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The Witch

C.S. Lewis

Trapped amid the woods with guile
They've led her bound in fetters vile
To death, a deadlier sorceress
Than any born for earth's distress
Since first the winner of the fleece
Bore home the Colchian witch to Greece—
Seven months with snare and gin
They've sought the maid o'erwise within
The forest's labyrinthine shade.
The lonely woodman half afraid
Far off her ragged form has seen
Sauntering down the alleys green,
Or crouched in godless prayer alone
At eve before a Druid stone.
But now the bitter chase is won,
The quarry's caught, her magic's done,
The bishop's brought her strongest spell
To naught with candle, book, and bell;
With holy water splashed upon her,
She goes to burning and dishonour
Too deeply damned to feel her shame,
For, though beneath her hair of flame
Her thoughtful head be lowly bowed
It droops for meditation proud
Impenitent, and pondering yet
Things no memory can forget,
Starry wonders she has seen
Brooding in the wildwood green
With holiness. For who can say
In what strange crew she loved to play,
What demons or what gods of old
Deep mysteries unto her have told
At dead of night in worship bent
At ruined shrines magnificent,
Or how the quivering will she sent

Alone into the great alone
Where all is loved and all is known,
Who now lifts up her maiden eyes
And looks around with soft surprise
Upon the noisy, crowded square,
The city oafs that nod and stare,
The bishop's court that gathers there,
The faggots and the blackened stake
Where sinners die for justice' sake?
Now she is set upon the pile,
The mob grows still a little while,
Till lo! before the eager folk
Up curls a thin, blue line of smoke.
"Alas!" the full-fed burghers cry,
"That evil loveliness must die!"



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