

Where They Hanged the Witch Named Maeve

September 13, 2017

They say the thunder rumbled low
Like a soft, foreboding drum
And the sky was colored like watered-down wine
Warning of something to come
According to the stories they tried her here
Away from the houses of town
And a wagon with two shaggy horses stood by
For when they brought her body down
Carrion birds came to witness the trial
All eager for their meager share
As the witch hunter used a dull razor and shears
To cut off her long, curly hair
They say that he searched her scalp for an hour
But no mark of the devil was found
So they stripped her and pricked her with dagger and awl
Before the greedy eyes of the town
And they say that after all these years
Still no grass grows on her grave
And no birds will perch in the barren tree
Where they hanged the witch named Maeve

They say her accuser was a man of wealth
High-placed in the town's social scale
He said that her witchery withered his wheat
And made his cow's milk go bad in the pail
He accused her of flying to his house on a broom
To invade his dreams at night
That she came to him naked and filled him with lust
And left him weak by morning's light
He said that she poisoned the land with her sin
And had meetings with the Lord of the Flies
And they say that she sobbed and begged them to listen
And that all of the charges were lies
But no man there denied her beauty was such
As to lead even good men astray
And several agreed she'd invaded their dreams
At least that's what the history book says
And they say that after all these years
Still no grass grows on her grave
And no birds will perch in the barren tree
Where they hanged the witch named Maeve

They say the judge ordered she face the test
So her arms and legs were tied
They took her out where the stream was known to be deep

And threw her over the side
For long, tense seconds they waited and watched
Then came the proof up at last
As Maeve, forevermore branded a witch,
Bobbed up to the surface and gasped
The good people of town wasted no time
They dragged her out to a sturdy tree
And as she begged and she pleaded and she prayed for her life
They wrapped a noose and let it swing free
Then they put it around her slender throat
Like the closing act of a play
They sat her upon a horse's back...
Then pulled the horse away
And they say that after all these years
Still no grass grows on her grave
And no birds will perch in the barren tree
Where they hanged the witch named Maeve

They say that her body writhed and shook
For several minutes, hanging up there
While the minister prayed and the good people stared
She danced on nothing but air
They say they took her body down
To a place where two roads meet
And they buried her face-down with the Host in her mouth
And iron spikes pierced through her feet
Yes, it's all in the records. You can read them today
But they're not easy to find when you look
They're kept in a box in a back room, almost hid
As if someone were afraid of that book
But there's no one to question, no descendants to ask
Just one book with pages still white
Because three days later everyone in that town
Simply vanished overnight
And they say that after all these years
Still no grass grows on her grave
And no birds will perch in the barren tree
Where they hanged the witch named Maeve

Stephen Thorn (C)