

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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The Banks of Green Willow (2)

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'Tis of a sea-captain
Down by the sea-side, O,
He's courted a young lady,
And he's got her by child.

"Go fetch your father's gold
And some of your mother's money,
And go all across the ocean,
All along with young Johnny."

"I've brought my father's gold
And some of my mother's money,
And I'll go all across the ocean,
All along with my Johnny."

Now they had not been sailing,
No not miles a great many
Before she was delivered
Of a beautiful baby.

"Go and fetch a white napkin
For to tie my head easy,
And throw me right overboard --
Both me and my baby."

Now see how she totters,
And see how she tumbles,
And see how she's rolling
All across the salt waters.

"Go fetch me a longboat
For to row my love back again,
For to row my true love back again,
Both her and her baby.

"For she shall have a coffin,
And the coffin it shall shine yellow,
And she shall be buried
On the banks of green willow."

Child #24

This version from the singing of Nic Jones; it is found on his

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self-titled album. The tune is partly his own creation.

Child's generic title for this ballad is "Bonnie Annie," although "The Banks of Green Willow" seems to be the most common traditional form.

Although it is not very clear in this version (and even less clear in other texts of this song), this is in fact a "Jonah Ballad."

Usually in such cases (as in the Biblical book of Jonah) a ship sets out on a voyage and encounters a storm or other calamity.

The sailors determine who is at fault and throw the guilty party overboard. (In this case it may be that the girl's only fault was to be female, or to have borne a child; at least, most recent versions do not involve the casting of lots to determine who was at fault.)

A more traditional version comes from Cynthia Gooding, "Queen of Hearts." Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger recorded "Bonnie Annie" on "Popular Scots Songs." RW

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