but desperate times call for desperate actions.

STERLING

Do I understand you well? We will attack Dunbar before the wedding?

LADY ROXBRUGH

Every so often you shine bright, Sterling. Come along, our war council is meeting tonight.

(Lady Roxbrugh exits.)

## STERLING

Lady Roxbrugh once accounted my advice worthy of consideration. But when young Thomas was lost, doubt and mistrust took up residence in her heart, and ever after all my good council has been dispensed with as the kitchen rubbish to the sows. How might she reevaluate my worth if I prove my wisdom after it has been summarily dismissed? I cannot best Aberdeen in combat, but perhaps I will catch my prey through stealth. If I am patient I may surprise him in a compromising position.

(Sterling exits.)

## SCENE 4

(The outskirts of the forest of Carterhaugh. Janet enters. Margaret and Aberdeen enter after her.)

MARGARET

Do you have any idea of the dangers that are all around us tonight?

JANET

I must go to Tam Lin!

MARGARET

Tam Lin is lost to you, now come away home.

(Janet exits again, and Margaret and Aberdeen exit after. Thompson and Sullivan enter.)

THOMPSON

If we come upon men we must challenge them  
Thrashing the humans is bonny wee fun.

SULLIVAN

But on this night the mortals may take a disguise.  
One may look like a man but not be one.  
A man may dress as a woman, and a woman as a man.  
Or either be disguised as a demon.

(MacDougal enters.)

MACDOUGAL

It will not do to go off in a blaze  
Lest the hominid prove fay  
You must ascertain that the entity  
Is some defeatable prey.

THOMPSON

Hominid, homunculus or humongous green dwarf  
I will bash them if they can be seen.  
It makes no difference to a strong elven knight  
If they are or are not human being.

(Margaret and Aberdeen enter, dragging Janet along.)

MARGARET

You will thank me for taming your wild and headstrong ways  
once you are cured of this fairy fever.

MACDOUGAL

Here are some folk, and mortal no doubt.  
No other night could we be seen,  
But now is the time for kything  
For it has become Halloween.

(The Elven Knights make themselves visible.)

Unburden yourself and be gone  
For the love-tossed lassie stays.  
You would be wise to heed me  
And live to see better days.

(Aberdeen and Margaret stop and gape at the sight  
of the Elven Knights. Aberdeen drops Janet.)

ABERDEEN

These must be Roxbrughs, dressed up for Halloween.

(Janet exits. When Aberdeen and Margaret try to  
follow, the Elven Knights block their way)

MARGARET

Beware Lord Aberdeen, for they are not mortal folk. You cannot  
fight them as you would the Roxbrughs.

SULLIVAN

You would do well to heed your lady's advice.  
We are not cowed by your blaze  
We are the folk mortals try to deceive  
With all their disguising ways.

ABERDEEN

Step aside unless you wish to meet Sir Murgatroyd!

THOMPSON

Where is this fellow and how is he disguised?  
His masquerading is a disgrace!  
No mortal man can ever defeat us!  
Make him show us his cowardly face.

(Aberdeen draws his sword.)

ABERDEEN

He is no coward and neither am I!

THOMPSON

I salute you Murgatroyd, what a clever disguise!  
And an excellent place, sir, to hide.

SULLIVAN

It is not a disguise you invincible fool  
It's a two-handed sword, bona fide!

(MacDougal draws his sword. Aberdeen and  
MacDougal circle each other.)

ABERDEEN

The day I am afraid of three pretty Roxbrugh knaves is the day I  
lay Murgatroyd down for his well-deserved rest. What poor  
woman did you rob when you selected your wardrobe my lads?

(Aberdeen and MacDougal cross swords once, part  
and circle again. Thompson and Sullivan also  
circle.)

MARGARET

My love is stout-hearted and brave, but even he cannot hope to  
match three Elven Lords on Halloween.

(She takes out a silken satchel of angelica.)

I hope that my granny spoke true of the power of angelica.

(She sprinkles angelica on the ground around the  
fight.)

Enchanted herb and magic flower  
Share with me your blessed power.

(The Elven Knights are weakened by the angelica.)

THOMPSON

Sullivan, I am dead weary  
I don't feel like fighting at all.

SULLIVAN

Thompson I am tarrowing too  
Let us escape before we fall.

(Aberdeen and MacDougal cross swords again, but  
this time Aberdeen causes MacDougal to drop his  
sword.)

MACDOUGAL

His woman employed an inflorescence.  
We'll be revenged when we meet again.

(Sullivan and Thomson pull MacDougal away with  
them.)

SULLIVAN

Aye Mackie, they will be sorry next time,  
Now let's run away while we still can.

(The Elven Knights exit.)

ABERDEEN

Margaret, we have defeated them!

(He embraces her)

MARGARET

By a miracle we have come out of the contest unscathed. It is  
lucky that I know some herbal lore, and you are so skilled in the  
martial arts.

ABERDEEN

I am skilled at other arts as well, and you yourself have felt the  
proof.

(Margaret pulls away from him.)

MARGARET

How could you talk that way while Janet is running loose in  
Carterhaugh?

ABERDEEN

I meant no offense good and honorable lady!

(He puts his arm around her shoulders.)

MARGARET

Lord Aberdeen, I pray you...

ABERDEEN

Please Margaret, I beg you. Be sweet to me during the little time we have left before my dreaded fate. What can it matter if you leave me with at least a little kindness to fondly remember. For tonight at least, call me Andrew.

MARGARET

Very well. Andrew.

ABERDEEN

You truly are the sweetest lady in all Scotland.

MARGARET

Your words might unhinge every last particle of my stern resistance, except that I fear what may become of Janet – she has been almost like a daughter to me–

ABERDEEN

No indeed – like a younger sister –

MARGARET

Please Andrew - if something should happen to her, I cannot say what I would do. But I doubt I could ever listen to a man's honeyed words again, for my unending grief.

ABERDEEN

Best woman known to the world, if I can help her, even if it means to surrender my own life, I will do it, for your dear sake.

MARGARET

You are a better man than even I accounted you. My heart fills with joy and breaks in two at the same instant. But no more – we must face the night.

ABERDEEN

I am grateful that we face it together, Meg.

(Aberdeen and Margaret exit.)

**SCENE 5**

(The forest of Carterhaugh. Janet enters and picks a rose. In a moment Tam Lin appears.)

TAM LIN

Why did you pick that rose  
And summon me, faithless lass?  
And what will you offer to appease me  
In order that you may pass?

JANET

Tam Lin, forgive me for staying away so long. But I have now  
come back to you again!

TAM LIN

I do not consort with mortal females.  
I do not care for all their inconstant ways.

JANET

How could you deny our love?

TAM LIN

I knew a lass once, but that was long ago  
And never saw her for uncountable days.

JANET

I could not come to you, although my heart was bleeding each day  
of my absence. But please heed me now, for I must tell you of a  
matter of great consequence concerning us both.

TAM LIN

Mortal concerns are not mine.  
Hand over your mantle then go your ways.

(Janet steps forward to hand him her mantle.)

JANET

You may have this green mantle and a score like it, if you will  
only tell me, and tell me true, Tam Lin, how did you come to  
dwell here in the forest of Carterhaugh?

TAM LIN

Seven years ago I was riding  
When from my horse I fell.  
The Queen of the Faeries caught me  
And brought me here to dwell  
In this gentle and pleasant land  
Where no pain nor sickness be.  
And no mortal lass could outmatch  
The queen's great kindness to me.

JANET

Perhaps that is so Tam Lin, and yet since you are mortal you must know: I go with child and it is your own, and unless you have forgotten your honor entirely, you will take pity on us both and acknowledge your babe.

TAM LIN

Another trick to try my patience sorely  
Give me the mantle and then be gone.

(Janet offers the mantle to him. He steps forward.  
Janet takes his hand and presses it against her  
belly.)

JANET

I am not yet big, but with your Elven-borrowed senses you may feel your mortal heritage stirring within.

TAM LIN

You speak truly - and your touch once again brings me back to my worldly senses - our wooing is no longer a hazy fancy, but a dear and cherished remembrance. I would forsake all the comely pleasures of the Faerie land to make an infinity of such memories with you.

(They kiss)

JANET

Nothing will make me so happy as to endure the pains of annual labor for my earthborn lord Tam Lin.

TAM LIN

My unparalleled Janet, I too will work hard and long for our mighty progenic cause.

(They kiss passionately, but Tam Lin breaks it off.)

TAM LIN

Now Janet, listen to what I tell you. The Queen will not willingly let me part.

JANET

Then you must go without her will.

TAM LIN

I have seen the strange enchantments she can work- I have seen much that no other mortal has seen, or seeing could believe. But tonight is Halloween, and the Queen must go forth to make a titling to the Dark Lord. You will have but one moment to win me away from her.

JANET

I will perform this task as though my life hung in the balance.

TAM LIN

As well it may. Go there at midnight and wait for the Elven host to pass by. You will see me beside the Faerie Queen. Cover me with your green mantle, then take me in your arms and do not let me go. She will rage and fret and do all in her power to thwart you. She will transform me into fearsome creatures, but you must hold on no matter what metamorphoses occurs.

JANET

I will hold you tight even if she changes you into the most horrendous incarnation ever conjured.

TAM LIN

Or our child will lose a father for another seven years. But on the third transformation, you must release me. I hear the Elven Lords approach, come away and I will tell you more.

(Tam Lin and Janet exit. Thompson, Sullivan and MacDougal enter.)

SULLIVAN

Inflorescence or battle skill  
Who cares whether he was stronger?  
If we don't find that scampering lass  
Tam Lin stays seven years longer.

THOMPSON

We'll search every inch of these woods  
and in the glen and in the bog.

MACDOUGAL

Our Queen awaits. We will contrive another way  
To rid us of that hateful dog.

(MacDougal, Sullivan and Thompson exit.)

**SCENE 6**

(The forest of Carterhaugh at Miles cross. There is a wishing well nearby. Aberdeen and Margaret enter.)

ABERDEEN

Her trail leads this way.

MARGARET

This is Miles Cross. But there is no rosebush here, and this place fills me with misapprehension.

ABERDEEN

Never fear the unearthly spirits, Margaret. They are no match for Aberdeen.

MARGARET

Only Aberdeen, and no other?

ABERDEEN

And my good and clever Maggie, of course. We have met with spirits and have lived to tell the tale - there is still some hope for us yet.

MARGARET

There is hope indeed, for it must be approaching midnight by now and if we can avoid the fey folk until one o'clock, they cannot do us harm, and we need only fear the injuries that the natural world will inflict on us – but listen – do you hear?

(They listen for a moment and hear bells.)

When the faerie folk travel, they ring bells to warn mortals off their path. We must not be seen by them.

(Margaret pulls Aberdeen aside. Thompson enters in procession)

It is an Elven Knight.

ABERDEEN

Is he not one that I fought and defeated?

(Sullivan enters.)

MARGARET

Aye, and there's another.

(MacDougal enters.)

ABERDEEN

And there's the third. But who is that?

(The Faerie Queen and Tam Lin enter.)

MARGARET

That is the Faerie Queen herself. Do not draw her attention or we will be in the gravest peril. You cannot defeat her with your sword, and my knowledge of herbal lore will not suffice. The young man by her side, if Janet's many praises are true, is Tam Lin himself.

(Janet enters and throws her mantle over Tam Lin.)

FAERIE QUEEN

What dark hour has befallen us?  
She has stolen dear Tam Lin from his Queen  
Release him, common wench  
Or the day of your death is Halloween.

MARGARET

Foolish girl, to bring the wrath of the Faerie Queen on your head!  
She is lost to us, Andrew.

(The Faerie Queen casts a spell.)

FAERIE QUEEN

How easy to hold a laddie dear  
Yet how tempting to forsake  
When all those words of sweetness  
Come from the tongue of a snake!

(Janet is now seen without Tam Lin and instead  
has a large snake wrapped around her.)

ABERDEEN

I will kill that serpent!

(He attempts to go to Janet, but MacDougal blocks  
him.)

MACDOUGAL

Hold off your brawny might,  
And your herbal incantation -  
If you challenge our dread Queen  
You risk that lassie's damnation

(The Faerie Queen circles Janet and the snake.)

FAERIE QUEEN

Why are you still holding it?  
You will pay for this too dear!  
You will not survive us both!

(The Faerie Queen attempts to grab Janet's neck,  
but she shies away from Janet's green cape.)

FAERIE QUEEN

There is angelica here!  
Isn't she a crafty wench?  
But no herb can prevent your dying  
When your true love turns fierce and savage:  
Distempered and ravenous lion!

(The Faerie Queen casts another spell and the  
snake turns into a lion.)

FAERIE QUEEN

The beast will swallow you whole!  
Release him you heedless fool!  
He will send you to your fate  
Wretched and horrible cruel.

(Janet refuses to let go of the lion.)

MARGARET

Oh I cannot bear it any longer. Janet let go!

ABERDEEN

Back, you wraiths! May you and the Faerie Queen be damned!

(MacDougal blocks him again.)

MACDOUGAL

You will blast it all to hell  
And destroy the only chance  
She has to win him  
If you continue to advance.

FAERIE QUEEN

You may be too silly and daft  
To release a vicious lion  
But no mortal lass can hold for long  
A burning wand of red iron!

(The lion has disappeared and Janet is holding a glowing bar of iron. On the count of five she goes to the well and throws the bar in.)

FAERIE QUEEN

You have lost him after all!  
Let your mourning begin  
You must go and drown yourself  
For you have drowned Tam Lin!

(Tam Lin rises from the well. Janet wraps him in her green mantle.)

MACDOUGAL

We have done it my brothers.  
She has won Tam Lin away  
The Queen is returning to ourselves  
On this blessed blissful day

FAERIE QUEEN

Had I known deceitful Tam Lin  
That you contrived against our good  
I would have poked out your two eyes  
And replaced them with eyes of wood!

MACDOUGAL

My Queen, this is a dreadful misfortune  
But the Dark Lord is awaiting.  
It does no useful service to him  
To linger so long berating.

(MacDougal leads the Queen away as she addresses Janet.)

FAERIE QUEEN

Shame betide your ill-fared face,  
An ill death may you see,  
For you have taken the bonniest knight  
In all my company.

(Faerie Queen and the Elven Knights exit.  
Margaret and Aberdeen go to Janet and Tam Lin –  
Tam Lin has gotten out of the well by this time,  
and remains wrapped in Janet's cape.)

MARGARET

So this is the famous Tam Lin. You are bonnier than even Janet  
has described.

ABERDEEN

Ahem!

MARGARET

And yet not as attractive as Lord Aberdeen.

JANET

I am sorry Aberdeen, but I cannot marry you. I must marry Tam  
Lin – for just as I told you, he is the father of my child. And now  
Margaret must claim her baby as your own.

ABERDEEN

Margaret?

MARGARET

Yes my lord.

ABERDEEN

Maggie, now you are truly mine.

(He kisses her. Sterling enters, grabs Janet and  
holds a knife to her throat.)

STERLING

What an amorous disposition you have Aberdeen. Lord Dunbar cannot be pleased that you are making love on the field of battle.

(Aberdeen draws his sword.)

ABERDEEN

I'll run you through!

STERLING

(holds Janet in front of himself)

But would you risk damaging this prettiest shield of the house of Dunbar? Please come with me, gentle folk. All the Roxbrugh clan will be happy to see you.

(All exit.)

**ACT V****SCENE 1**

(The fields outside the castle. Lady Roxbrugh and Sterling enter.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

I have long waited to see Dunbar's ambitions trimmed back. The news of our illustrious captives gladdens my old heart. Is the treaty drawn up?

STERLING

Aye Madame.

(hands her the treaty.)

And once he hears our terms it'll set him to ranting and roaring all over again.

LADY ROXBRUGH

(reads)

"I Lord Dunbar do with an open and generous heart, give over half of all my lands and pledge an annual tax to Lady Roxbrugh and her kin, in exchange for the safe return my daughter and Lord Aberdeen." Aye, this'll get him going.

(Dunbar enters, followed by Douglas.)

DUNBAR

Where is that wicked virago who kidnapped my kith and kin?

LADY ROXBRUGH

Hello Angus. You're roaring like the fire that swallowed up our dear departed old catapult.

DUNBAR

Where is my daughter and Aberdeen?

LADY ROXBRUGH

Bring forth the captives, Sterling.

(Sterling exits.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

Dunbar why do you covet our lands? Haven't we been good neighbors? You have vast holdings, a fine castle, good knights attending on you and a healthy big family. Isn't that enough for any man? Why try to take Carterhaugh as well?

DUNBAR

Your legacy is in doubt and your kin would be fighting each other for generations to come, which would bring war on us all. It would have been for your benefit as well as ours.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Such a gentleman you are, Dunbar. You took my lands upon yourself strictly as a favor to me. I suppose I should thank you for your consideration of my welfare, but I don't believe I deserve such a loving kindness.

(Lady Roxbrugh hands Dunbar the treaty. Dunbar reads.)

And so I must decline your generosity.

DUNBAR

Half of all my lands!?

LADY ROXBRUGH

You are welcome. You see, Angus, I could have taken the entire kit and caboodle.

(Janet and Aberdeen enter, followed by Sterling.)

DUNBAR

Where is Margaret, my daughter's lady? Or do you plan to charge me a herd of cattle for her?

LADY ROXBRUGH

Bring forth the woman.

(Sterling exits.)

JANET

But what about Tam Lin?

LADY ROXBRUGH

Tam Lin?

DUNBAR

I'm not ransoming a ghost!

(Margaret, Tam Lin and Sterling enter.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

Tam Lin, is it? If you answer by another name, then I know you well – and you have not aged a day since I saw you last!

TAM LIN

Seven years is not so long a time, and yet it seems an eternity.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Come and give your old grandmamma a better look.

(Lady Roxbrugh embraces Tam Lin.)

My dear Thomas, you are not moldering in your grave after all!

STERLING

We told you we never laid a hand on him!

TAM LIN

The faerie folk took me seven Halloweens ago.

LADY ROXBRUGH

The faerie folk?

TAM LIN

Aye, although it is a strange tale to tell, I'd be with them still except for this brave lass who stole me away from the Faerie Queen herself.

LADY ROXBRUGH

This lass? The daughter of Lord Dunbar? Well, this changes the situation a wee bit, doesn't it?

TAM LIN

We plan to marry. Janet is carrying a babe, and it is my own.

LADY ROXBRUGH

An heir of the house of Dunbar and the house of Roxbrugh!

DUNBAR

This cannot be! She is betrothed to Lord Aberdeen!

ABERDEEN

I release her from her betrothal.

DUNBAR

But Aberdeen, don't you want a wife?

ABERDEEN

I found another.

(He and Margaret join hands.)

LADY ROXBRUGH

Let the captives be released. Beyond all probability the house of Roxbrugh now has an undisputed heir. We're kin Angus, whether you like it or no.

DUNBAR

Well Carolyn, it looks as though I did you a favor after all, although not exactly as I planned. This lawful joining of our families cannot help but bring a lasting peace to our lands.

LADY ROXBRUGH

Let's have a toast to this blessed turn of events.

(Dunbar and Lady Roxbrugh exit.)

DOUGLAS

Did I understand this rightly, Monsieur Pierre? Tam Lin is the Roxbrugh's heir, and all this squabbling has been for naught?

STERLING

So it seems. Truly this is a most unpredictable time of year. Come along then. Lady Roxbrugh's scotch is justly famous and I sorely need a drink.

DOUGLAS

You're not such a bad fellow, for a Froggie.

STERLING

(giving up on ever convincing Douglas)

What can I say, but... merci beaucoup.

(Sterling and Douglas exit.)

JANET

How now Margaret dear, should I have kept to my place in the world as you once advised?

MARGARET

I would be an ungrateful lady if I did not recognize the part you played in my good fortune, in spite of all your heedless and headstrong methods.

JANET

Good old Meg.

(They embrace.)

ABERDEEN

My sweet Maggie, beyond all hope, I may now rightfully claim you as my own. What do you say, bonny lady? My knights are waiting to celebrate my nuptials – will you give them something to celebrate?

MARGARET

With one provision.

ABERDEEN

Out with it immediately! I can't wait more than a heartbeat for your acceptance. Give me your terms!

MARGARET

You must promise me, dear Andrew, that you will always take a candle with you to bed.

ABERDEEN

A candle? But for what purpose?

MARGARET

So you may always determine the true identity of your bedmate – henceforth let there never be any doubt on the matter of whom you are doing what with in the shadows of the night.

ABERDEEN

I will have the sun himself shine into my bedchamber – our bedchamber – at midnight, if that is what you wish.

MARGARET

One small candle will suffice.

ABERDEEN

Then yes, Maggie, a candle – now please, end my suspense! What do you say?

MARGARET

Yes, I will marry you, Andrew, my heart's desire. And I will dance with you all night long.

(Aberdeen and Margaret exit.)

JANET

Tam Lin, though we have accomplished much with what little time we have had together, yet I have enjoyed your wooing but once, and that is a million times less than satisfactory.

TAM LIN

Let us go to Roxburgh Castle where we will spend our days snug in each others arms and planning for our future prodigious brood.

JANET

But what of the Faerie Queen? I fear her bitter envy will blast us apart if she sees you again.

TAM LIN

I am safe for another year, for Halloween is done and the faerie and mortal worlds are drawn apart once more. But you and I must never venture forth on Halloween save we are in disguise. With this precaution observed we two will remain safe from the Queen and all her minions the rest of our days. Now come away and I will recount for you the strange and wondrous things I saw while on the other side of the dark divide.

JANET

Do you miss the faerie lands, Tam Lin?

TAM LIN

No dearest Janet, although it is a pleasant land indeed, I am content to change it all for one brave and stalwart mortal lass. There is no Faerie Queen who dares compare with the enchanting likes of you.

(They exit.)

**SCENE 2**

(The fields outside the castle. The Faerie Queen enters.)

**FAERIE QUEEN**

She who gets Tam Lin  
Has got a stately groom  
And she who loses Tam Lin  
Has got a taste of doom.  
Male creatures are sorry and feckless  
Expectations must be so tame.  
All the more shocking to find him  
Who puts all the others to shame.  
And when he is off and away  
The world becomes flat and stale  
Wretched, tiresome, dreary, and dull,  
Weary and boring and pale.

(The Elven Knights enter.)

**MACDOUGAL**

My Queen, assiduously I attend your will.  
We have answered the Dark Lord's call  
And there is no reason to linger here more.  
We may return to Carterhaugh.

**FAERIE QUEEN**

Dear MacDougal how long has it been  
Since I've truly gazed upon you?  
I had quite forgotten how handsome you are  
and Thompson and Sullivan too.  
It takes me away from the heartache  
And the melancholy pain  
Why stand around sobbing and groaning?  
It stands to give us no gain.

**SULLIVAN**

Pardon my Queen but please tell us  
Which one of us you best prefer.

**THOMPSON**

It is me she prefers as I told you.

MACDOUGAL

I believe the choice falls to her.

FAERIE QUEEN

Why must I be so choosy  
And have only one of you brave gallants?  
We can spend our time altogether  
I like each of your many fine talents.  
Thompson so strong and so sturdy  
Sullivan all feisty and raring,  
MacDougal is clever and ever concerned  
With how well his dear queen is faring.  
Let us away all to Carterhaugh  
Our adventuring finally ends.  
The future holds cozy carousing  
For this saucy wee quartet of friends.

(Happy at last, the Elven knights carry the Faerie  
Queen off.)

**THE END**