

The Blackmailer

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With a 12/8 swing feel, like a moderate jig

I should have checked the fel - low out be - fore we went a - way, Asked
ques-tions on the grape-vine, heard what o-ther wo-men say, But he was so per-suas-ive, and it
was a love - ly day. I made a big mis - take. I won't de - ny it. He
said, "Let's take your dad - dy's car." I did - n't stop to think. He
said, "Un-dress. I'll drown you here." I raised a roy-al stink A - bout his seeing me na-ked, then I
pushed him in the drink. How - e-ver will I keep that damn bird qui-et?

I should have checked the fellow out before we went away,
Asked questions on the grapevine, heard what other women say,
But he was so persuasive, and it was a lovely day.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
He said, "Let's take your daddy's car." I didn't stop to think.
He said, "Undress. I'll drown you here." I raised a royal stink
About his seeing me naked, then I pushed him in the drink.
However will I keep that damn bird quiet?

I knew that he'd be trouble from the first day that he came.
A bird should know some phrases, maybe even say his name.
This one knew all the hits in Francis Child's hall of fame.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
He sang "The Gypsy Laddie" when my cousin left her spouse.
When cook served leg of lamb, he sang "The Broom of Cowdenowes".
At night, he'd sing two seven five to tell me "Lock the house!".
However will I keep that damn bird quiet?

Continued on the other side

I came back after midnight, and I looked a royal mess,
The petrol nearly gone, peculiar mud stains on my dress.
I needed eight hours sleep; then, I could plan and reassess.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
I tried to tiptoe past the cage as I crept down the hall.
Have you heard parrots whisper? Not a pleasant sound at all.
He asked me if I realized his cage was rather small.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

I told him we'd go shopping in the morning and we'd find
A place that sold a larger cage, if he was so inclined.
He said I'd underestimated what he had in mind.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
I said, "You want a carpenter, my feathered little pet?"
He laughed. I said "An architect?" He said we had to get
The fellow who had just designed Aida for the Met.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

The gardener had quit, and we'd five acres gone to weed.
The center was just meadow, with the edges nicely treed.
The parrot flew around and said, "Exactly what we need."
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
We started with some sketches of a geodesic dome.
He said, since we were bounding space with steel, glass, and chrome,
A Crystal Palace replica would make him feel at home.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

I didn't mind the stainless steel rasp to trim his beak,
The half a dozen mirrors or the perches made of teak.
The Tiffany style birdbath of stained glass was rather chic.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
But when he asked for ivory, I told him he'd betrayed
A fellow jungle creature, because ivory is made
Of parts of slaughtered elephants. He settled for pure jade.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

I should have kept my mouth shut, but one day the thought occurred.
"Don't you think all this space is rather much for just one bird?"
He made me write two pages and a few lines of a third.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
I looked the pages over. What exotic names I saw!
What is a Goffin's Cockatoo? A Hyacinth Macaw?
Six hours he spoke of differences in feather, beak, and claw.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

Whenever I tried saying "No", the parrot persevered.
I must admit it's all worked out much better than I'd feared.
The word-of-mouth spread quickly. Lines of visitors appeared.
I made a big mistake. I won't deny it.
We meet our costs through tickets. We're officially a zoo.
He gets to be the CEO and gives me jobs to do.
His species is endangered, so he helps with breeding, too.
How ever will I keep that damn bird quiet?

Some Internet references as of October 2007:

For "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight", Lesley Nelson's Child Ballads web site at <http://www.contemplator.com/child/variant4.html> has six versions, and <http://www.contemplator.com/child/outland.html> has another version plus numerous useful links
For parrots in general, the World Parrot Trust's web site at <http://www.parrots.org> has numerous species names
For the Goffin's Cockatoo, the Sedgwick County Zoo's page is found at <http://www.scz.org/animals/c/goffins.html>
For the Hyacinth Macaw, start at <http://hyacinthmacaw.org/hyacinthmacaw.htm> to access a very extensive site