

Semerwater

Music: Nigel Harbron

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12 crust of bread and wa - ter cool was all he did re - quest - He knocked on ma ny
17 cot-tage doors but the words were all the same: "You are not wel-come in these parts; re-
22 turn now whence you came." Ch. I call thee Sem-er - w - a - ter, rise fast, rise deep, rise
free. Whelm all ex-cept the lit-tle house that fed and shel-tered me.

An old man came to Wensleydale in need of food and rest,
A crust of bread and water cool was all he did request.
He knocked on many cottage doors, but the words were all the same:
"You are not welcome in these parts; return now whence you came."

*Ch: I call thee, Semerwater, rise fast, rise deep, rise free -
Whelm all except the little house that fed and sheltered me.*

He dared approach the vicarage, and asked to see the priest,
But the cleric cursed him vulgarly, then sat down to a feast.
At the castle gate, the old man stopped to beg a scrap of meat,
But the cook released a pack of dogs which chased him down the street.

The furthest building in the town was a hovel, low and mean,
A shepherd lived there on his own, ignored whenever seen.
He shook the traveller by the hand and opened wide his door,
He gave the old man milk and bread, and made a bed of straw.

Next day the old man bade farewell, refusing a last crumb,
But as the sun shone down on him, a prince he did become,
And as the young lord took his leave, more magic there occurred,
The shepherd fell upon the ground, but these words clearly heard:

The rain began to fall that day, and fell without a break
The beck became a river broad, a flood and then a lake.
The buildings in the town soon fell, all washed away save one:
The shepherd's humble cottage spared as thanks for what he'd done.

Here's a distant view of Semerwater - it's bigger than it looks in this picture. It's tucked away up a valley some 5 or 6 miles south-east of Hawes, in Wensleydale. It's worth visiting, but probably only if the sun is shining, and this cannot be guaranteed in this neck of the woods.

*My interest in the area stems from an early age. One of the first books I recall reading, well trying to read, on my own was **Folk Tales of Yorkshire** by H.L. Gee, and, as *The Legend of Semerwater* was the first story, I had plenty of goes at it! I don't recall having nightmares about the story, but I do remember feeling a little anxious when my mother was less than welcoming to a rather pushy tramp who knocked on the back-door one day....*

