

# Tattercoats

TATTERCOATS

It's like it's alive  
At the end of the string

Dancing away from me  
Laughing at me  
Playing with me

Fighting me

Like it wants to be rid of me  
Wants to be free of me

The kite I made with loving care  
Doesn't care for me

I'm on the ground  
My kite flies high

And if I let go?

Is that what you want?  
Is that why you tug at my arms?  
Is that why you twist the string round my fingers  
so tight they're ready to bleed?

You want me to let go?

What'll happen?  
What will the story be if I let go?

Will you leave me here and fly to countries far away?

Or without me to keep the string held tight  
Will my kite just flutter back down to the earth?

Try it someday.

You think I'm too old to fly a kite?

I learned when I was young

SHE SKIPS

I'm on my ownio  
my lonely-onely-ownio  
One step two step  
Nobody there

I was never very young

My mother died before I remember

But I remember her father  
my grandfather

I remember my grandfather's tears

GRANDFATHER

I am on my own  
Lonely on my own  
One step two step no  
There's no-one here for me

I am on my own – o-oh  
Lonely on my own – o-oh  
One step two step no  
There's no-one here for me.

TATTERCOATS

Alone he sat at the top of a tower  
with tears that splashed his cheeks  
tears that rolled down his long white beard  
tears that flowed into the dark salt sea

GRANDFATHER

My dear daughter's gone and left me  
Weeping my tears in the salty sea  
Never again can I be happy  
For there is no one  
To love me  
Like she

TATTERCOATS

hug me grandfather  
make me feel better  
it's your job to make me feel better

then I'll hug you  
I'll make you feel better  
it's my job to make you feel better

let me hug you

I'm tangled in your beard Grandfather  
your beard that binds my arms so tight  
they're ready to bleed

I'm drowning in your tears Grandfather  
tears that weigh so heavy on my heart  
I've no room to breathe

NURSE                    Look what you're doing sir

TATTERCOATS        These are the words the old nurse spoke  
I remember the nurse – old and bent

NURSE                    Look what you're doing to your granddaughter sir  
you've lost your daughter sir  
don't lose your granddaughter too

                              look at her sir

TATTERCOATS        but my grandfather turned his face to the window  
turned his face to the sea  
and turned his back on me

                              There's other faces I remember  
faces turned against me  
faces full of hate  
those are the faces I remember

                              The cooks in the castle kitchen  
cackled with glee

COOKS                    Oh you're not wanted silly child  
No you're not wanted silly child  
you're the one he blames  
for all the tears that he's crying silly child  
yes you're to blame for his daughter's death  
you're to blame for his daughter's death  
so we won't feed you silly child  
no we won't feed you silly child  
if he won't love you silly child  
then why should we?"

TATTERCOATS        I never knew if my grandfather knew  
knew how the cooks hid the food from me  
knew how the cooks kept the food from me  
I never knew if he knew  
how hungry I was

NURSE                    Here you are child, don't tell a soul."

TATTERCOATS        These are the words the old nurse spoke.

NURSE                    I've brought what I can without being seen.  
Don't gobble it all at once  
you'll be hungry when the night comes.

TATTERCOATS        My clothes, nurse.  
They're ripped and torn.  
Look what the cooks have done to my clothes

ripped and torn

NURSE

We'll find scraps and patches  
to make-do and mend.  
Enough to cover you up and keep you warm.  
Little Tattercoats.

TATTERCOATS

Tattercoats  
Little Tattercoats

The nurse meant Tattercoats as a kindly name  
a friendly name  
little Tattercoats  
but the cooks  
the cooks in the castle kitchen  
they used the name  
for a different game

COOKS

Tattercoats, little Tattercoats  
Tattercoats, little Tattercoats  
scraps and rags for scrawny little  
scraggy little Tattercoats

You've got no shoes  
go barefoot  
no shoes  
go barefoot  
scraps and rags  
rags and scraps  
for you  
for you

scrawny little Tattercoats  
scraggy little Tattercoats  
raggy little Tattercoats  
got no shoes

Out out of the castle out out out  
Out out of the kitchen out out out  
Out of the castle out of the kitchen  
Out little Tattercoats out out out

scrawny little Tattercoats  
scraggy little Tattercoats  
raggy little Tattercoats  
out out out

TATTERCOATS

And they slammed the door behind me  
  
Let me in!

no-one heard me

Let me in!  
Grandfather  
Grandfather  
let me in!

or if they did hear me  
no-one came

I ate berries off the bushes  
I shared them with the birds

I found hazelnuts in the wood  
I shared them with the squirrels

I gnawed at acorns off the Oak trees  
I shared them with the pigs

That was my breakfast lunch and supper  
except for what the nurse could bring me

NURSE

Here you are child, don't tell a soul.  
I've brought what I can without being seen.  
Don't gobble it all at once  
you'll be hungry when the night comes.

TATTERCOATS

And I was hungry when the night came  
My belly ached with hunger

I was wet when the rain fell  
when the rain fell to wet my bed of leaves

I was cold when the wind blew  
when the wind blew cold through  
my coat of rags and tatters

the wind  
playing with my hair

the wind  
rustling the leaves

the wind  
chasing the clouds

I heard it first

Before I saw it I heard it

A whistling and a humming

somewhere high up above

In the trees?

No, higher.  
High, high up above

Squinting my eyes against the sun

Something there

a bird?

But the sound

a whistling and a humming  
almost a screaming

a spirit of the sky  
a ghost  
a banshee

a howling and a whirling  
and suddenly there it is

screaming down at me

SHE FALLS FLAT ON THE GROUND  
WHEN SHE LOOKS UP THE BIRD-SCARER IS THERE

BIRD-SCARER	Why are you hiding?
TATTERCOATS	Who are you?
BIRD-SCARER	What are you playing?
TATTERCOATS	I'm not playing. Are you going to pinch me?
BIRD-SCARER	No
TATTERCOATS	Are you going to punch me?
BIRD-SCARER	No
TATTERCOATS	Are you going to tear my clothes? Are you going to steal my food?
BIRD-SCARER	No I'm not
TATTERCOATS	Haven't got any food to steal

BIRD-SCARER I could get you an apple

TATTERCOATS Why did you attack me?

BIRD-SCARER I didn't attack you

TATTERCOATS Something attacked me

BIRD-SCARER What?

TATTERCOATS It was a spirit, a ghost  
a whirling banshee  
that came screaming from the sky

BIRD-SCARER It was this

TATTERCOATS What's that?

BIRD-SCARER My kite  
  
I'm the bird-scarer  
I fly my kite to scare the birds

TATTERCOATS Why do you want to scare the birds

BIRD-SCARER It's my job  
It's what I get paid for

TATTERCOATS Who pays you to scare the birds?

BIRD-SCARER Your grandfather

TATTERCOATS You know who I am?

BIRD-SCARER Yes I know who you are

TATTERCOATS How do you know who I am?

BIRD-SCARER I saw when they chased you away  
When they chased you out of the castle

TATTERCOATS It was the cooks who chased me away  
My grandfather doesn't know  
My grandfather loves me

BIRD-SCARER Of course

TATTERCOATS Could you really get me an apple?

BIRD-SCARER Yes

TATTERCOATS	Where from?
BIRD-SCARER	The castle garden
TATTERCOATS	You could never get over the wall it's too high not unless you can fly
BIRD-SCARER	You'd be surprised
TATTERCOATS	You scared me with your kite
BIRD-SCARER	I didn't mean to the wind whipped it away ripped it almost out of my hands
TATTERCOATS	Why does it whistle? Why does it scream?
BIRD-SCARER	These, look  I tie them to the kite  The wind makes them whistle The wind makes them scream
TATTERCOATS	Can I?
BIRD-SCARER	Can you what - whistle and scream?
TATTERCOATS	No The kite Can I?
BIRD-SCARER	Can you?
TATTERCOATS	I don't know
BIRD-SCARER	It's my job Your Grandfather won't pay you
TATTERCOATS	I wish I could fly
BIRD-SCARER	Sometimes it lifts me off the ground
TATTERCOATS	Does it?
BIRD-SCARER	Sometimes

Keep the string tight  
and I'll let it go into the wind

THE KITE DOESN'T LAUNCH

TATTERCOATS      There isn't any wind

BIRD-SCARER      There is, he's there  
He's playing with you

THEY TRY AGAIN

TATTERCOATS      It's pulling  
It's like it's alive

BIRD-SCARER      Pull back  
  
harder than that

TATTERCOATS      It just stopped  
like it wasn't there any more

BIRD-SCARER      I tell you he's playing with you

THEY TRY AGAIN  
THE KITE SOARS INTO THE AIR

TATTERCOATS      As the kite soared into the air  
my heart soared with it

dancing in the air  
laughing  
free

I was on the ground  
looking up at the kite

But I was also up there with the kite  
looking down at me

there I was  
me  
raggedy little Tattercoats

mouth stained with berry juice  
hands and face streaked with mud  
hair matted with leaves

belly aching with hunger

and I was the happiest girl alive

TATTERCOATS &  
BIRD-SCARER

flying high flying free  
a whole new world to see  
soaring swooping chasing round and round  
so far above the ground  
sailing on high  
blown far across the sky  
twisting turning looping leaping high  
across the clear blue sky

racing and rushing  
upside down and round and round  
soaring and swooping from the clouds down to the ground  
and up and down and round and round and round

TATTERCOATS

The world was suddenly a different place  
a bigger place

If only grandfather could see

I had to tell him  
nothing could stop me  
I went barging into the castle  
before the cooks could say a word

Look out of the window grandfather  
not the window where you're looking  
in that window all you see is the sea  
look out of the other window grandfather  
the window behind you

look at the kite  
the boy you pay to scare the birds  
is flying his kite

look how it flies  
tossed by the wind  
high above the earth  
a whole world to see

why don't you understand grandfather?

NURSE

Let him be

TATTERCOATS

these are the words the old nurse spoke

NURSE

all he can see is the sea  
fed by his own salt tears  
that's all he wants to see"

TATTERCOATS

I don't understand

NURSE	Let him be”
GRANDFATHER	What’s that I see far out to sea?
TATTERCOATS	a sail
GRANDFATHER	a ship’s sail
TATTERCOATS	a ship sailing its way across the waves  at the top of the mast fluttered a flag
GRANDFATHER	the royal flag the king’s ship
TATTERCOATS	sailing its way across the waves
NURSE	with a message an invitation
GRANDFATHER	An invitation from the King
NURSE	‘A Great Ball at the royal palace... all the Lords and Ladies of the land... the Prince, to choose a wife.’  Well you won’t want to go.”
GRANDFATHER	Bring me my finest silk suit
NURSE	You’re not well
GRANDFATHER	Dry my eyes cut my hair trim my beard
NURSE	You took no notice of your granddaughter
GRANDFATHER	But the King.
NURSE	Oh, the king.
GRANDFATHER	Yes the King now fetch me some scissors woman and be sharp about it I’m tied up so tight in my own hair and beard That I can’t move a muscle hurry

TATTERCOATS      Can I come Grandfather?  
                                  Grandfather can I come?

GRANDFATHER      Hurry woman

TATTERCOATS      Will you take me with you?

GRANDFATHER      The King's ship waits to carry me across the sea

TATTERCOATS      Will you take me across the sea with you, grandfather?

GRANDFATHER      Stop your silly chatter child  
                                  Now hurry up woman and set me free

NURSE                Your granddaughter sir

GRANDFATHER      A great ball

NURSE                Her name's on the invitation sir

GRANDFATHER      All the lords and ladies

NURSE                She's expected sir

GRANDFATHER      The young prince

NURSE                She has a right to go sir

GRANDFATHER      Choose himself a bride

NURSE                I know it's not my place sir

GRANDFATHER      Nurse

NURSE                Sir

GRANDFATHER      You're right  
                                  You're absolutely right  
                                  It's not your place  
                                  So you will say nothing  
                                  The king's ship waits

TATTERCOATS      I watched from the window  
                                  as the ship sailed away with my grandfather in it  
                                  sailed its way back across the waves  
                                  to a distant shore

The cooks from the kitchen  
came creeping upstairs  
to chase me away

COOKS                      Tattercoats little Tattercoats  
                                 Tattercoats little Tattercoats  
                                 fancy thinking you could ever dance with a Prince  
                                 little Tattercoats

NURSE                      She's doing no harm  
                                 let her stay

TATTERCOATS            these are the words the old nurse spoke

NURSE                      let her stay"

COOKS                      out out out  
                                 out out out  
                                 out  
                                 out out out  
                                 out out  
                                 out out  
                                 out out  
                                 You're too old to be of use  
                                 She's too young to be of use  
                                 Neither of you's any use  
                                 So both of you get out

TATTERCOATS            I'll look after you nurse

NURSE                      I'm the nurse  
                                 I should look after you  
                                 where will you get your food from now  
                                 without me to bring it from the castle?

TATTERCOATS            No I'm all right you see I can manage  
                                 There's plenty of food if you know where to look

Berries from the bushes  
the birds will help  
Nuts from the trees  
just ask the squirrels  
acorns off the ground  
the pigs are my friends

NURSE                      How he could he do this to you child?  
                                 How could your grandfather let this happen?

TATTERCOATS      You don't understand Nurse  
He doesn't know  
He loves me  
He just doesn't know

Now we must gather leaves  
to make you a bed

We'll be happy here nurse  
you and me  
we'll be happy

NURSE                Look at me child  
You're sad child  
It's in your eyes and it's plain to see  
you want to travel across the sea  
to the Great Ball

TATTERCOATS      I haven't time to be sad Nurse  
not if I'm looking after you  
no time for being sad

look nurse  
the kite

the boy who scares the birds  
is flying his kite

let me teach you to fly a kite

you can't be sad  
if you fly a kite

BIRD-SCARER      Your grandfather's gone

TATTERCOATS      He's gone across the sea

BIRD-SCARER      I saw him go

TATTERCOATS      To the Palace

BIRD-SCARER      He hasn't left the castle since your mother died

TATTERCOATS      The king commanded  
A Great Ball  
all the lords and ladies in the land

BIRD-SCARER      You wish you were there

TATTERCOATS      How do you know?

BIRD-SCARER	Am I right?
	Hold on
TATTERCOATS	Hold on what?
BIRD-SCARER	Hold on me
	come on hold on
TATTERCOATS	Why?
BIRD-SCARER	You want to travel across the sea? then hold on tight
NURSE	Hold on little Tattercoats
TATTERCOATS	these are the words the old nurse spoke
NURSE	hold on tight my son knows what he's doing
TATTERCOATS	Your son?
NURSE	My son?
BIRD-SCARER	Hold on
	tight
TATTERCOATS	I held on tight and he held on tight
	and the kite strained in the wind and pulled and heaved
	till the kite lifted us off the ground
	both of us
	then the kite found its strength
	the wind whipped it high in the air and we clung tight
	the kite carried us high in the air we circled the castle
	the nurse waved and wished us well

the cooks gaped in amazement

now we were over the sea  
skimming the waves

the splash of the waves  
wetting our ankles

dry land ahead  
so much land  
a land of fields and forests  
of valleys and hills  
of ancient cities  
of high rise towers  
a whole new world  
getting closer and closer and closer  
and ...

THEY TUMBLE ONTO THE LAND

PRINCE	Are you an angel?
TATTERCOATS	Excuse me?
PRINCE	You just fell from the sky Are you an angel?
TATTERCOATS	I didn't fall I flew I did didn't I That's what I did I flew
PRINCE	So you are an angel Where are your wings
TATTERCOATS	No you don't understand  I flew here by kite I held on tight
PRINCE	By kite? No, I don't understand
TATTERCOATS	My friend the bird-scarer ... you...
PRINCE	Me?
TATTERCOATS	The Bird-scarer

where's he gone?

PRINCE                   What's a Bird-scarer?

TATTERCOATS         Someone who scares birds  
you know that don't you

PRINCE                   Why?

TATTERCOATS         Why?

PRINCE                   Why does he scare birds?

TATTERCOATS         He taught me to fly  
that's why I'm here  
he taught me to fly  
and now he's gone

                              hasn't he?

PRINCE                   Where's that music  
in the air  
or the earth?

                              It's in the air

TATTERCOATS         The kite  
It's the music of the kite

PRINCE                   Angel music

TATTERCOATS         There it is  
the kite  
he must be somewhere  
flying his kite

                              where is he?

                              It's making me dance

                              I can't help it  
it's making me dance  
the dance of the kite

SHE DANCES

PRINCE                   That's no sort of dance I've seen before

                              The dances I dance have steps  
and counts  
forward and back

and side to side

you seem to whirl  
round and round  
up and down

your dance seems altogether free

Don't you get giddy?

TATTERCOATS      Of course I get giddy

PRINCE              Perhaps you could teach me

TATTERCOATS      just follow the music

PRINCE              Really?

TATTERCOATS      Yes really

PRINCE              Listen  
there's a Great Ball tonight in the King's Palace

TATTERCOATS      Yes I know

PRINCE              You know?

TATTERCOATS      That's why I flew here

PRINCE              You have an invitation?

TATTERCOATS      Not exactly

PRINCE              You need an invitation  
it's the rule

TATTERCOATS      I've changed my mind

PRINCE              Oh?

TATTERCOATS      Why would I want to go to a stuffy ball  
with some posh Prince prancing about?  
I bet he's like you

PRINCE              What do you mean?

TATTERCOATS      I bet all he dances is forward and back and side to side

PRINCE              Yes unfortunately you're right

TATTERCOATS      I'll stay out here where I can whirl

where I can get giddy and no-one'll mind  
I'll stay out here and dance with the wind  
by the light of the moon  
and the sparkle of the stars

PRINCE                    Come to the Palace  
                              come to the ball  
                              as my honoured guest

TATTERCOATS        Why?

PRINCE                    The Palace needs you

TATTERCOATS        The Palace would laugh at me  
                              my skirt of rags  
                              my tangle of hair  
                              my mouth stained with berry-juice

my dancing would shame a man  
who dances in steps  
and counts  
forward and back  
and side to side

No I'll stay here  
and dance with the wind

PRINCE                    Are you afraid?

TATTERCOATS        Of course I'm not afraid  
                              why should I be afraid?

But I've no fine clothes to swirl in  
only the rags that hang from my body

and I've no fine shoes to dance in  
just feet that are bare and covered in mud

PRINCE                    You will come to the ball as my honoured guest  
                              on one condition

that you come dressed  
exactly as you are

TATTER                    Now I understand  
                              it's just a game

You want me to be laughed at

scrawny little Tattercoats  
scraggy little Tattercoats

raggy little Tattercoats  
out out out

PRINCE I don't want you to be laughed at at all  
  
I want you to be loved and admired  
  
come to the palace at midnight  
and let me welcome you in

TATTERCOATS You know nothing whoever-you-are  
you know nothing

PRINCE Trust me

TATTERCOATS Why should I?

PRINCE Because I care

TATTERCOATS Why did I?

Well I did.

Later that night  
I arrived at the gates of the Palace  
But the way was barred  
By the Palace Guard

THE SOLDIERS DANCE IN LINES

The clock struck twelve

GUARD Where do you think you think you're off to?

TATTERCOATS To the ball.  
I've been invited.

GUARD You?

TATTERCOATS Yes me.

GUARD Invitation

TATTERCOATS I have no invitation  
I was invited by a young man in a golden cloak

GUARD Do you take me for a fool?

TATTERCOATS No I don't think so

GUARD Then clear off

TATTERCOATS	I've been invited
GUARD	Clear off
TATTERCOATS	He's expecting me
GUARD	Will you stand still will you stop your whirling you're making me whoozy whirling whoozy whirling
TATTERCOATS	Behind the Palace doors I could hear soft music I could hear loud laughter I could hear the chink of a thousand necklaces of diamonds and pearls  the chimes of midnight came to an end and the doors of the palace were flung open wide
PRINCE	Welcome So you came
TATTERCOATS	I came so many people lords and ladies
PRINCE	May I present you to my father the King
KING	Oh
PRINCE	Father this is the girl  this is the girl who fell from the sky  this is the girl who whirls with the wind  this is the girl with whom I wish to share my life
TATTERCOATS	Am I?
KING	This?
PRINCE	This

TATTERCOATS      Excuse me  
                         I'm not a this I'm a person

KING                      This wild little ragamuffin  
  
                         she's a scrawny little Tattercoats  
                         scraggy little Tattercoats  
                         raggy little Tattercoats  
  
                         we'll laugh her out of the palace

TATTERCOATS      I'm leaving anyway  
                         it's all a mistake

PRINCE                      No you mustn't  
  
                         And you will not be laughing her out of the Palace  
  
                         I need her to teach me to dance  
  
                         I need her to teach me to dance as free as the wind  
  
                         all I can dance is steps  
                         and counts  
                         forward and back  
                         side to side  
  
                         that's all you've ever taught me to dance  
  
                         but she dances round and round  
                         and up and down  
  
                         there's a whole new world in her dance

#### PRINCE AND TATTERCOATS DANCE

May I dance with you?  
May I dance with you  
May I dance with you?  
May I dance with you?  
May I dance with you  
For the whole night through?  
May I dance with you for the whole night through  
May I dance with you  
May I dance with you for the whole night through  
May I dance with you  
We'll dance the whole night through  
We'll dance the whole night through  
May I dance with you

Will you let me join you as you travel?

Will you teach me to fly a kite?  
A kite that will lift us into the air  
to travel the world that I see in your dance?

Will you?

TATTERCOATS

You're a Prince  
One day you'll be a king

Your place is in the Palace  
not with me

PRINCE

No  
If you will have me  
my place is with you

TATTERCOATS

You have to hold on very tight  
so tight your arms ache

wind the string so tight  
till your fingers are ready to bleed

then we can fly  
we can fly wherever the wind will take us

but first

Grandfather

Grandfather  
will you wish me well

will you wish me joy  
will you wish me luck  
will you wish me happiness

Grandfather

I wish you happiness  
in my heart I wish you happiness

let my mother be

and tell me you love me

TATTERCOATS

But he never could let my mother be

nor could he find it in his heart  
to forgive me

he sailed back to his tower  
at the top of the castle  
on the edge of the island  
in the middle of the sea

I didn't go back

I've never gone backwards

one door closed  
but another door opened

and if you want to know what I did next  
than join me as I fly

fly your kite  
wherever the wind blows

feel it alive  
tugging at you

telling you there's another game to play  
somewhere else to explore

another day

and as long as the wind blows  
as long as you have strength to pull the string

your kite will lead the way

TATTERCOATS &  
BIRD-SCARER

flying high flying free  
a whole new world to see  
soaring swooping chasing round and round  
so far above the ground  
sailing on high  
blown far across the sky  
twisting turning looping leaping high  
across the clear blue sky

racing and rushing  
upside down and round and round  
soaring and swooping from the clouds down to the ground  
and up and down and round and round and round