

## Phil Ochs

### "Highwayman"

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The wind was a torrent of darkness  
Among the gusty trees  
The moon was a ghostly galleon  
Tossed upon cloudy seas  
And the road was a ribbon of moonlight  
Over the purple moor  
And the highwayman came riding, riding, riding  
Yes, the highwayman came riding  
Up to the old inn door  
Over the cobbles he clattered  
And clashed in the darkened yard  
And he tapped with his whip at the window  
But all was locked and barred  
So he whistled a tune to the window  
And who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black eyed daughter  
Bess the landlord's daughter  
Plaiting a dark red love knot  
Into her long black hair  
One kiss, my bonny sweetheart  
For I'm after a prize tonight  
But I shall be back with the yellow gold  
Before the morning light  
Yet if they press me sharply  
Harry me through the day  
Oh, then look for me by moonlight  
Watch for me by moonlight  
And I'll come to thee by moonlight  
Though Hell should bar the way  
He did not come at the dawning  
No, he did not come at the noon  
And out of the tawny sunset  
before the rise of the moon  
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon  
Looping the purple moor  
Oh a redcoat troop came marching, marching,  
marching  
King George's men came marching  
Up to the old inn door  
And they bound the landlord's daughter  
with many a sniggering jest

And they bound the musket beside her  
With the barrel beneath her breast  
Now keep good watch and they kissed her  
She heard the dead man say  
"Oh look for me by moonlight  
Watch for me by moonlight  
And I'll come to thee by moonlight  
Though Hell should bar the way"  
Look for me by moonlight  
Hoof beats ringing clear  
Watch for me by moonlight  
Were they deaf that they did not hear  
For he rode on the gypsy highway  
She breathed one final breath  
Then her finger moved in the moonlight  
Her musket shattered the moonlight  
And it shattered her breast in the moonlight  
And warned him with her death  
Oh he turned; he spurred on to the west  
He did not know who stood  
Bess with her black hair a flowing down  
Drenched with her own red blood  
Oh not 'til the dawn had he heard it  
And his face grew gray to hear  
How Bess the landlord's daughter  
The landlord's black eyed daughter  
Had watched for her love in the moonlight  
And died in the darkness there  
Back he spurred like a madman  
Shrieking a curse to the sky  
With the white road smoking behind him  
And his rapier brandished high  
Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon  
Wine red his velvet coat  
When they shot him down on the highway  
Down like a dog on the highway  
And he lay in his blood on the highway  
With a bunch of lace at his throat  
And still on a winter's night they say  
When the wind is in the trees  
When the moon is a ghostly galleon  
Tossed upon cloudy seas  
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight  
Over the purple moor  
Oh the highwayman comes riding, riding, riding  
Yes the highwayman comes riding  
Up to the old inn door.

