

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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The Prickilie Bush

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chi: O, the prickilie bush,
It pricks my heart full sore,
And if ever I get out of the prickilie bush,
I'll never get in it any more.

Hangman, slack your rope;
Will you slack it for a while?
For I think I see my brother coming;
He's riding over yonder stile.
Brother, did you bring me gold,
Or silver to pay my fee,
For to save my body from the cold clay ground,
My neck from the gallows tree?
No, I didn't bring you gold,
Or silver to pay your fee,
But your sister and I have come today
To see you on that hangman's tree.

Hangman, slack your rope;
Will you slack it for a while?
For I think I see my father coming;
He's riding over yonder stile.
Father, did you bring me gold,
Or silver to pay my fee,
For to save my body from the cold clay ground,
My neck from the gallows tree?
No, I didn't bring you gold,
Or silver to pay your fee,
But your mother and I have come today
To see you on that hangman's tree.

Hangman, slack your rope;
Will you slack it for a while?
For I think I see my true love coming;
She's riding over yonder stile.
Sweetheart, did you bring me gold,
Or silver to pay my fee?
Or have you come to see me swing
On that gallows tree?
Yes, I've brought you gold;
I brought you silver to pay your fee.
No, I could not bear to see you swing

On that hangman's tree.

Final cho:

Oh, the prickilie bush,

It pricks my heart full sore.

And now that I'm out of the prickilie bush,

I'll never get in it any more.

Child #95

This version of "The Maid Freed from the Gallows" (best known today as "Hangman, Hangman") was recorded by Roxanne & Dan Keding on "From Far and Near." I'd have a hard time proving this, but this may be the only Child Ballad sung in the Carribean; MacEdward Leach and Albert B. Friedman both reprint a version of the song from Jamaica. (Not the text printed here, obviously.) Other versions of the song are found almost everywhere English is spoken, and foreign-language versions of the story are found throughout Europe. As Child's title indicates, the person threatened with death is usually a woman; it appears that the criminal became a man in America because women are rarely hung in the U.S. Few recent versions of the song make the woman's crime explicit, but many of the older verisons reveal it. In several foreign texts she had been taken by pirates and is forced to beg for ransom. In certain English versions, by contrast, the woman has been convicted of fornication, and can only be rescued by her lover (so, probably, in "The Golden Ball" in this collection; the golden ball is the woman's fidelity.) RW

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