**The Highwayman - Catherine**

The orange sun shone over the purple moors. The light woke Bess up from an amazing dream.

The dream

It was a gusty day. The wind was throwing everything around, from bits of hay to old boots

and plant pots. Bess was leaning out of her bedroom window; the shutters clinging on to the

rusty hinges like a child hanging on a tree branch, afraid to let go. Her hair was getting blown

about, so she tied it into a plait, her dark braids hanging in a love knot reaching for the ground.

Her dark eyes fixed on the lane, the lane where he came, the love of her life, the light in the

night.

Thoughts filled her mind, the plans that they had made, the life that they would live. They

would run away, away into the purple moors. Together and alone. No one would disturb

them. They would be together…

The sound of a horse cut through her thoughts, it was a sound she knew so well, the sound of

her loved one riding, riding down the lane. The wind did not disturb him, except it made him

desperate, his French cocked hat bobbing up and down on his crown.

Her smile grew wide with happiness, her eyes were pools of joy, she was fiddling with her

love knot tying it over and over, but as he clattered through the yard, she let her coal black

waves fall below window ledge, so he could kiss the sweet fragrance branding him with her

love.

“I will come to you by moonlight, arriving on the strike of midnight, so watch for me by

moonlight, wait for me on the strike of midnight.” This he said in a whisper, barely loud

enough to hear.

“I’ll watch for you by midnight, I’ll wait for you on the strike of midnight.” Promised Bess, her

eyes full of happiness, joy and love.

But listening in the stables; his eyes as wide as saucers his mouth as big as a dinner plate,

stood Tim the ragged Osler. His clothes were rags, his hair like hay, but yet astounded, the landlords

red lipped daughter was talking to this thief. He needed to go to King Gorge, they would kill him,

the one who *ruined* his life, The Highwayman.

Bess waved her hand, would he be followed? Would they find him? Would he ever return?

But then he always came, no matter wat the weather: snow, wind, rain, sun, hail, cloud. He always came, no matter what.

Bess was wrong. At that moment Tim was riding to King Gorge. He was going to finally get rid of

that Highwayman.

Thud. Thud. Thud. What was that? A cascade of red-coated solders were marching, marching

down the lane.

Bess’s face went white, her dark eyes grew wide, King Gorge had been alerted. But how? But

when?

She remembered the stable gate had opened-when her Highwayman had come…

Tim. The single word filled her mind. He had always envied the Highwayman, this was his

revenge.

The men came rudely in. Butting into everything and drinking all the gin.

“Tell us where your daughter is!” boomed a cross-eyed soldier.

“Why?” asked the landlord. He was afraid. He loved Bess. She was kind, helpful, anything a father

could possibly want. “What has she done?” he knew perfectly well that Bess had an illegal love, but

for her sake he lied. He didn’t want to ruin her life.

“TELL US!” boomed the soldier again.

“Fine.” He sighed. “She’s upstairs. Down the landing, the first door to the right.

“Right men,” ordered the leader. “Les’ go up an’ tie her up!”

“No, no, please don’t!” cried the landlord. “No, please, I’ll do anything!”

“Tie him up too.”

Thud. Thud. Thud. The soldiers stomped up the oak-wood stairs. Their boots knocking against the

banister. The leader kicking open Bess’s door.

“Here she is the little devil.” Sneered a thin soldier. Bess stepped towards the door but a hefty one

eyed soldier blocked her. Her black hair covered her eyes, which were full of tears. Surely this was the end, Bess thought. He is never going to survive.

But that is what she thought. As the thick ropes bit into her skin, the door quietly opened…

“OW!” came a yell. A few more sounded. Suddenly the ropes around here was undone.

“Father?” called Bess.

“Bess? Are you okay? Go. Go and find the friend of yours. No, don’t worry about me. I’m just an old

man waiting to die.”

“No-“

“Bess, listen to me. Go live your life. Go have a family. Just promise me one thing.” said the landlord.

“What?” asked Bess.

“Just be Happy.”

“I will.” She promised through tears. Why did it have to be like this? Why was she to leave somebody

she loved to be with somebody she loved? Why was it so hard?

Five minutes had passed and standing on the doorstep-shivering with sadness- was Bess. She had

made her decision; she was going to run away.

Trot. Trot. Trot. A horse came riding, riding down the rainy lane. Trot. Trot. Trot. A figure she knew

so well. The Highwayman came riding, riding towards the inn. His rapier sword was shining, his lace

beneath his chin, his gun reflecting the moonlight as the midnight strike rung. Bess hopped up on his

horse, and raised her hand then waved.

This was her destiny.

This was her fate.

She was made to break the law, run away, her black hair was dragging behind them as they rode on

into the night.

The next morning

Bess’s eyes darted around as she realised where she was. It hadn’t been a dream. It was true! The

purple heather was placed underneath her head like a pillow. Midnight, the horse, was wandering

about in a field. Her owner a reasonable man with no job but the best life ever. Herself, just as happy.

**THE END**

**By Catherine Margaret Carruthers**