Winter 2008

The Erl King

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Who rides so late on a night so wild?
It is a father with his child;
He clasps the boy tight in his arm
He holds him close, he keeps him warm.

Silhouette art by Andy Smetanka
"My son, are you hiding your face in fear?" / "The Erl-King, father! The Erl-King is here! Do you not see him in cape and crown?" / "It is simply the mist, child, creeping aground."

Dear child, come away with me! / Such games we'll play, such fun there will be; Such flowers we'll gather and wonders behold. / My mother will fashion you garments of gold.

"My father, my father, do you not hear? / The Erl-King is whispering, and drawing quite near!" "Lie still, my son, and rest quietly; / It is only the wind in the leaves of the tree."
Dear child, won't you come with me? / My daughters will favor you, you'll see;  
They'll make for you such splendid tokens to keep, / They'll dance you and swing you and sing you to sleep.

"My father, my father, can you not see / The Erl-King's fair daughters waiting for me?"
"I see them, my son, yes, I see what you say: / The willow tree waving its branches of gray."

I love you, dear child—I promise no ill. / But I'm taking you whether or not you will.  
"The Erl-King, my father, he's laid me ahold! / He's hurting me, father! His fingers are cold!"
The father now shudders and doubles his haste
To bear them from the dismal waste
But reaching the courtyard he looks down in dread:
In his shivering arms the child is dead.

*Translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Der Erlkönig” by Andy Swetanka*