

Third stage\poetry\Najlaa Kamil\ La Belle Dame sans Merci

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge has withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
So haggard and so woe-begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done.

I see on thy brow,  
With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful-a faery's child,  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone,  
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed, and nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing

A faery's song.  
She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said-  
'I love thee true.

She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she wept and sighed full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep  
And there I dreamed-Ah! Woe betide!-  
The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hillside.

I saw pale king and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
They cried-La Belle Dame Sans Merci  
Hath thee in thrall!

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke and found me here,  
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,

And no birds sing.

Third Stage\La belle Dame Sans Merci\A.I. Najlaa Kamil

This poem is a ballad.

1-it contains 38 lines stanza which is rhymed as ababbcbcb with 4 lines envoi rhyming bcbcb.

2-The last line of the first stanza serves to be refrain.

3-It starts in abrupt 4-The language is simple-direct

4-It told a story through dialogue and action.

The poem focuses on a return to beauty: Greek myth, fairies, idealism, nature, and individualism. These are the most important themes in his work and to all romantic literature.

The first stanza opens with an unidentified speaker. The speaker sets up the scene and the subject of this poem. The speaker comes upon the knight but he astonishes as he sees someone that does not behave as a knight who is brave and valiant. But rather he is alone and loitering and wondering aimlessly. The speaker asks the knight about the reason of his suffering that he is wondering lonely by the lake though it is not summer time. The speaker wonders why, and he asks. He also remarks about the time of year and claims that "the sedge has withered from the lake\And no birds sing". Here, he is indicating that spring is over, and there is no lively singing or springtime beauty in the atmosphere. He wonders why the knight would be wandering about, pale and lonely, during this time of the year. It is probably growing cold, as the birds have flown south already. The speaker finds it concerning that this knight is sickly and alone, without shelter, at this time of the year.

2<sup>nd</sup> stanza

With this stanza, the reader can grasp the full picture of what the knight looks like. The speaker describes him as "alone", "pale", "haggard", and "woe-begone". The setting is also described. It seems that the harvest is done. Therefore, the reader can imagine the bare, dry ground and the silence of nature after the birds have already flown south. Overall, this description gives "La belle Dame Sans Merci" a very

gloomy tone. The subject is down-trodden, and nature itself seems stripped of all joy. The birds have ceased their singing and the squirrels have stored up enough food to go into hiding. Thus, the lonely knight is left utterly alone.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza

In this stanza, the speaker informs the knight that he looks very ill. He tells him that his face is as pale as a lily and his face looks moist with sweat as if he had a fever. All of his colors are fading quickly from his cheeks. It appears the speaker is very concerned about the knight's health. He speaks to the knight to make sure he is aware of how ill he is. In the following stanza, the knight answers him.

### 4<sup>th</sup>. stanza

The speaker is now the knight as he gives answers to the concerns of the first speaker. He tells him of a lady that he met and describes her long hair and light step. Her eyes were "wild". It is clear from this stanza, that the knight fell in love at the first sight of this lady he describes. He describes her as not quite human. The knight does not refer to her as fully fairy, but he does not call her a "faery's child" which gives the reader the impression that she is at least half fairy.

### 5<sup>th</sup>. stanza

In this stanza, the knight describes his relationship with this lady. It appears that he won her heart. He made her a garland of flowers for her head. Then he made her bracelets from flowers. He also adorned her private parts with flowers. This is implied when he says that he put flowers on her "fragrant zone". Then the knight implies when he made love to this woman. He says that "she looked at "him" as she did love" and that she made a sweet moan. This implies that the two were intimate with one another.

### 6<sup>th</sup>. stanza

The sixth stanza can be read as an extension of the previous stanza, where the lady riding the knight's stallion is an extended metaphor for their continued sexual relations. On the other hand, it could be read literally. In this case, the knight would have placed her on his horse and watched her ride "all day long" while she sang. In either case, the knight

is so entirely absorbed with this woman that he sees and hears nothing else. He is devoted to her the entire day long.

#### 7<sup>th</sup>. stanza

This stanza continues to describe the fairy woman's supernatural qualities. She feeds him sweet roots, wild, honey, and manna. The "roots of relish sweet" refer to her human qualities, but the manna and the wild honey are symbolic of her supernatural qualities. In the Jewish religion, it is told that God fed the Israelites' bread from heaven called manna. This same God promised the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey. Thus, the fact that the fairy-woman was able to feed him bread from heaven, wild honey, and roots suggests that the fairy is part human and part supernatural. The reference to "language strange" is yet another evidence of the lady's unnatural lineage.

#### 8<sup>th</sup>. stanza

The Knight continues to describe the fairy woman's qualities. He describes her cave, or "grot" as something elf-like in nature. Then, he gives her human characteristics once again when he says that "she wept and sighed full sore". He does not explain why she cried, but he does imply that he wiped her tears away with his kisses. This occurs between the knight and the fairy-woman allows the reader to understand the depth of their relationship. Earlier in "La Belle Dame sans Merci", they connected physically. Here, they connect emotionally as the knight is there to wipe away her tears.

#### 9<sup>th</sup>. stanza

With stanza, readers can begin to feel uncertain about this fairy-woman. They should question why she is lulling this knight to sleep. In previous stanza, she cried, and there, no reason was offered for her tears. Now, she lulls him to sleep. The knight has a dream. It is a nightmare. For in his recollection of this dream, he cries out "Ah!, woe betide!" which suggests that it was the last dream was woeful. Then he says that this was "the latest dream I ever dreamt" which suggests that it was the last dream that he would ever dream. He does not explain how he knows that this was the last dream he would ever have, but he seems so confident of it that the reader does not question it.

Suddenly, this poem has taken a turn for the worse. Something awful was happened, and the reader can begin to understand that the fairy-woman is at fault, but there are no specific given just yet.

#### 10<sup>th</sup>.stanza

At this point, the knight begins to describe the "pale kings and princes" that he saw in his dream. In this case, "pale" is a symbol of death. Since "La Belle sans Dame Merci" has already introduced biblical symbols of the supernatural, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that the pale warriors and princes and kings are all after the likeness of the pale horse in the book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament. The pale horse and rider of the Bible symbolizes death and bring destruction.

This poem continues to become more and more nightmare as it continues. All of the pale kings, princes, and warriors cry out "La Belle Dame sans Merci". This, of course, is the title of the poem. It is in French, and it translates to read "The Beautiful Woman Without mercy".

Suddenly, amid his dream, the knight becomes aware of what is happening to him. He has been seduced by a woman who would show him no mercy. Not only that , but he is one of many who have come to ruin at the hands of this fairy-woman.

#### 11<sup>th</sup>. stanza

The knight comes to the full realization of what has happened to him. Every man that the fairy has ever seduced has died. He describes these dead men that were in his dream. They have "starved lips" and they looked at him "with horrid warning" but it was too late. The knight had already been seduced, and as a consequence of his moment of pleasure, he now faces death. When he awoke from his dream, he found himself "on the cold hill's side" with no fairy-woman in proximity. From the original description of the knight, the readers can conclude that he is, in fact, dying.

#### 12<sup>th</sup>. stanza

The readers are left to grieve the loss of the knight. He dies alone with no one to comfort him in his last moments. Not even the birds are there to sing a song to offer comfort in his death. He is utterly alone in

his last moments, and all because he was seduced by that beautiful fairy-woman without mercy.

Although the language used is simple, Keats manages to create two parallel universes. The real world, where the knight is found alone, and palely loitering, is dark and dismal and wintry. The other world, where the Lady lives, seems exotic and beautiful, with such glorious foods as honey wild and manna-dew. The nightmarish imagery that exists between the worlds can be taken to be part and parcel of the lady's world, as it is she who whisks young men away, willing or unwilling, to their doom.

### Themes

This poem contains dejection in love, heartbreak, sadness, death, and illusion vs reality. The most important theme of the poem is dejection in love. There is a sense of separation in the knights that makes him appear lifeless. His loitering in the wild without any hope depicts the need for love in his life. The lady's illusory existence makes him sadder about his reality. The person with whom he had spent some time, does not exist at all. This though pains the knight deep. Apart from that, the themes of sadness and heartbreak go side by side in the poem. The knight's mental condition is so sad that poet thinks even nature laments his loss.

It is not fallacious to think that the theme of death is also an integral part of the poem. While writing this poem, the poet was going through a similar kind of condition. It seems that through the story of the knight the poet somehow tried to express his feelings. He knew about his approaching death and also aware of the fact that union with his beloved wasn't possible. As being close to entering the gate of death, the poet's mind was flooded with the thoughts of oblivion.

The first two stanzas reflect not only the knight's but also the poet's state of mind. In the tenth stanza, the theme of death is visible. Here, the dead kings and princes remind the knight that lady without pity captivated his mind. Hence, it's useless to wait any longer for her.

### Poetic devices

Anaphora \apostrophe: O, Oh in any line is an apostrophe as it is used to introduce the knight and evokes the spirit into the poem.

Metaphor: in "squirrel's granary" the poet uses a metaphor. Here, the poet refers to the squirrel's hole. In "fever-dew" there is a metaphor and the comparison is between the dew and fever.

Personal metaphor: in "starved lips" there is a personal metaphor.

Metonym: The word "death-pale" is a metonym. The kings and princes look pale as they have died. It's a reference to the cause in place of the effect of being pale.

Allusion: There is a biblical allusion in the line, "And honey wild, and manna-dew".

Palilogy: the poet uses these devices by repeating the word, "wild" twice.

Repetition: The last stanza contains a repetition of the idea present in the first line of the poem.

Caesura: It occurs when the poet uses a pause in the middle of a line. For example, "And there I dreamed-Ah ! woe betide!-" and "Full-beautiful-a faery's child."

Imagery: It can be seen through the powerful images in the knight's dreams as he's forced to suffer terrible nightmares. For example, "I saw their starved lips in the gloam,\With horrid warning gaped wide".



