

## Miorița

*(The Little Ewe)*

An old Romanian  
Pastoral ballad and  
considered one of the  
most important pieces  
of Romanian folklore.

Near a low foothill  
At Heaven's doorsill,  
Where the trail's  
descending  
To the plain and ending,  
Here three shepherds  
keep  
Their three flocks of  
sheep,  
One, Moldavian,  
One, Transylvanian  
And one, Vrancean.  
Now, the Vrancean  
And the Transylvanian  
In their thoughts,  
conniving,  
Have laid plans,  
contriving  
At the close of day  
To ambush and slay  
The Moldavian;  
He, the wealthier one,  
Had more flocks to keep,  
Handsome, long-horned  
sheep,  
Horses, trained and  
sound,  
And the fiercest hounds.  
One small ewe-lamb,  
though,  
Dappled gray as tow,  
While three full days  
passed  
Bleated loud and fast;  
Would not touch the  
grass.  
"Ewe-lamb, dapple-gray,  
Muzzled black and gray,  
While three full days  
passed  
You bleat loud and fast;  
Don't you like this grass?  
Are you too sick to eat,  
Little lamb so sweet?"  
"Oh my master dear,  
Drive the flock out near  
That field, dark to view,  
Where the grass grows  
new,  
Where there's shade for  
you.

"Master, master dear,  
Call a large hound near,  
A fierce one and fearless,  
Strong, loyal and  
peerless.

The Transylvanian  
And the Vrancean  
When the daylight's  
through

Mean to murder you."

"Lamb, my little ewe,  
If this omen's true,  
If I'm doomed to death  
On this tract of heath,  
Tell the Vrancean  
And Transylvanian  
To let my bones lie  
Somewhere here close  
by,

By the sheepfold here  
So my flocks are near,  
Back of my hut's grounds  
So I'll hear my hounds.

Tell them what I say:  
There, beside me lay  
One small pipe of beech  
With its soft, sweet  
speech,

One small pipe of bone  
Whit its loving tone,  
One of elderwood,  
Fiery-tongued and good.

Then the winds that blow  
Would play on them so  
All my listening sheep  
Would draw near and  
weep

Tears, no blood so deep.  
How I met my death,  
Tell them not a breath;  
Say I could not tarry,  
I have gone to marry  
A princess – my bride  
Is the whole world's  
pride.

At my wedding, tell  
How a bright star fell,  
Sun and moon came  
down  
To hold my bridal crown,  
Firs and maple trees  
Were my guests; my  
priests  
Were the mountains high;  
Fiddlers, birds that fly,  
All birds of the sky;  
Torchlights, stars on  
high.

But if you see there,  
Should you meet

somewhere,  
My old mother, little,  
With her white wool  
girdle,  
Eyes with their tears  
flowing,  
Over the plains going,  
Asking one and all,  
Saying to them all,  
'Who has ever known,  
Who has seen my own  
Shepherd fine to see,  
Slim as a willow tree,  
With his dear face, bright  
As the milk-foam, white,  
His small moustache,  
right  
As the young wheat's  
ear,  
With his hair so dear,  
Like plumes of the crow  
Little eyes that glow  
Like the ripe black sloe?'  
Ewe-lamb, small and  
pretty,  
For her sake have pity,  
Let it just be said  
I have gone to wed  
A princess most noble  
There on Heaven's  
doorsill.  
To that mother, old,  
Let it not be told  
That a star fell, bright,  
For my bridal night;  
Firs and maple trees  
Were my guests, priests  
Were the mountains high;  
Fiddlers, birds that fly,  
All birds of the sky;  
Torchlights, stars on  
high."

