

The Little Musgrave

John Wesley Harding

As it fell out upon a day
As many in the year
Musgrave to the church did go
To see fair ladies there

And some came down in red velvet
And some came down in pall
And the last to come down was the lady barnard
The fairest of them all

She's cast a look on the little musgrave
As bright as the summer sun
And then bethought this little musgrave
This lady's love I've won

Good day good day you handsome youth
God make you safe and free
What would you give this day musgrave
To lie one night with me

I dare not for my lands, lady
I dare not for my life
For the ring on your white finger shows
You are lord barnard's wife

Lord barnard's to the hunting gone
And I hope he'll never return
And you shall slip into his bed
And keep his lady warm

There's nothing for to fear musgrave
You nothing have to fear
I'll set a page outside the gate
To watch til morning clear

And woe be to the little footpage
And an I'll death may he die
For he's away to the green wood
As fast as he could fly

And when he came to the wide water
He fell on his belly and swam
And when he came to the other side
He took to his heels and ran

And when he came to the green wood
'twas dark as dark can be
And he found lord barnard and his men
Asleep beneath the trees

Rise up rise up master he said
Rise up and speak to me
Your wife's in bed with little musgrave
Rise up right speedily

If this be truth you tell to me
Then gold shall be your fee

And if it be false you tell to me
Then hanged you shall be

Go saddle me the black he said
Go saddle me the grey
And sound you not the horn said he
Lest our coming it would betray

Now there was a man in lord barnard's train
Who loved the little musgrave
And he blew his horn both loud and shrill
Away musgrave away

I think I hear the morning cock
I think I hear the jay
I think I hear lord barnard's horn
Away musgrave away

Lie still, lie still, you little musgrave
And keep me from the cold
It's nothing but a shepherd boy
Driving his flock to the fold

Is not your hawk upon it's perch
Your steed is eating hay
And you a gay lady in your arms
And yet you would away

So he's turned him right and round about
And he fell fast asleep
And when he woke lord barnard's men
Were standing at his feet

And how do you like my bed musgrave
And how do you like my sheets
And how do you like my fair lady
That lies in your arms asleep

It's well I like your bed he said
And well I like your sheets
But better I like your fair lady
That lies in my arms asleep

Get up, get up young man he said
Get up as swift as you can
For it never will be said in my country
I slew an unarmed man

I have two swords in one scabbard
Full dear they cost my purse
And you shall have the best of them
I shall have the worst

So slowly, so slowly he rose up
And slowly he put on
And slowly down the stairs he goes
Thinking to be slain

And the first stroke little musgrave took
It was both deep and sore
And down he fell at barnard's feet
And word he never spoke more

And how do you like his cheeks, lady
And how do you like his chin
And how do you like his fair body
Now there's no life within

It's well I like his cheeks she said
And well I like his chin
And better I like his fair body
Than all your kith and kin

And he's taken up his long long sword
To strike a mortal blow
And through and through the lady's heart
The cold steel it did go

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Musgrave to the church did go
To see fair ladies there