

SHEPHERDS' PLAY 2

SHEPHERD 1: Lord, but this foul weather's cold! And I'm poorly-wrapped.  
I'm near- numb, truth be told, so long have I napped;  
My legs, ah, they fold! My fingers are chapped.  
It's not good, I'll be bold, to be like me lapped  
Thus in sorrow. 5  
In storms and in tempest  
Now in the east, now in the west.  
Pity him who has no rest,  
Midday nor morrow!

But we hard-pressed farmers, now, walking the moor, 10  
Near-ruined, I vow -- thrust from our own door!  
Need you then wonder how we should be poor,  
When the land we should plough lies as fallow as the floor,  
As you know.  
We are so hamstrung; 15  
Bled-white and wrung;  
Humbled so; down we are flung  
By these gentry -- our foe!

Thus they wrench us from rest -- Lady curse them all now!  
These lords-men are a pest: they tarry the plough. 20  
That, men say, is for the best; we cannot see how!  
Thus are farmers oppressed, near-deprived, I may vow,  
Of our lives.  
Thus they hold us under;  
Thus they cause us to blunder; 25  
It'll be a great wonder  
If any of us thrives!

If one gets a lord's livery or a badge here today,  
 You'll be sorry, believe me if you grieve, or gainsay,  
 Or reprove him too sharply, try as hard as you may; 30  
 Yet you can't believe, truly, one word he may say -  
 Not one letter!  
 He can go purveying  
 With bragging and braying,  
 Because those lords maintain him - 35  
 Who are far greater.

There'll come an upstart like a peacock - lo!  
 He must borrow my cart, my plough also;  
 With it I must part before he will go.  
 With pain thus we smart, with anger and woe 40  
 By night and day.  
 He'll take what he may crave  
 Though its loss makes me rave;  
 Better be in my grave  
 Than once tell him "nay." 45

It does me good, as I walk thus on my own  
 Of this world here to talk with a bit of a moan.  
 To my sheep now I'll stalk, and listen alone;  
 Rest awhile on a balk, or sit on a stone  
 Very soon. 50  
 For, by God, you'll see  
 If true men they be,  
 We'll get more company  
 Ere it be noon.

SHEPHERD 2: Bensté and Dominus! What may all this mean? 55  
 This world faring thus we've not often seen.  
 Lord, this foul weather spites us; the winds are so keen  
 With tears this frost blinds us, or so it would seem,  
 No lie!  
 Now dry; now wet we meet; 60

Then the snow, then the sleet;  
When my shoes freeze to my feet  
It's not at all easy.

But I tell you my friend, as far as I know  
We wretched wedded men suffer most woe; 65  
Again and yet again, it's often found so.  
Silly Pockle, our hen, both to and fro  
She cackles.

But when she starts to chuck,  
To groan or to cluck, 70  
Woe to him who's our cock,  
For he's in the shackles.

These men that are wed don't have all their will,  
For, let it be said, they must sigh and keep still.  
God knows they are led so, and put through the mill; 75  
In bower nor in bed may they once speak their fill.  
It's plain

That my part I've found;  
Learned my lesson sound:  
Woe to him who's tied down,  
For so he'll remain. 80

But now, fate in our lives - it seems so strange to me  
That my heart heaves and writhes such great wonders to see -  
For what fate contrives surely must come to be -  
Some men will take two wives, and some men three  
Or more. 85

Some are woeful with any!  
But it seems to me  
Sad the man who has many,  
For he feels it sore!

But young men a-wooing, by God that you bought, 90  
Be wary of wedding, and give this some thought:  
"Had I known" is a thing that will help you not.

Endless great mourning has married life brought,  
 And much wrong,  
 With many a sharp ache. 95  
 In an hour you may make  
 What will prove a mistake  
 All your life long!

As I've read Paul's Epistle, my companion I swear  
 Is as sharp as a thistle, as rough as a bear. 100  
 With brows like a bristle - sourest face anywhere!  
 Had she once wet her whistle, she could sing a fair  
 Old Paternoster.  
 As great as a whale withal;  
 She has a gallon of gall; 105  
 By him that died for us all,  
 I wish I had run till I had lost her!

Shepherd 1: God watch over the row! Are you deaf where you stand!

Shepherd 2: Well, the devil nip your toe, you're very late, man!  
 Where's Daw, do you know? 110

Shepherd 1: On the pasture land  
 I heard him blow. He's quite near at hand,  
 Over there.  
 Stand still!

Shepherd 2: Why? 115

Shepehrd 1: He'll be here soon, say I.

Shepherd 2: He'll tell us both a lie  
 Unless we beware.

Shepherd 3: Christ's cross me speed, and Saint Nicholas!  
 Of that I've great need - it is worse than it was. 120  
 Who sees this, take heed, and let the world pass!  
 It's in danger indeed, and brittle as glass,

And tumbles.  
This world fared never so,  
Such strange things come and go; 125  
Now well-being, now woe,  
And each thing crumbles.

Never since Noah, I swear, have such floods been!  
Winds and rains that so tear, and storms so keen!  
Some staggered, some doubted there what they had seen. 130  
Now God mend all this care! I say what I mean,  
For ponder:  
These floods so do drown  
All in fields and in town,  
And bear all things down, 135  
And that is a wonder!

We that walk in the night our livestock to keep,  
See many a strange sight when other men sleep.  
Yet now my heart's light: I see two rogues peep.  
You're two monsters alright! I will tell my sheep: 140  
To go.  
That's not good, I can tell,  
As I walk on this fell.  
But I'll repent well  
If I just stub my toe! 145

Ah, sir, God you save, and master mine!  
A drink, sir, I crave, and I'd like to dine.

Shepherd 1: Christ's curse, my knave! You are a lazy swine!

Shepherd 2: What? Hear the boy rave! Wait till it's time;  
We've had our bit. 150  
Bad luck to you, mate!  
Though the rogue came late  
He holds out his plate  
To eat - if he had it!

Shepherd 3: Such servants as I, that work till we sweat, 155  
 Eat our bread quite dry - all the thanks that we get!  
 When our masters sleep, aye, we are weary and wet;  
 Yet our food and drink comes by more slowly yet.  
 But I'm telling you,  
 Both our mistress and sire, 160  
 When we've run in the mire,  
 They can cut down our hire,  
 And pay us late, too!

But hear my vow, master: for the food you give me  
 I shall just follow after - work accordingly . 165  
 I shall do a little, sir, and play constantly.  
 In my stomach my supper never yet lay heavy  
 In the fields.  
 But why should I fuss?  
 With my staff I'll leap, thus; 170  
 And men do tell us  
 "Cheap bargains: bad yields"

Shepherd 1: You were a fool, lad, to go a-wocing  
 With a man that had so little for spending.

Shepherd 2: Peace boy, I said! No more wrangling, 175  
 Or I'll quiet you, by God, and no hesitating,  
 With your frauds!  
 Where are our sheep? - now, no scorn!

Shepherd 3: Sir, this same day at morn  
 I left them in the corn 180  
 When the bell rang for lauds  
 They have pasture good, they cannot go wrong.

Shepherd 1: That is right. By God's blood these nights are long!

Still, before we go someone should give us a song.

Shepherd 2: So I thought as I stood, to cheer us along. 185

Shepherd 3: I grant.

Shepherd 1: Let me sing the tenor free;

Shepherd 2: And I the treble, truly;

Shepherd 3: Then the mean must fall to me;  
Let's see how you chant. 190

Then Mak enters, dressed with a cloak over his tunic

Mak: Lord, who by your names seven, made moon and stars to abide,  
Far more than I can name them, your will from me you hide.  
I am all uneven; my brains perplexed inside.  
Would to God I were in heaven, for there no babies cry  
So shrill. 195

Shepherd 1: Who is that moaning out there?

Mak: Would to God you knew how I fare!  
One who walks on the moor full of care,  
And has not all his will.

Shepherd 2: Mak, where have you gone? What news do you bring? 200

Shepherd 3: Has he come? Keep watch then on each little thing!

And he takes the cloak from him

Mak: What! We be a yeoman we tell thee, of the king  
The self and the same one, sent from a great lording,  
Truly.  
Fie on thee! Go thou hence,  
Out of our presence! 205

We must have reverence  
Why, who are we?

Shepherd 1: Mak, why play it so quaint? You do wrong, say I.

Shepherd 2: Do you want to play the saint, Mak? Do you long to try? 210

Shepherd 3: All colours he can paint – the devil hang him high!

Mak: We shall make complaint, and have thee whipped here, aye,  
At a word,  
And tell thy ways, forsooth!

Shepherd 1: But Mak, is that truth? 215  
Now, take out that fancy tooth,  
And put in a turd!

Shepherd 2: Mak, the devil with you be! I'll give you plenty pain!

Shepherd 3: Mak, know you not me? By God, I'll burst your brain!

Mak: God keep you, all three! I thought you were the same! 220  
You are a fair company.

Shepherd 1: Remember now your name?

Shepherd 2: Look about you!  
Going thus late out,  
What will men think, I out? 225  
And you're known hereabout  
For stealing sheep, too!

Mak: That I am true as steel all men know;  
But a sickness I feel – that grips me so!  
My belly's not too well – it is full of woe. 230

Shepherd 3: Seldom the devil of hell starves her below.

Mak: For sure,  
I am ill now within;  
May my sorrows begin  
If I ate but a pin 235  
This month and more.

Shepherd 1: And how's your wife, Mak, truly, how is she now?

Mak: Lies sprawling, believe me, by the fire - that's how!  
With a house full of babes she'll be. Drinks well, I vow.  
Does no good, certainly. Oh, she's a cow!  
But she 240  
Eats as fast as she can,  
And every year that comes to a man  
She brings forth another bairn -  
And some years, three!

But were I more prosperous than the king on his throne, 245  
I'd be eaten out of house and of home.  
Yet she's all foulness if near you come;  
There is none that knows or could know such a one  
Now as me.  
Now will you see what I'd proffer? 250  
I'd give all in my coffer  
Tomorrow morn to offer  
Her funeral-mass penny!

Shepherd 2: So weary with watching is none in this shire;  
I'll vow I'll be sleeping, if I must take less hire. 255

Shepherd 3: I'm near-bare and shivering, I'd so like a fire.

Shepherd 1: I am weary and aching from trudging through mire.  
Watch, you!

Shepherd 2: Nay, I'll lay down nearby,  
For I must sleep now, fie! 260

Shepherd 3: As good a man's son am I  
As any of you.

Mak: But Mak, come hither. Between shall you lie down.  
That will prevent a scene - the rumours that fly round,  
Indeed! 265  
From my top to my toe,  
Manus tuas commendo  
Poncio Pilato;  
Christ's cross me speed!

Then he gets up while the shepherds are sleeping, and says:

Now's the time for a man that lacks what he'd hold 270  
To stalk secretly then, into the sheepfold

And nimbly to work, then, and not be too bold,  
For who pays for that bargain pays dear, truth be told,  
At the reckoning.  
Now to move with good speed - 275  
But good thinking he'll need,  
Who hopes to succeed  
And has little for spending.

Have about you a circle, as round as a moon,  
Till I've done what I will, until it be noon, 280  
That you may lie stone-still until I have done,  
And I'll speak my fill - a few good words soon  
Over you:  
"Over your heads my hand I lift;  
Blind are your eyes; sightless they drift!" 285  
But I must make a better shift  
Ere it will do.

Lord, but they sleep hard! That may you all hear.  
 I was never a shepherd, but I'll learn, never fear!  
 If the flock be scared, I'll wait till I'm near. 290  
 Here now, come hitherward! Now this brings good cheer  
 Out of sorrow.  
 A fat sheep I dare say;  
 A good fleece, I dare lay.  
 When I can, I'll repay, 295  
 But this I will borrow.

Jill: Hey, Jill, are you in? Get us some light!  
 Who makes such a din this time of the night?  
 I'm all set to spin! I don't think I might  
 Rise now for a pin. God give them the blight! 300  
 So it goes.  
 For housewives like us,  
 In our toil plagued by fuss  
 Can show no work done thus,  
 For such chores, God knows! 305

Mak: Good wife, open the hatch! Don't you see what I bring?  
 Jill: I shall let you draw the latch. Ah! come in my sweeting!  
 Mak: Huh! You don't care a stitch for my long standing  
 Jill: By the neck they may catch and leave you there hanging  
 Mak: Away! I deserve my meat, 310  
 For when hard-pressed I'll get  
 More than those that work and sweat  
 All the long day.

Jill: Thus it fell to my lot, Jill; I had such luck!  
 I'd be a foul blot in a noose to be stuck 315  
 Mak: Yet I've escaped scot-free from far dirtier muck.  
 Jill: "But so long goes the pot to the water," my duck,  
 "At last  
 Comes it home broken!"

MAK: Well I know the token, 320  
 But let it never be spoken  
 But come and help fast!

I wish he were skinned: Oh, I long to eat!  
 These twelve months or so, I've yearned for sheep meat.

Jill: If they come ere he's dead, lo, they'll hear the sheep bleat 325

Mak: Then they'd take me, I know: that would be my defeat!  
 Go bolt  
 The outer door.

Jill: Yes, Mak,  
 For if they come at your back 330

Mak: Then might I get from the whole pack  
 A hell of a jolt!

Jill: A good trick have I spied, since you know none:  
 Here shall we hide him until they are gone,  
 In my cradle. Abide! Let me alone! 335

Mak: And I shall lie beside in childbed, and groan.  
 To bed!  
 I'll say this night you bore here  
 A baby boy, my dear!

Jill: Now blessed be far and near 340  
 That day that I was bred!

It's a good device - a play well-cast.  
 So a woman's advice helps at the last!  
 But we don't know who spies: go back again fast!

Mak: I'll be there ere they rise, else there'll blow a cold blast! 345  
 I will go sleep.  
 Still sleeps all this company;  
 And I'll creep in so secretly  
 They'll never know it was me  
 That stole away their sheep. 350

Shepherd 1: Resurrex a mortuus! Here! hold my hand!  
 Judas carnas dominus! I may not well stand:  
 My foot sleeps, by Jesus, Hunger makes me faint, and  
 I dreamt that we lay asleep close to England.

Shepherd 2: Not me! 355  
 Lord, but I have slept well!  
 As fresh as an eel,  
 As light now I feel  
 As leaf on a tree

Shepherd 3: God bless us within, I so quake! 360  
 My heart bursts its skin, such a noise you make!  
 What's up? Why this din? How it makes my head ache!  
 To the door I'll go then. Hark, fellows, awake!  
 We were four -  
 Did you see Mak, you two? 365

Shepherd 1: We were up before you.

Shepherd 2: Man, I'll tell you it's true,  
 He's still here, as before.

Shepherd 3: I thought he was wrapped in a wolf's skin.  
 Shepherd 1: So are many wrapped now, especially within. 370  
 Shepherd 3: When we had long napped, with a trick I thought then  
 A fat sheep he trapped; but he made no din.

Shepherd 2: Be still!  
 Your dream makes you mad.  
 It's a fantasy, lad. 375

Shepherd 1: God turn all to good from bad,  
 If it be his will.

Shepherd 2: Rise, Mak, for shame! You've slept far too long.  
 Mak: Now Christ's holy name be us among!  
 By Saint James, what's this? Lame? I can't get along! 380  
 I trust it's a game. Ah, my neck's lain all wrong!  
 Enough!

Thanks! Last night, I swear  
 By Saint Stephen the fair, 385  
 I'd an awful nightmare -  
 My heart burst it's skin!

I thought Jill began to croak and labour like mad  
 To bear at the first cock another young lad.  
 To increase our flock. If so, I'll not be glad 390  
 I've got more nails to knock than ever I had.  
 Oh my head!  
 All those young mouths to feed -  
 The devil hang them with speed!  
 Woe to him who will fast breed, 395  
 And has so little bread.

I must go home, by your leave, to Jill as I ought.  
 I pray, look up my sleeve, that I steal nought;  
 I am loath you to grieve, or from you take aught.

Shepherd 3: Go forth! - bad luck achieve! I'd suggest we sought 400  
 This morn  
 That we've all our sheep here.

Shepherd 1: I'll go first, never fear.  
 Let us meet.

Shepherd 2: Where? 405

Shepherd 3: At the crooked thorn.

Mak: Undo this door! Who is here? How long shall I stand?  
 Jill: You're hurting my ear! Curses on your head, man!  
 Mak: Ah Jill, what cheer? It is I, Mak, your husband.  
 Jill: Then the devil is here, all in his neckband - 410  
 Sir Guile!  
 See, he comes with a croak,  
 As if one held him by the throat.  
 I may not work - it's no joke! -  
 Even a brief while. 415

Mak: Will you hear what fuss she makes, and excuses, God knows;  
 And her ease then she takes, and just picks her toes!  
 Jill: Why, who bustles? who breaks her back? who comes? who goes?  
 Who brews and who bakes? That's all you, I suppose!  
 Aye, and 420  
 It's a shame to behold,  
 Now in hot, now in cold,

The poor woeful household  
That lacks woman's hand.

Mak: But what end did you reach with the shepherds, Mak? 425  
In their last little speech when I turned them my back,  
They said they would seek for each sheep — the whole pack.  
I think they may let out a screech when they see what they lack,  
God knows!  
But whatever the game 430  
They'll suspect me of blame  
And cry out "Fie! shame!"  
On me, I suppose.

Jill: But you must do as you said!  
Agreed! Now this babe'll 435  
Be swathed toe to head, here in my cradle.  
I was cleverly bred for such tricks — it's no fable.  
I'll lie down here in bed. Cover me.

Mak: As I'm able.  
Jill: Behind! 440  
If Coll and his mate come  
They will search hard — and then some!

Mak: And they'll make me more than glum  
If they the sheep find.

Jill: Listen now for their call; they'll soon be along. 445  
Come and make ready all, and then sing a song.  
"Lullay" you must bawl, for I must groan on,  
And cry out by the wall, on Mary and John,  
In pain.  
Sing "lullay" — and fast — 450  
When you hear them at last  
And if this net's not well-cast  
Never trust me again.

Shepherd 3: Ah, Coll, good morn! Why still on the go?  
 Shepherd 1: Alas, that ever I was born! We have some great woe: 455  
 A fat ram from our flock torn.

Shepherd 3: God forbid it be so!  
 Shepherd 2: Who should do us that scorn? That is a foul blow!  
 Shepherd 1: Would I knew!  
 I have turned every leaf 460  
 On Horbury Heath,  
 And for fifteen young sheep  
 I found but one ewe.

Shepherd 3: Now trust me, if you will: by Saint Thomas of Kent  
 Either Mak or Jill contrived that event. 465  
 Shepherd 1: Peace, man, be still! I saw when he went.  
 You slander him ill. You ought to repent  
 With speed.

Shepherd 2: Now as I hope to thrive;  
 As ever I'm alive, 470  
 I'd swear he did contrive  
 To do that same deed.

Shepherd 3: Go we there then, I say, and run on our feet.  
 I'll eat no bread today till we know all, complete.

Shepherd 1: Drink nothing I may till with him I meet 475  
 Shepherd 2: I shall rest nowhere, nay, till I may him great.  
 My brother.  
 I'll promise alright,  
 Till I have him in sight  
 I'll not sleep one more night 480  
 In this place or another.

Shepherd 3: Will you hear how they trill? Our man wants to croon!  
 Shepherd 1: I've not heard one so shrill, so clean out of tune!  
 Call on him!

Shepherd 2: Mak! Jill! undo your door soon! 485  
 Mak: Who speaks so loud? - tell - as if it were noon -  
 Aloft?  
 Who is that, I say?

Shepherd 3: Good fellows, if it were day.  
 Mak: As far as you may, 490

Good fellows, speak soft,

Over a poor woman's head who's so sick - now please! -  
I would rather be dead than put her ill at ease.

Jill: Go elsewhere instead! I can hardly wheeze.  
Each loud step you tread makes my head buzz like bees - 495  
Oh, it's true!

Shepherd 1: Tell us, Mak, if you may  
How are you, I say?

Mak: But are you here in town today?  
Now, how are you? 500

You have run through the mire, and are all wet.  
I shall make you a fire, if you will sit.  
A nurse I would hire - just think a bit:  
What I didn't desire? - my dream? - this is it,  
Tonight! 505  
I have babes, if you knew,  
Far too many, it's true;  
But we must drink as we brew  
And that's only right.

I'd have you eat ere you go. You're sweating, I think. 510

Shepherd 2: You'll not cheer us up so with food or with drink.

Mak: Why, sir, are you then in woe?

Shepherd 3: Aye, our sheep, in a wink  
Are stolen as they go. A foul loss we think.

Mak: Drink, sirs! 515  
Had I been there  
I'd filled some one with care!

Shepherd 1: Marry, some men think you were -  
And each of us concurs.

Shepherd 2: Mak, some men suppose your work this must be. 520

Shepherd 3: Either you or your spouse, so say we.

Mak: Now if you make these vows about Jill or me,  
Come, ransack our house, and then you may see  
Who had her.

If I stole any sheep 525  
 Or a heifer to keep -  
 And my Jill's been asleep  
 Since down she laid her.

As I am true as steel, to God here I pray  
 That this be the first meal that I shall eat this day. 530  
 Shepherd 1: As I hope bliss to feel, Mak, take care I say:  
 "He learned early to steal, who could not say nay."  
 Jill: I faint!  
 Out, thieves, leave us alone!  
 You come to rob our house and home! 535  
 Mak: Do you not hear her groan?  
 You should use more restraint!

Jill: Out, thieves, from my babe there! The child I bore!  
 Mak: If you'd seen her hard labour, your hearts would be sore!  
 You do wrong to invade her, to rant and to roar 540  
 At one just out of labour. But I say no more.  
 Jill: Ah, my middle!  
 I pray to God so mild  
 If ever I you beguiled,  
 That I may eat this child 545  
 That lies here in this cradle!

Mak: Peace, woman, for God's pain, and don't cry so!  
 You'll burst your poor brain, and fill me with woe.  
 Shepherd 2: I'm sure our sheep's slain. What find you two? Ho!  
 Shepherd 3: Our search is in vain: we may as well go. 550  
 But hell's gates,  
 I hate this defeat!  
 I can find no meat  
 Salt nor sweet -  
 Just two empty plates. 555

No livestock, but this, tame or wild,  
 None, as I hope for bliss, that smelled quite so vile!  
 Jill: No, as God me bless, and give me joy of my child!

Shepherd 1: We have aimed amiss – aye, we've been beguiled.  
 Shepherd 2: Sir, we've done. 560  
           Our Lady give him joy  
           Is your child a boy?  
 Mak: Any lord might enjoy  
           This child as his son.  
  
           When he wakens he grabs things – a joy to the eye! 565  
 Shepherd 3: May he have many blessings, and good luck say !!  
           But what godparents bring themselves so quickly by?  
 Mak: Bless them all – my heart sings!  
 Shepherd 1: Hark now, a lie.  
           Sure as eggs are eggs! 570  
           Parkin, and Gibbon Waller, I say  
           And gentle John Horn, by the way –  
           All from that other play –  
           With the long legs.  
  
 Shepherd 2: Mak, friends will we be, for we are all one. 575  
 Mak: We? Here's my hand for me – since I want this thing done –  
           Farewell all three!– I'll be glad when you're gone.  
 Shepherd 3: Fair words there may be, but love there is none  
           This year.  
 Shepherd 1: Gave you the child anything? 580  
 Shepherd 2: I swear, not a farthing.  
 Shepherd 3: Quickly I'll give him something:  
           Just wait for me here.  
  
           Mak, don't take it in spite if to your babe I come.  
 MAK: Nay! you've angered me quite; most foully you've done! 585  
 Shepherd 3: The child won't take fright, little star-bright one  
           Let me, as is right, Mak, give to yur son  
           But six pence.  
 Mak: No! away now, he sleeps.  
 Shepherd 3: I think that he peeps. 590  
 Mak: When he wakens, he weeps.  
           I pray you, go hence!

Shepherd 3: Give me leave him to kiss, and pull the sheet out.  
What the devil is this? He has a long snout!

Shepherd 1: He looks all amiss: I fear what we're about! 595

Shepherd 2: Ill-spun thread such as his always shows, there's no doubt.  
But Look!  
He is just like our sheep.

Shepherd 3: What Gib? May I peep?

Shepherd 1: Well, nature will creep 600  
Where it may not walk.

Shepherd 2: What a trick, by the Lord, and cleverly passed.  
It was a great fraud!

Shepherd 3: Aye, sirs, well-cast.  
Let's burn this bawd, and bind her fast. 605  
With her neck in a cord a scold hangs at last;  
So shall you  
Will you see how they swaddle  
His four feet in the middle  
A horned lad in a cradle 610  
I saw never, it's true!

Mak: Peace, I say! Shame! Stop all your din!  
From my loins he came, and that woman bore him.

Shepherd 1: What the devil's his name? Lo, God, Mak's heir and kin!

Shepherd 2: Stop! I saw this game. God punish his sin- 615  
Such guile!

Jill: A pretty child is he,  
To sit on a woman's knee;  
A dilly-down, you see.  
To make a man smile.

Shepherd 3: I know him by the ear-mark; that is a good token 620

Mak: I tell you, sirs, hark! his nose was broken.  
Afterwards, a wise clerk of bewitchment had spoken.

Shepherd 1: This is false work and dark! Your heads should be broken.  
Get a weapon!

Jill: He was changed by an elf - 625



Shepherd 1: This was the most wondrous song ever I heard.  
It's a marvel to be scared thus; I give my word.

Shepherd 2: Of God's son he spoke to us from heavenward.  
All the woods in most glorious light then appeared 660  
By his power.

Shepherd 3: Of a babe, this I know,  
In Bethlem he spoke so.

Shepherd 1: That's what yon star means - lo!  
Let us seek for that bower. 665

Shepherd 2: Say, what was his song? Did you not hear him sing out,  
Three short notes, one long?

Shepherd 3: By God, it did ring out!  
No croquet was wrong and he left no thing out.

Shepherd 1: Here to sing in this throng what I heard him bring out,  
I can. 670

Shepherd 2: Let's see how you croon.  
Can you bark at the moon?

Shepherd 3: Now hold both your tongues soon!

Shepherd 1: Then listen, man! 675

Shepherd 2: To Bethlem he bid we should go along  
I am worried, my lad, that we tarry too long.

Shepherd 3: Be merry and not sad: Of joy is our song!  
For evermore glad shall we be before long,  
And in bliss. 680

Shepherd 1: Go we there, then, quickly,  
Though we are wet and weary,  
To that child and that lady.  
We must not forget this.

Shepherd 2: We find by the prophecy - stop all your din! - 685  
Of King David, certainly, Isaiah then,  
And others who said wisely in a virgin  
He would alight truly, to quench our sin,  
And slake it -  
Save us from woe - 690  
Isaiah said so:

Ecce virgo  
Concipiet a child that is naked.

- Shepherd 3: Oh, glad may we be, and wait for that day,  
That fair babe to see, who holds all in sway. 695  
Lord, happy, truly, I'd be now and ay  
Might I kneel on myknee, some word there to say  
To that child.  
But the angel said  
In a crib was he alid; 700  
He was meanly arrayed,  
So poor and so mild.
- Shepherd 1: Patriarchs that have been, and prophets long gone  
They desired to have seen the birth of this one.  
They are gone - vanished clean - have lost what we've won. 705  
By us he'll be seen before this night's done:  
A token.  
When I see him and feel,  
I'll know as I kneel,  
It is true as steel 710  
That prophets have spoken:
- To such poor men as we that he would appear,  
Find and tell, as we see, by his herald here.
- Shepherd 2: Go ye now, speedily: the place must be near.
- Shepherd 3: I'm eager and ready; to him let us steer - 715  
That bright one.  
Lord, if your will it be -  
We're unlearned all three -  
Grant us something lovely  
To comfort your son. 720
- Shepherd 1: Hail, comely maiden! Hail, young child!  
Hail, maker, glorious gleam, from a maiden so mild!  
You have cursed, it would seem, that warlock so wild:  
The beguiler, I mean - now he goes beguiled.  
Lo, he marry is! 725  
Lo, he laughs, my sweeting!  
A wondrous meeting!

Here is my promised greeting:  
Have a bob of cherries.

- Shepherd 2: Hail, sovereign Saviour, for us you have sought!  
Hail noble child and flower, that all things has wrought! 730  
Hail, full of favour, that made all of nought!  
Hail! I kneel and I cower. A bird have I brought:  
Here you are.  
Hail, little tiny mop!  
Of our creed you'ie the crop. 735  
I would drink from your cup,  
Little day-star.
- Shepherd 3: Hail, darling dear, full of Godhead!  
I pray you be near when I may have need.  
Hail! sweet is your cheer. My heart would bleed 740  
To see you sit here in such poor clothes, indeed,  
With no pennies.  
Hail! your hand give me.  
I bring but a ball: see!  
Play with it joyfully, 745  
And go to the tennis.
- Mary: The father of heaven, God omnipotent,  
That made all in days seven, his son has he sent.  
My name he had spoken: in me ere he went  
He did not: I conceived him then, by God's intent. 750  
And now he is born.  
May he keep you from woe!  
I shall pray him do so.  
Tell this as you go,  
And think on this morn. 755
- Shepherd 1: Farewell, lady; so fair to behold,  
With your child on your knee.

Shepherd 2: But he lies so cold.

Ah, well is me! Now we go, lord, behold.

Shepherd 3: It's as if already it's often been told,  
Say I.

760

Shepherd 1: What grace we have found!

Shepherd 2: Come forth! we're unbound!

Shepherd 3: Let us raise a glad sound  
To the heavens high!

765

Here ends the pageant of the shepherds.