

Gathering Rushes in the Month of May

Anne Briggs

A fine young girl all in the month of May,
She was gathering rushes just at the break of day.
But before she's come home she's born a little son,
And she's rolled him underneath her apron.

Well, she cried at the threshold as she coming at the door,
And she folded in her apron the little babe she bore.
Said her father, "Where've you been, my little daughter Jane,
And what's that you've got underneath your apron?"

"Oh father, dear father, it's nothing then," said she.
"It's only my new gown and that's too long for me.
And I was afraid it would draggle in the dew,
So I rolled it underneath my apron."

But in the dead of the night, when all were fast asleep,
This pretty little baby, oh, it began to weep.
Said her father, "What's that bird a-crying out so clear
In the bedroom among the pretty maidens?"

"Oh father, dear father, it's nothing then," said she,
"It's just a little bird that fluttered to my knee,
And I'll build for it a nest, and I'll warm it on my breast
So it won't wake early in the May morning."

But in the third part of the night, when all were fast asleep,
This pretty little baby again began to weep.
Said her father, "What's that baby a-crying out so clear

In the bedroom among the pretty maidens?"

"Oh father, dear father, it's nothing then," said she,
"It's just a little baby that someone gave to me.
Let it lie, let it sleep this night along o' me
And I tell to you its daddy in the May morning."

"Well, was it by a black man or was it by a brown,
Or was it by a ploughing lad a-ploughing up and down,
That gave to you the stranger you wear with your new gown,
That you rolled up underneath your apron?"

"No, it wasn't by a black man and it wasn't by a brown,
I got it from a ploughing lad that ploughs the watery main.
He gave to me the stranger I wear with my new gown
That I've rolled up underneath my apron."

"Well, was it in the kitchen got or was it in the hall?
Or was it in the cow-shed or was it in the stall?
I wish I had a firebrand to burn the building down
Where you met with him on a May morning."

"No, it wasn't in the kitchen got, it wasn't in the hall,
And neither in the cow-shed and neither in the stall.
It was down by yonder spring where the small birds they sing
That I met with him on a May morning."