

Phil Ochs "The Highwayman"

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Pre>

By alfred noyes

Part one

I

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty
trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy
seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight, over the purple
moor,
And the highwayman came riding-
Riding-riding-
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

li

He'd a french cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of
lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-
skin;
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to
the thigh!
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

lii

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark
inn-yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was
locked and barred;
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.

lv

And dark in the old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where tim the ostler listened; his face was white and

peaked;
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy
hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's red-lipped daughter,
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber
say-

V
"one kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-
night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the
morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the
day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way."

Vi
He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach
her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! his face
burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over
his breast;
And he kissed it's waves in the moonlight,
(oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and
galloped away to the west.

Part two

I
He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at
noon;
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the
moon,
When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the purple
moor,
A red-coat troop came marching-
Marching-marching-
King george's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

li
They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale
instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the
foot of her narrow bed;
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at

their side!

There was death at every window;
And hell at one dark window;
For he could see, through the casement, the road
that he would ride.

lii

They had tied her up to attention, with many a
sniggering jest;
They bound a musket beside her, with the barrel
beneath her breast!
"now keep good watch!" and they kissed her.
She heard the dead man say-
Look for me by moonlight;
Watch for me by moonlight;
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way!

lv

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots
held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat or blood!
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the
hours crawled by like
Years,
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! the trigger at least was
hers!

v

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for
the rest!
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath
her breast,
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive
again;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;
Blank and bare in the moonlight;
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to
her love's refrain.

vi

Plot-plot; plot-plot! had they heard it? the horse-hoofs
Ringing clear;
Plot-plot, plot-plot, in the distance? were they deaf that
they did
Not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,

Riding, riding!

The red-coats looked to their priming! she stood up
strait and still!

Vii

Plot-plot, in the frosty silence! plot-plot, in the echoing
night

!

Nearer he came and nearer! her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last
deep breath,

Then her finger moved in the moonlight,

Her musket shattered the moonlight,

Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him-
with her death.

Viii

He turned; he spurred to the west; he did not know who
stood

Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with
her own red blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear
How bless, the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in
the darkness there.

Ix

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 i' the golden noon; wine-red
was 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.

* * * * *

X

And still of 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,

A highwayman comes riding-

Riding-riding-

A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

Xi

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-
yard,

And he taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is
locked and barred;

He whistles 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.

By alfred noyes and phil ochs

C em

The wind was a torrent of darkness

Am

Among the gusty trees

Em f

The moon was a ghostly galleon

Dm g7

Tossed upon cloudy seas

C em

And the road was a ribbon of moonlight

Am

Over the purple moor

F c e am

And the highwayman came riding, riding, riding

F c

Yes, the highwayman came riding

Dm g7

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
Out 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 bless the landlord's daughter
The landlord's black eyed daughter
Had watched for her love in the moonlight
And died in the darkness there
C em
Back he spurred like a madman
Am
Shrieking a curse to the sky
Em f
With the white road smoking behind him
Dm g
And his rapier brandished high
C em
Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon
Am
Wine red his velvet coat

F c
When they shot him down on the highway
E am
Down like a dog on the highway
F c
And he lay in his blood on the highway
F g
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. /pre>

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