

THE DEVIL'S BRIDE

by Ken Bradbury



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Way on back of the thick-run snicker snack,
Way on back of the Sweet Gum Dell,
Back in the times of the lonesome tamarack,
Somethin' took place I'll now retell.

'Twas old John Biggs lay dyin' in bed with powerful
ugly hurt in his head,
And 'twas on that night when the moon stood still that
Old John Biggs from the top of the hill
Near breathed his last confounded breath and waited
there for the hand of death.

'Twas on that night that his daughter cried and she
moaned and she wailed to the empty skies
And Belle said, "If you just spare his life, well the
Devil hisself, I'll be his wife."

Old John gasped for a gulp of air, "Oh darlin' Belle!
You best take care!

"Don't go swearin' to the devil I'm a tellin' you or
who knows what might find you there!"

Then down in the deep, dark lonesome tamarack,
Down under ground where the sweet gum grows,
Down 'neath the roots of the thick-run snicker-snack,

Came a mighty rumblin' from the ground below.

Old John's bed started shakin' like a shingle when the
north wind blows and the tacks come loose.
The cups on his shelf started chatterin' and breakin'
and house itself started up to move.

Then 'fore you could say Bob White there come and
awful sound down the chimney run,
And Belle turned around with awful yell and there
stood the Devil, just fresh from hell.

In a long black coat with hat of red, and chicken's
claw stickin' up 'side his head,
With a face of bones, and eyes of coal, and a hole in
the place where his nose ought to go.
And the sulfur stink just filled the room, and his black
boots smoked like the mist of doom.
His hair greased back to blackened sheen, and silver
cane with the nub rubbed clean.

The Devil, he bowed and scraped the floor, said, "Here
I am, Don't wish no more."
And Old John Biggs he started to breathe, and his hand
reached up from his worn-out sleeve,
And his eyes grew bright, and his breath came quick,
and he found he wasn't near quite as sick.
"There, now!" said the Devil, "Your Pappy's well,
now come with me to my home in hell!"

Well, there wasn't much poor young Belle could do,
'cause a pact with the Devil must needs hold true.

And before he reached to take his claim, her poor old
Pappy called her name,
“Come here, my girl, a final word ...” and he breathed
in her ear so the Devil hadn’t heard,
And whispered real soft and he whispered real low and
he whispered somethin’ to her that the Devil didn’t
know.

Then soon as her old Pappy spoke, off went the Devil
in a trail of smoke
A-draggin’ Belle to his home below, where souls
that’s damned forever go.
Down through the earth and the rock and shale as the
lights grew dim and the hopes grew pale.
Down through the pitch-dark depths they flew, poor
Belle cryin’ like her life was through.

Then up from the middle of the earth Belle felt a
powerful heat like a roarin’ hearth,
And the sweat on her back started runnin’ in streams,
and off in the distance, she could hear the screams.
Then a light broke forth all red and white, and Devil
slowed down from his death-dark flight.
When she opened her child-like eyes she fell, to the
floor of a place that looked like hell.

When they came to door of the fiery pit, the Devil-man
said, “Well this is it!
“Come on in and drop your coat. It’s plenty warm.
Feel free to smoke.”
And Belle, she pushed back Satan’s door, and the
flames rushed out with a mighty roar,



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