

The Highwayman

Phil Ochs

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
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 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.