La Belle Dame Sans Merci. A Ballad

I

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

 Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has withered from the lake,

 And no birds sing.

II

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.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,

 With anguish moist and fever-dew,

And on thy cheek a fading rose

 Fast withereth too.

IV

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.

V

I made a garland for her head,

 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;

She looked at me as she did love,

 And made sweet moan.

 VI

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.

VII

She found me roots of relish sweet,

 And honey wild, and manna\*-dew,

And sure in language strange she said –

 ‘I love thee true’.

VIII

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.

IX

And there she lullèd me asleep

 And there I dreamed – Ah! woe betide! –

The latest dream I ever dreamt

 On the cold hill side.

X

I saw pale kings, and princes too,

 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried – ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci

 Thee hath in thrall!’

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,

 With horrid warning gapèd wide,

And I awoke and found me here,

 On the cold hill’s side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here

 Alone and palely loitering,

Though the sedge is withered from the lake,

 And no birds sing.

John Keats

\*Manna – Food from heaven