

Mckennitt Loreena

"The Highwayman"

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The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty
trees

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon the
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

He'd a french cocked hat on his forehead, a bunch of
lace at his chin

A coat of 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

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 blackeyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair

"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, 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, and harry me through the
day,

Then look for me by the moonlight,

Watch for me by the moonlight,

I'll come to thee by the moonlight, though hell should
bar the way"

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 its
Waves in the moonlight, (oh, sweet black waves in the
moonlight!)
The he tugged at his rein in the moonlight,
And galloped away to the west

He did not come at 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 gypsy'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

The said no word to the landlord, the drank his ale
instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the
foot of her narrow
bed;
Two of them knelt at the casement, with muskets at
their side!
There was death at every windows,
And hell at one dark window;
For bess could see, through the casement, the road
that he would ride

They had tied her up to attention, with many a
sniggering jest;
They had 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 the moonlight
Watch for me by the moonlight
I'll come to thee by the moonlight, though hell should
bar the way!

She twisted her hands behind her, but all the knots
held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat of 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!

Plot-plot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs were
ringing clear
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
straight and still!

Plot, in the frosty silence! 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!

He turned; he spurred to the west; he did not know she
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

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 the spurs! In 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 the bunch
of lace at his
throat.

Still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the

trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon, tossed upon the
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.

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