



Clan MacColin Samhain II



*Songs of Murder*

# MURDER SONGS

## MURDER SONGS (MacColin Samhain II)

### Contents of "Murder Songs" lyric sheets:

#### SCOTTISH:

Croodin Doo .....	1
Dowie Dens O' Yarrow, The .....	1
Great Silkie, The .....	1
Hugh the Grame (Hughie Graeme) .....	2
Johnnie O' Braidesley .....	2
Lady Dysie .....	3
MacPherson's Rant .....	3
Mary Hamilton (The Four Maries) .....	4
Oor Hamlet .....	9

#### IRISH:

Abdul Abulbul Amir .....	10
Biddy McGrath's Bra .....	4
Boulavogue .....	5
Nell Flaherty's Drake .....	5

#### ENGLISH:

Down by the Greenwood Side .....	6
Lonely Willow Tree, The .....	6
Matty Groves .....	11

#### AMERICAN:

Banks of the Ohio .....	7
Cruel Sister, The (Twa Sisters) .....	7
Frankie & Johnnie .....	7
Jesse James .....	8
Long Black Veil .....	8
Pretty Polly .....	8

### See "Death Songs" lyric sheets for these:

#### IRISH:

Glendalough Saint, The (St. Kevin)
Irish Ballad (Rickety Tickety Tin)
Old Woman from Wexford, The
Weela Wallia
William Bloat
Wind that Shakes the Barley, The

#### EXILE:

Wild Colonial Boy
-------------------

#### NOT IRISH!

Bonnie Earl of Moray, The
Captain Kidd
Lord Randal
My Son David
Omie Wise
Tom Dooley
With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm



## MURDER SONGS

### Hugh the Grame (Hughie Graeme)

*Traditional (Child #191)*

The Laird o' Hume he's a huntin' gane  
Over the hills and mountains clear,  
And he has ta'en Sir Hugh the Grame  
For stealin' o' the Bishop's mear.

*Chorus:* Tay ammarey, O Londonderry,  
Tay ammarey, O London dee.

They hae ta'en Sir Hugh the Grame  
And led him doon through Strivling toon,  
Fifteen o' them cried oot at aince,  
"Sir Hugh the Grame, he must gae doon!"

"Were I to die," said Hugh the Grame  
"My parents would think it a very great lack"  
Full fifteen feet in the air he jumped  
Wi' his hands bound fast behind his back.

Then oot and spak the Lady Black,  
And o' her will she was right free,  
"A thousand pounds, my lord, I'll give  
If Hugh the Grame's set free to me."

"Haud your tongue, ye Lady Black  
And ye'll let a' your pleading be!  
Though ye would gie me thousands ten  
It's for my honour he would die."

Then oot and spak the Lady Hume,  
And aye a sorry woman was she:  
"I'll gie ye a hundred milk-white steeds  
Gin ye'll gie Sir Hugh the Grame to me."

"O Haud your tongue, ye Lady Hume  
And ye'll let a' your pleading be!  
Though a' the Grames were in this court,  
He should be hanged high for me."

He lookit ower his left shoulder  
It was to see what he could see,  
And there he saw his auld faither  
Weeping and wailing bitterly.

"O, haud your tongue, my auld faither  
And ye'll let a' your mournin' be!  
For if they bereave me o' my life  
They canna haud the heavens frae me."

"You'll gie my brother, John, the sword  
That's pointed with the metal clear,  
And bid him come at eight o'clock  
And see me pay the Bishop'e mear."

"And brother James, tak' here the sword  
That's pointed wi' the metal brown;  
Come up the morn at eight o'clock  
And see your brother putten down."

"Ye'll tell this news to Maggie, my wife  
Neist time ye gang to Strivling toon,  
She is the cause that I lose my life  
She wi' the Bishop played the loon."

### Johnnie o' Braidesley

*Traditional*

Johnny arose on a May mornin',  
Called for water tae wash his hands;  
"Gae loose tae me my twa gray dogs,  
That lie bound in iron bands, *bands*,  
That lie bound in iron bands."

"Ye'll busk, ye'll busk, my noble dogs,  
Ye'll busk and make them bound;  
For I'm gaun tae the Broadspear Hill  
Tae ding the dun deer doon, *doon*,  
Tae ding the dun deer doon."

When Johnny's mother, she heard o' this,  
Her hands wi' dule she wrang,  
Cryin', "Johnny, for my benison,  
Tae the green wood dinna gang..."

"Enough ye hae o' the guid white breid,  
Enough o' the blude red wine;  
So Johnnie, for your venison  
Tae the green wood dinna gang..."

Aye, but Johnny hae buskit up his good bent bow  
An' his arrows ane by ane,  
And he's awa tae Durisdeer,  
Tae ding the dun deer doon...

Oh Johnny, he shot, and the dun deer lap,  
And he wounded her in the side;  
But atween the water and the wood,  
The dogs, they laid her pride...

Johnnie ate o' the venison,  
His dogs drank o' the blude,  
Til they a' lay doon an' fell asleep,  
Asleep as they been deid...

It's by there cam' a silly auld carle,  
An' a silly auld man was he;  
And he's awa' tae the king's foresters,  
Tae tell what he did see...

It's up and spake the king's forester  
And an angry man was he,  
Said, "If this be Johnny O' Braidesley,  
We soon will gar him dee..."

"Stand stout, stand stout, my noble dogs,  
Stand stout and dinna flee!  
Stand fast, stand fast, my guid grey hounds,  
And we wi' mak' them dee..."

## MURDER SONGS

Johnnie he shot six o' them,  
He's wounded the seventh sair,  
Syne he swung his hough ower his horse's back,  
And he swore he would hunt mair...

Johnny's good bent bow, is brak',  
His guid gray dogs are slain,  
And his body lies in Durisdeer:  
His huntin' days  
are dane...



### Lady Dysie

*Traditional*

There was a king, and a very great king,  
And a king of muckle fame;  
He had a lovely dochter fair  
Lady Dysie was her name.

And word's gane up and word's gane doon,  
And word's gane tae the king:  
Lady Dysie she gars right roond about  
And tae whom they dinna ken.

When bells were rung and Mass was sung,  
And they've all gan tae their rest,  
The king's gane tae Lady Dysie's bower,  
And he wasnae a welcome guest.

He's pu'd the curtains right roond about  
And there he sat him doon  
"O, tell me, Lady Dysie," he said,  
"Wha gars ye gan sae roond?"

"It is tae a lord or tae a laird,  
Or a Baron o' high degree?  
Gae tell tae me Lady Dysie," he said,  
"And I pray ye dinna lee!"

"O it's no to a lord and it's no to a laird,  
Nor to any baronie,  
But it's tae Roger the kitchen boy;  
Wha cause hae I tae lee?"

He's called his merry men oot by ane,  
By ane, by twa, by three.  
An' at last came Roger the kitchen boy,  
And he's dashed him tae a tree.

Then he's ta'en oot that bonnie boy's heirt,  
Put it in a cup o' gold,  
And sent it tae Lady Dysie's bower,  
Because she'd been sae bold.

"O, fareweel mither, fareweel faither,  
Farewell to pleasure and joy.  
He died for me; I'll die for him,  
Though he was but a kitchen boy.  
Farewell mither, farewell faither,  
Farewell my brothers three;  
Ye thought ye had taken the life o' ane,  
But you've ta'en the life o' three."

### MacPherson's Rant

*Traditional*

Fareweel, ye dungeons dark and strong,  
Fareweel, fareweel tae thee;  
MacPherson's time will nae be lang  
On yonder gallows tree.

*Ch:* Sae rantin'ly, sae wantonly  
Sae dauntin'ly gaed he  
He played a tune and danced it roon'  
Below the gallows tree.

Untie these bands frae off my hands  
And gie to me my sword.  
There's no' a man in all Scotland  
But I'll brave him at a word.

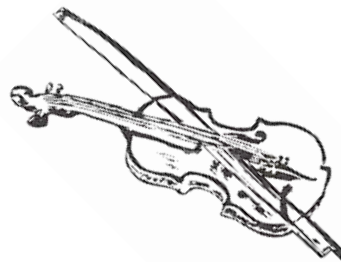
There's some come here tae see me hanged,  
And some to buy my fiddle;  
But before I do part wi' her,  
I'll brak her thro' the middle.

*[Tune as for chorus:]*

He took the fiddle in both of his hands  
And he brak' it o'er a stone.  
Sayin', "There's nae ither hand shall play on thee  
When I am dead and gone."

O little did my mother think  
When first she cradled me,  
That I would turn a rovin' boy  
And die on the gallows tree.

The reprieve was comin' o'er the brig o' Banff  
Tae let MacPherson free,  
But they pit the clock a quarter before  
And hanged him tae the tree.



## MURDER SONGS

### Mary Hamilton (The Four Maries)

*Child #173 (one of many variants)*

Word is to the kitchen gone  
And word is to the hall,  
And word is up to Madam the Queen,  
And that's the worst of all:  
That Mary Hamilton's born a babe  
To the highest Stewart of all.

"Arise, arise, Mary Hamilton,  
Arise and tell to me,  
What thou hast done with thy wee babe  
That I heard weep by thee?"

"I put him in a tiny boat,  
And cast him out to sea,  
That he might sink or he might swim,  
But he'd never come back to me."

"Arise, arise, Mary Hamilton,  
Arise and come with me;  
There is a wedding in Glasgow town  
This night we'll go and see."

She put not on her robes of black,  
Nor on her robes of brown,  
But she put on her robes of white,  
To ride into Glasgow town.

And as she rode into Glasgow town,  
The city for to see,  
The bailiff's wife and the provost's wife  
Cried, "Ach, and alas for thee."

"Ah, you need not weep for me," she cried  
"You need not weep for me;  
For had I not slain my own wee babe,  
This death I would not dee."

"Ah, little did my mother think  
When first she cradled me,  
The lands I was to travel in,  
And the death I was to dee."

Then by and come the King himself,  
Looked up with a pitiful eye,  
"Come down, come down, Mary Hamilton,  
Tonight you'll dine with me."

"Ah, hold your tongue, my sovereign liege,  
And let your folly be;  
For if you'd a mind to save my life  
You'd never have shamed me here."

"Cast off, cast off my gown," she cried,  
"But let my petticoat be,  
And tie a napkin 'round my face;  
The gallows I would not see."

"Last night I washed the Queen's feet,  
And put gold on her hair,  
And the only reward I find for this,  
The gallows to be my share."

"Last night there were four Marys,  
Tonight there'll be but three;  
There was Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton,  
And Mary Carmichael, and me."

### Oor Hamlet

*[See Page 9]*



### IRISH:

#### Abdul Abulbul Amir

*[See Page 10]*

#### Biddy McGrath's Bra

*Words: Originally by Matt McGinn, but "folk-processed" since! Tune: "Mrs. McGrath"*

Well, I'll tell you a story, that will give you all a shock,  
It's all about a double murder on the Ringsend Dock.  
The girl is question was Biddy McGrath:  
She strangled two sailors with the straps of her bra!

*Ch:* With me too-rye-yah, foddle-diddle-dah,  
Too-rye, oo-rye, oo-rye-yah. *[2x]*

Now they tried to get her drunk with foreign liquor,  
But smart as they were, well, she was quicker!  
She remembered the warning told by her Ma,  
To keep one hand on the straps of her bra.

Well, the first tar tried to have his evil way,  
But Biddy very quickly put an end to his play,  
She wrapped those straps  
round the big sailor's head,  
And she threw him in the Liffey like a crust of bread.

The little sailor laughed, and he said, "Haw, haw!"  
So she stuffed his gob with rest of her bra.  
His face turned purple, but before he fell,  
She lifted up her skirts and she ran like hell.

Well, she got home about quarter to one,  
Very well contented with a job well done.  
She told her story to her Pa and Ma,  
Who said, "Thank God that you wore yer bra!"

## MURDER SONGS

Now all young girls who go out at night,  
Don't wear the straps of your bra too tight.  
Remember the story of Biddy McGrath—  
Just keep one hand on the straps of your bra!

And all young sailors in Dublin Town,  
Where Nelson's Pillar used to be found,  
Keep your hands off the mot with the brand new bra,  
You might be throttled by Biddy McGrath!

### Boulavogue

*Words: Patrick Joseph McCall; Tune: Traditional, 'Eochail'*

At Boolavogue, as the sun was setting  
O'er the bright May meadows of Shelmalier,  
A rebel hand set the heather blazing  
And brought the neighbours from far and near.  
Then Father Murphy, from old Kilcormack,  
Spurred up the rock with a warning cry:  
"Arm! Arm!" he cried, "for I've come to lead you  
For Ireland's freedom we'll fight or die."

He led us on 'gainst the coming soldiers,  
And the cowardly Yeomen we put to flight.  
'Twas at the Harrow the boys of Wexford  
Showed Bookey's Regiment how men could fight.  
Look out for hirelings, King George of England,  
Search ev'ry kingdom, where breathes a slave.  
For Father Murphy from the County Wexford  
Sweeps o'er the land like a mighty wave.

At Vinegar Hill, o'er the pleasant Slaney,  
Our heroes bravely stood back-to-back;  
And the Yeos at Tullow took Father Murphy,  
And burned his body upon the rack.  
God grant you glory, brave Father Murphy  
And open Heaven to all your men  
For the cause that called you may call tomorrow  
In another fight for the Green again.

### Nell Flaherty's Drake

*Words: Anonymous; Tune: Traditional*

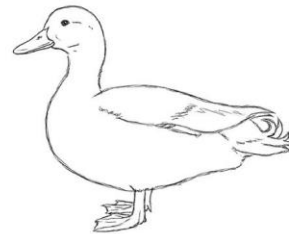
Oh my name it is Nell, and the truth for to tell  
I do come from Cootehill, which I'll never deny;  
I had a fine drake, and I'd die for his sake,  
That me grandmother left me, and she goin' to die.  
The dear little fellow, his legs they were yellow;  
He could fly like a swallow or swim like a hake.  
Till some dirty savage,  
to grease his white cabbage,  
Most wantonly murdered my beautiful drake.

Now his neck it was green, oh, most fit to be seen;  
He was fit for a queen of the highest degree.  
His body was white, and it would you delight,  
He was plump, fat, and heavy, and brisk as a bee.  
He was wholesome and sound,  
he would weigh twenty pound,  
And the universe round I would roam for his sake.  
Bad luck to the robber, be he drunk or sober,  
That murdered Nell Flaherty's beautiful drake!

May his spade never dig, may his sow never pig,  
May each hair in his wig be well thrashed with the flail;  
My his door never latch,  
may his roof have no thatch,  
May his turkeys not hatch, may the rats eat his meal.  
May every old fairy from Cork to Dun Laoghaire  
Dip him snug and airy in river or lake,  
That the eel and the trout  
they may dine on the snout  
Of the monster that murdered  
Nell Flaherty's drake!

May his pig never grunt, may his cat never hunt,  
May a ghost ever haunt him the dead of the night.  
May his hens never lay, may his horse never neigh,  
May his coat fly away like an old paper kite.  
That the flies and the fleas  
may the wretch ever tease  
May the piercin' March breeze  
make him shiver and shake  
May a lump of the stick  
raise the bumps fast and thick  
On the monster that murdered  
Nell Flaherty's drake!

Now, the only good news that I have to infuse  
Is that old Paddy Hughes and young Anthony Blake,  
Also Johnny Dwyer and Corney Maguire,  
They each have a grandson of my darlin' drake.  
My treasure had dozens  
of nephews and cousins,  
And one I must get, or me heart it will break,  
For to set me mind easy, or else I'll run crazy;  
So ends the whole song of Nell Flaherty's drake!



*The drake of the title is thought to refer to Robert Emmet (1778-1803), who was hanged for helping lead an uprising against British rule in Dublin in 1803.*

## MURDER SONGS

### ENGLISH:

#### **The Cruel Sister (Twa Sisters)**

*Child #10 (a very lively American variant)*

There was an old lord in the north country,  
*Rollin', rollin',*  
And he had daughters, one, two, three,  
*Down by the waters rollin'.*

Two little sisters, side by side,...  
And both of them on Johnnie cried,...

Johnnie gave the old one a beaver hat,...  
And the younger one thought hard on that,...

Then Johnnie gave the young one a gay gold ring,...  
And he never gave the old one another thing,...

"Sister, oh, sister, lets' walk the seashore,...  
To see the boats as they sail o'er,"...

Two little sisters walking downstream,...  
The older one pushed the young one in,...

Down she sank and away she swam,...  
She floated down to the miller's dam,...

The miller, he took her by the hand,...  
And brought her safely to dry land,...

Then the miller took off her gay gold ring,...  
And pushed her back into the water again,...

The miller was hanged on a scaffold so high,...  
And the older sister was hung close by,...

#### **Down by the Greenwood Side**

*Child #20 (variant of "The Cruel Mother")*

There was a maid who lived in York,  
*Down by the greenwood side.*  
She had two babes by her father's clerk,  
*Down by the greenwood side.*

*Ch: Down by the greenwood side-y, oh,*  
*Down by the greenwood side.*

She leaned her back against a thorn,  
*Down by the greenwood side.*  
And there those pretty babes, they were born,  
*Down by the greenwood side.*

She took out her little pen knife...  
And there she twined those pretty babes' life...

As she was walking by the wall...  
She spied two pretty boys playing ball...

She said "Oh babes, if you were mine...  
I'd dress you up in silk so fine."...

"Oh, mother dear, when we were thine...  
You wrapped us in a shroud so thin..."

"In seven years you'll hear a bell...  
And that will be your call to hell."...

#### **Lonely Willow Tree, The**

*Child #4 (American variant)*

There was a youth, a cruel youth,  
Who lived beside the sea;  
Six lovely maidens he drowned there,  
By the lonely willow tree.

As he walked out with Sally Brown,  
As they walked by the sea,  
And evil thought came to him there,  
By the lonely willow tree.

"O turn you back to the waterside,  
And face the willow tree,  
Six pretty maidens I've drowned here,  
And you the seventh shall be.

"But first take off your golden gown,  
Take off your gown," cried he,  
"For though I am going to murder you  
I'd not spoil your finery."

"Then turn around, you false young man,  
Turn round about," cried she,  
"For 'tis not proper that such a youth  
A naked woman should see."

The round he turned, that false young man,  
Around about turned he;  
And seizing him boldly in both her arms,  
She cast him into the sea.

"Lie there, lie there, you false young man,  
Lie there, lie there," cried she,  
"Six pretty maidens you've drowned here,  
Go, keep them company!"

He sank beneath the icy waves,  
He sank into the sea,  
No living thing wept a tear for him,  
Save that lonely willow tree.

#### **Matty Groves**

*[See Page 11]*





## MURDER SONGS

### AMERICAN:

#### **Banks of the Ohio**

*Traditional*

I asked my love to take a walk,  
Just a little walk, just a little way,  
As we walked, and as we talked,  
About our golden wedding day.

*Ch:* And only say that you'll be mine,  
In no other's arms entwined,  
Down beside where the waters flow,  
Down by the banks of the Ohio.

I held a knife against her breast  
As into my arms she pressed.  
She cried, "O Willie, don't murder me.  
I'm not prepared for eternity."

I started home between twelve and one.  
I cried, "My God, what have I done?  
I killed the only one I loved,  
Because she would not be my bride."

#### **Frankie & Johnnie**

*First lyrics credited to Bill Dooley, 1899*

*First published tune © by Hughie Cannon, 1904.*

Frankie and Johnny were sweethearts,  
Oh, Lordy, how they could love;  
Swore to be true to each other,  
Just as true as the stars above—  
He was her man, but he done her wrong.

Frankie went down to the corner  
Just for a bucket of beer,  
Said to the fat bartender.  
"Has my loving Johnny been here?"  
He was her man, but he done her wrong.

"I don't want cause you no trouble,  
But I ain't gonna tell you no lie;  
I saw your man about an hour ago  
With a gal named Nellie Bly—  
If he's your man, then he's doing you wrong."

Frankie looked over the transom  
And saw to her great surprise,  
There on the bed sat Johnny  
Just a-lovin' up Nellie Bly!  
He was her man, but he was doin' her wrong.

Frankie drew back to her kimono;  
She took out a little .44.  
Rutti-toot-toot, three times she shot,  
Right through that hardwood door.  
She shot her man 'cause he was doin' her wrong.

"Roll me over easy, boys,  
Roll me over slow;  
Roll me over on my left side,  
'Cause them bullets, they hurt me so.  
I was her man, but I done her wrong."

"Bring out the rubber-tired hearses,  
Bring out the rubber-tired hack;  
They're taking my man to the graveyard,  
And they ain't a-gonna bring him back!  
He was my man, but he done me wrong."

It wasn't murder in the first degree,  
It wasn't murder in the third;  
Frankie just went and dropped her man  
Like a hunter drops a bird:  
She shot her man 'cause he was doin' her wrong.

Frankie, she said to the warden,  
"What are they going to do?"  
The warden, he said to Frankie,  
"It's the electric chair for you;  
You shot your man 'cause he was doin' you wrong."

This story ain't got no moral,  
This story ain't got no end,  
This story just goes to show you  
That there ain't no good in men.  
They'll do you wrong, just as sure as you're born.



*From "The Home Bartender's Guide & Songbook," 1930*

*This American ballad has generated many variants in just over a century. It was probably based on a real murder that took place in St. Louis in 1899.*

## MURDER SONGS

### Jesse James

*Traditional*

Jesse James was a lad that killed many a man,  
He robbed the Glendale train.  
He stole from the rich and he gave to the poor;  
He'd a hand and a heart and a brain.

*(Chorus)*

Poor Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life,  
Three children, they were brave;  
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard  
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Well it was Robert Ford, that dirty little coward,  
I wonder now how he feels,  
For he ate of Jesse's bread  
and he slept in Jesse's bed,  
And he laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Well Jesse was a man, a friend to the poor,  
He'd never rob a mother or a child.  
They said there was no man with the law in his hand  
That could take Jesse James when alive.

Now the people held their breath  
when they heard of Jesse's death;  
They wondered how he'd ever come to fall.  
Robert Ford, it's a fact, he shot Jesse in the back,  
While Jesse hung a picture on the wall.

Jesse went to rest with his head on his breast,  
The devil upon his knee.  
He was born one day In the County of Clay  
And he came from a solitary race.



### Long Black Veil

*Songwriters: Robbie Robertson*

*Long Black Veil lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.*

Ten years ago on a cool, dark night,  
There was someone killed 'neath the town hall light.  
There were few at the scene, and they all did agree  
That the man who ran looked a lot like me.

The judge said, "Son, what is your alibi?  
If you were somewhere else,  
then you won't have to die."  
I spoke not a word, though it meant my life;  
I had been in the arms of my best friend's wife.

She walks these hills in a long black veil  
She visits my grave where the night winds wail  
Nobody knows, no, and nobody sees  
Nobody knows but me

The sky froze high and eternity neared  
She stood in the crowd and shed not a tear  
But sometimes at night when the cold wind moans  
In a long black veil she cries over my bones

She walks these hills in a long black veil  
She visits my grave where the night winds wail  
Nobody knows, no, and nobody sees  
Nobody knows but me.

### Pretty Polly

*Traditional (American variant of "The Gosport Tragedy")*

Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come go along with me,  
Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come go along with me,  
Before we get married, some pleasure to see

He led her over hills and through valleys so deep,  
He led her over hills and through valleys so deep,  
Pretty Polly, she mistrusted and then began to weep.

"Oh Willy, oh Willy, I'm afraid of your ways,  
Oh Willy, oh Willy, I'm afraid of your ways,  
The way you've been rambling, you'll lead me astray."

"Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, your guess is 'bout right.  
Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, you're guess is 'bout right.  
I been workin' on your grave,  
the long hours of last night."

She went on a little farther, and what did she spy?  
She went on a little farther, and what did she spy?  
A new dug grave, with the spade lying by.

He stuck to the heart, and her heart's blood did flow,  
He stuck to the heart, and her heart's blood did flow,  
And into the grave Pretty Polly did go.

He threw a little dirt over her and started for home,  
He threw a little dirt over her and started for home,  
Leave only the woods and the wild birds to mourn.



## MURDER SONGS

### Oor Hamlet

Just about the greatest retelling of this story, ever!  
Words: © Adam McNaughtan; Tune: Mason's Apron

There was this king nodding  
In his garden all alane,  
When his brither in his ear  
Dropped a wee tait of henbane,  
Then he stole his brother's crown  
And his money and his widow;  
But the dead king walked and got his son,  
And said, "Now, listen, kiddo.

"I've been killed and it's your duty  
To take revenge on Claudius:  
Kill him quick and clean,  
And show the nation what a fraud he is.  
The boy says, "Right, I'll do it,  
But I'll have to play it crafty;  
So that no-one will suspect me,  
I'll kid on that I'm a daffy."

So with all except Horatio  
(And he trusts him as a friend),  
Hamlet—that's the kid—  
He kids on he's round the bend,  
And because he's not yet willing  
For obligatory killing,  
He tries to make his uncle think  
He's tuppence off the shilling.

Took the mickey oot Polonius,  
Treated poor Ophelia vile,  
And told Rosencrantz and Guildenstern  
That Denmark's blooded bile.  
Then a troupe of traveling actors,  
Like the "784,"  
Arrived to do a special  
One-night gig in Elsinore.

Hamlet, Hamlet, acting barmy,  
Hamlet, Hamlet, loves his mommy,  
Hamlet, Hamlet, hesitating;  
Wonders if the ghost's a fake,  
And that is why he's waiting.

Then Hamlet wrote a scene  
For the players to enact,  
While Horatio and him would watch  
To see if Claudius cracked.  
The play was called "The Mousetrap"  
(Not the one that's running noo);  
And sure enough, the King walked out  
Before the scene was through.

So Hamlet's got the proof  
That Claudius gi'ed his dad the dose,  
The only problem being now  
That Claudius knows he knows,  
So while Hamlet tells his ma  
That her new husband's not a fit man,  
Uncle Claud puts out a contract,  
With the English king as hit man.



Then when Hamlet killed Polonius,  
The concealed *corpus delecti*  
Was the King's excuse to send for  
An English hempen necktie,  
With Rosencrantz and Guildenstern  
To make sure he got there.  
But Hamlet jumped the boat,  
And put the finger straight on that pair.

Meanwhile, Laertes heard his dad  
Had been stabbed thru the arras;  
He came racing back to Elsinore  
*Toute suite*, hot-foot from Paris.  
And Ophelia, with her dad killed  
By the man she wished to marry,  
After saying it with flowers,  
She committed *hara-kiri*.

Hamlet, Hamlet, there's no messin',  
Hamlet, Hamlet, learned his lesson,  
Hamlet, Hamlet, Yorick's crust  
Convinced him that men, good or bad,  
At last must come to dust.

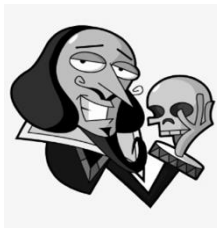
Then Laertes lost the place  
And was demanding retribution,  
But the king said, "Keep your head,  
And I'll provide you a solution."  
So he arranged a sword-fight  
With the interested parties,  
With a blunted sword for Hamlet  
And a sharp sword for Laertes.

And to make things double sure—  
The old belt-and-braces line—  
He fixed up a poison sword tip  
And a poisoned cup of wine;  
And the poisoned sword got Hamlet,  
But Laertes went and muffed it,  
Cause he got stabbed himself  
And he confessed before he snuffed it.

Then Hamlet's mummy drank the wine,  
And as her face turned blue,  
Hamlet says, "I quite believe  
The King's a baddy through and through;  
Incestuous, treacherous, damned Dane!"  
He said, to be precise,  
And made up for hesitating once  
By killing Claudius twice.

He stabbed him with the sword  
And forced the wine between his lips,  
Then he said, "The rest is silence,"  
And he cashed in all his chips.  
They fired a volley over him  
That shook the topmost rafter;  
And then Fortinbras, knee-deep in Danes,  
Lived happily ever after.

Hamlet, Hamlet, end of story,  
Hamlet, Hamlet, very gory,  
Hamlet, Hamlet, I'm away—  
And if you think that this is boring,  
You should read the bloody play!



## MURDER SONGS

### Abdul Abulbul Amir

*Words & tune: Percy French*

The sons of the Prophet are brave men and bold,  
And quite unaccustomed to fear;  
But the bravest by far in the ranks of the Shah,  
Was Abdul Abulbul Amir.

If you wanted a man to encourage the van,  
Or harass the foe from the rear,  
Storm fort or redoubt, you had only to shout  
For Abdul Abulbul Amir.

Now the heroes were plenty and well known to fame  
In the troops that were led by the Czar,  
And the bravest of these was a man by the name  
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

One day this bold Russian, he shouldered his gun,  
And donned his most truculent sneer,  
Downtown he did go, where he trod on the toe  
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

"Young man," quoth Abdul, "has life grown so dull  
That you wish to end your career?  
Vile infidel, know, you have trod on the toe  
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir!

"So take your last look at the sunshine and brook,  
And send your regrets to the Czar.  
For by this I imply, you are going to die,  
Count Ivan Skavinsky Skavar."

Skavar said, "My friend, your remarks in the end  
Will avail you but little, I fear,  
For you ne'er will survive to repeat them alive  
Mister Abdul Abulbul Amir."

Then this bold Mameluke drew his trusty skibouk,  
Singing, "Allah! Allah! Al-lah!"  
And with murderous intent, he ferociously went  
For Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

They parried and thrust,  
          they side-stepped and cussed,  
Of blood they spilled a great part;  
The philologist blokes, who seldom crack jokes,  
Say that hash was first made on the spot.

They fought all that night 'neath the pale yellow moon;  
The din, it was heard from afar,  
And huge multitudes came, so great was the fame,  
Of Abdul and Ivan Skavar.

As Abdul's long knife was extracting the life,  
In fact, he was shouting, "Huzzah!"  
He felt himself struck by that wily Calmuck,  
Count Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

The Sultan drove by in his red-breasted fly,  
Expecting the victor to cheer,  
But he only drew nigh to hear the last sigh,  
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

Czar Petrovich, too, in his spectacles blue,  
Sauntered up in his gold-plated car,  
And arrived just in time to exchange a last line  
With Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

There's a tomb rises up  
          where the Blue Danube rolls,  
And graved there in characters clear,  
Is, "Stranger, when passing, oh pray for the soul  
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir."

A splash in the Black Sea one dark, moonless night  
Caused ripples to spread wide and far.  
It was made by a sack fitting close to the back,  
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

A Muscovite maiden her lone vigil keeps,  
'Neath the light of the cold northern star,  
And the name that she murmurs in vain as she weeps  
Is Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.



*This song (originally titled "Abdulla Bulbul Ameer") was written by Percy French in 1877 for a Trinity College concert. He then sold it to a publisher for five pounds. The publisher never credited French with authorship, and despite its later popularity, French never received any royalties. The song has spawned numerous variants, and has been recorded by artists as diverse as the Sons of the Pioneers and Bert Parks.*

*Percy French, a prolific Irish poet, wrote many popular Irish music-hall songs in the late 1800's. Some of his other works are "Are You Right There, Michael," "The Mountains of Mourne," "Eileen Oge, and "McBreen's Heifer."*

## MURDER SONGS

### Matty Groves

*Child #81 (one of many variants)*

*Fun fact: It's the ancestor of "Shady Grove"*

Oh, holiday, high holy day,  
The best day of the year,  
Little Matty Groves to church did go,  
Some holy words to hear.

He spied some ladies dressed in black  
As they came into view,  
Lord Arlen's wife was gaily clad,  
The flower among the few.

"Come home with me, little Matty Groves,  
Come home with me tonight.  
Come home with me, little Matty Groves,  
And stay with me till light."

"I cannot stay, I dare not stay,  
I fear 'twill cost my life,  
For I see by your little ring  
You are Lord Arlen's wife."

"That may be false, that may be true,  
I can't deny it all;  
But Arlen's gone to consecrate  
King Henry at Whitehall."

Her little page did listen well  
To all that they did say,  
And ere that sun had set that night  
He swiftly sped away.

"What news, what news," Lord Arlen cried,  
"What new do you bring to me?  
My castle burned, my tenants wronged,  
My lady with babee?"

"No harm has come to your house or lands,  
While you have been away,  
But Matty Groves is bedded up  
With your fair lady gay."

"If what you say is not the truth,  
As I take it to be,  
I'll build a scaffold castle-high  
And hangèd you shall be!"

But riding with his merry men,  
Was one who'd wish no ill.  
He put his bugle to his mouth  
And he blew it loud and shrill.

"Oh what is this?" cried Matty Groves,  
As he sat up in bed.  
"I fear it is your husband's men,  
And I will soon be dead."

"Oh lie back down, Matty Groves,  
And keep my back from cold,  
'Tis nothing but my father's men  
Calling their sheep to fold."

So Matty Groves, he lay back down,  
To take a nap of sleep;  
And when he woke, Lord Arlen was  
A-standing at his feet.

"How do you like my feather bed?  
And how do you like my sheets?  
And how do you like that lady fair,  
Who lies in your arms asleep?"

"It's well I like your feather bed,  
It's well I like your sheets,  
But it's best I like that lady fair,  
Who lies in my arms asleep."

"Get up, get up," Lord Arlen cried,  
"Get up as quick as you can;  
In England it shall never be said  
I slew a sleeping man."

"I won't get up, I can't get up,  
I fear 'twill cost my life,  
'Cause you have got two bitter swords,  
And I ain't got a knife."

"Oh, yes, I have two bitter swords,  
They cost me deep in my purse.  
I'll give to you the best of them,  
And I will take the worst."

The first stroke little Matty struck,  
It hurt Lord Arlen sore,  
But the next stroke that Arlen struck,  
Little Matty struck no more.

Then Lord Arlen took his wife  
And sat her on his knee.  
Saying, "Who do you like the best of us,  
Little Matty Groves or me?"

Then up and spoke Lord Arlen's wife,  
Never heard her speak so free:  
"I'd rather have little Matty Groves  
Than you and your finery!"

He took her by the lily white hand  
And led her across the hall;  
He pulled out his sword and cut off her head,  
And he kicked it against the wall.

"Go dig a grave," Lord Arlen cried,  
"To put these lovers in;  
But bury my lady at the top,  
For she was of noble kin."