

# The Lady of Shalott

Loreena Mckennitt

On either side the river lie  
Long fields of barley and of rye,  
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;  
And thro' the field the road run by  
To many-towered Camelot;  
And up and down the people go,  
Gazing where the lilies blow  
Round an island there below,  
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
Little breezes dusk and shiver  
Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
By the island in the river  
Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle imbowers  
The Lady of Shalott.

Only reapers, reaping early,  
In among the beared barley  
Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
From the river winding clearly;  
Down to tower'd Camelot;  
And by the moon the reaper weary,  
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
Listening, whispers "'tis the fairy  
The Lady of Shalott.

There she weaves by night and day  
A magic web with colours gay.  
She has heard a whisper say,  
A curse is on her if she stay  
To look down to Camelot.  
She knows not what the curse may be,  
And so she weaveth steadily,  
And little other care heat she,  
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear  
That hangs before her all the year,  
Shadows of the world appear.  
There she sees the highway near  
Winding down to Camelot;  
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue  
The knights come riding two and two.  
She hath no loyal Knight and true,  
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
For often thro' the silent nights  
A funeral, with plumes and lights  
And music, went to Camelot;  
Or when the Moon was overhead,  
Came two young lovers lately wed.

'I am half sick of shadows,' said  
The Lady of Shalott.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
He rode between the barley sheaves,  
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
And flamed upon the brazen greaves  
Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd  
To a lady in his shield,  
That sparkled on the yellow field,  
Beside remote Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;  
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
From the bank and from the river  
He flashed into the crystal mirror,  
'Tirra lirra,' by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,  
She made three paces thro' the room,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She look'd down to Camelot.  
Out flew the web and floated wide;  
The mirror crack'd from side to side;  
'The curse is come upon me,' cried  
The Lady of Shalott.

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining.  
Heavily the low sky raining  
Over tower'd Camelot;  
Down she came and found a boat  
Beneath a willow left afloat,  
And around about the prow she wrote  
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Seeing all his own mischance -  
With a glassy countenance  
Did she look to Camelot.  
And at the closing of the day  
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,  
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her blood was frozen slowly,  
And her eyes were darkened wholly,  
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.  
For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,

By garden-wall and gallery,  
A gleaming shape she floated by,  
Dead-pale between the houses high,  
Silent into Camelot.  
Out upon the wharfs they came,  
Knight and Burgher, Lord and Dame,  
And around the prow they read her name,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? And what is here?  
And in the lighted palace near  
Died the sound of royal cheer;  
And they crossed themselves for fear,  
All the Knights at Camelot;  
But Lancelot mused a little space  
He said, "she has a lovely face;  
God in his mercy lend her grace,  
The Lady of Shalott."