

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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True Thomas

True Thomas
(Danny Carnahan)

Thomas lay upon the grassy bank and beheld a lady gay,
Come riding o'er so brisk and bold along the ferny brae.
Her skirt was of the silk so green, and her coat the velvet fine
And at each toss, her horse's mane rang fifty bells and nine.

And Thomas did salute her, bowing down upon his knee,
And he said, "Well met enchanting one, you're the flower of this country."
And as he gazed upon her, oh so blind of love was he,
That he has kissed her rosey lips all 'neath the Eildon tree.

Oh now you've kissed me, Thomas, you must ride away with me
To serve my will for seven years what e'er your chance may be
She's mounted up her snow white steed and pulled Thomas up behind
And aye when'er her bridle rang, they flew swift as the wind.

And on they rode and farther on till they spied a garden green
And she said, "Lie down, dear Thomas, for we're near my fair country.
Take this bread and wine and lay your head down on my knee,
For when your fill you've eaten, I would show you fair ways three.

See the narrow road to paradise, though it winds through thorn and tree,
The broad road leads to the gates of Hell, though fair it seems to be,
But see you not yon farther road, winding round the lilly lea,
That is the road to my fair land, whence you must go with me.

But mark you, Thomas, hold your tongue and answer only unto me,
For should you speak unto another, your own home you ne'er shall see."
When Thomas came into the hall, oh a well bred man was he.
They've asked him questions one and all, but not one word spoke he.

Its of woven clouds she's made the roof and of flowered vines the walls
And jewels did shower down as rain that night among them all.
And each day brought Thomas wonders, never seen by mortal eye,
And each night brought Thomas wonders, as next the lady he did lie.

But she rose and said, "True Thomas, now 'tis time you were away,
For seven years have passed an
"If it's seven years, my lady, since my face on earth was seen,
Pray give to me some token that I may prove where I have been."

And it's on she rode and farther on to the Huntley banks rode she

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And she set him down upon the ground beside the Eilden tree.

"As you'd have a token, Thomas, a rare token shall it be,
For the gift I give you, Thomas, is a tongue that can not lie"

But he's cried, "I pray you lady, and give not this gift to me,
For how may I counsel prince or lord or court a fair lady?"
"Be careful in your silence as you're careful what you say,
May your truth outlive them all," she said as she turned and rode away.

Written by Danny Carnahan after a Child ballad. " Based on the
13th century legend of Thomas Rymer of Erceldoun. Thomas was
said to have visited the land of Faery and returned with the gift
of prophecy and tongue that could not lie. Most recent versions
of the ballad leave off at the point where Thomas is taken to the
other world, but one 14th century version recounts what happened
aft
on this older story."

Child #37

SG