

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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I'm a Little Orphan Girl

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1.

I'm a little orphan girl,
My mother she is dead;
My father is a drunkard,
And won't buy me my bread.
I leant upon the window-sill
To hear the organ play
And think of my dear mother
Who's dead and far away.

Ding dong my castle bell,
Farewell to my mother,
Bury me in the old churchyard
Beside my eldest brother.
My coffin shall be white,
Six little angels by my side,
Two to sing and two to pray
And two to carry my soul away.

2.

Ding dong my castle bell,
Farewell to my mother,
Bury me in the old churchyard
Beside my elder brother.
My coffin shall be white
Six white angels by my side,
Two to sing and two to play
And two to carry my soul away.

3.

Ding, dong! castle bells,
Tell me where my mother dwells;
Bury me in the old churchyard,
Beside my oldest brother.

My coffin shall be black,
Six angels at my back;
Two to sing, and two to pray,
And two to carry my soul away.

4.

Ding! dong! my passing bell,

Fare thee well, my mother.
Bury me in the old churchyard
Beside my oldest brother.

My coffin shall be black;
Six angels at my back:
Two to sing and two to pray
And two to carry my soul away.

(1) Sung by children at Norton Park School, Edinburgh; recorded by the BBC in the 50s. From Lomax, Scotland (gramophone disc), side A NO. 8(a). The castle bell may well be a distortion of the obsolete passing bell; cf. no. (4) below. Similar in Ritchie Golden City (1965), 124, an Edinburgh skipping song (for "German ropes", in which a taut rope is on the ground and the girl has to jump from one side to the other), with sole differ in line 5, "I sit upon the window sill".

(2) Opies Lore (1959), 34, a skipping song, particular locality in Scotland unstated.

(3) Rymour Club Misc. I (1906-11), 150, from Gorgie School, Edinburgh; with music. Sometimes the words vary, as "Green peas, mutton pies, Tell me where my mother lies;/ I'll be there before she dies, And cuddle in her bosom./ My coffin shall be black, etc." <Cf. "Green Peas".>

(4) Rodger Lang Strang (1948), 27, as a line game; continued with a rhyme properly belonging to the class of book rhymes: When I'm dead and in my grave,/ And all my bones are rotten,/ This little book shall tell my name/ When I am quite forgotten./ Jeannie Rodger is my name;/ Dundee is my nation;/ Heaven is my dwelling-place/ And holy habitation.

Cf. White Paternoster, etc.; FSJ pt. 22, 86-89.

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