

THE WEeping WILLOW TREE (traditional Vermont)

There are plenty of wonderful versions of this old, old ballad. Sometimes the little cabin boy dies, sometimes he doesn't. The number of holes he bores varies widely. I love singing this one; more than once I've had audiences cheer for the cabin boy in the middle of the song.

A sailing ship was fashioned to sail the southern seas
Down in the lowlands low.
She was handsome, she was tall, and as trim as trim could be
And the name of the ship was The Weeping Willow Tree
That ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves heigh ho.

The crew of the ship were hearty seamen bold
Lads from the lowlands low
Her decks were broad and wide, and white as white could be
And on her sail was printed a weeping willow tree
That ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves heigh ho.

This worthy ship was chosen to sail the Spanish Main
Far from the lowlands low,
Her captain he was shrewd and was also proud and vain
And he hoped by his shrewd dealings a fortune for to gain
With that ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves heigh ho.

Now while they were sailing all on the southern seas
Far from the lowlands low
They met a Spanish ship called The Royal Castilee
And they jeered at the crew of The Weeping Willow Tree
That ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves heigh ho.

So the captain called his cabin boy as he had done before,
A lad from the lowlands low.
He said, "Boy, you can swim, and your stroke is swift and sure,
So that saucy Spanish ship, she will never reach the shore,
You'll sink her in the ocean low, low, low
Oh, you'll sink her in the ocean low."

"In your hand you'll carry an auger and swim to her side,
For we're from the lowlands low
And there you'll bore a hole, and you'll bore it deep and wide
For five hundred pounds in gold, and to be first mate beside,
You'll sink her in the ocean low, low, low.
Oh, you'll sink her in the ocean low."

So that was the end of the Royal Castilee.
She sank in the ocean low.
Her lofty sail so high, and her haughty air so free,
Both were buried in the depths of the raging southern sea.
She sank into the ocean low, low, low.
Oh, she sank into the ocean low.

The cabin boy exclaimed, "Sir, I now demand my fee,
You rogue from the lowlands low.
Five hundred pounds in gold you now must give to me,
And I also am first mate of The Weeping Willow Tree."
That ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves high ho.

"You'll get no gold from me, boy, for causing this wreck
You thief from the lowlands low!"
And he took the cabin boy by the nape of the neck
And he threw him overboard from The Weeping Willow's deck.
He threw him in the ocean low, low, low.
Oh, he threw him in the ocean low.

Ah, but he still carried the auger as he had done before,
The lad from the lowlands low.
And his heart was full of vengeance, and his stroke was swift
and sure.
And instead of boring one hole, he bored twenty-four
In that ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves high ho.

That worthy ship went down two hundred miles from shore,
Far from the lowlands low.
Her captain and her crew, why they never reached the shore.
And the wild seemed to say fare thee well forevermore
To that ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves high ho.

Ah, but one brave hearty seaman survived the raging sea;
The lad from the lowlands low
He was picked up by a ship, so it has been told to me
And he told to us the tale of The Weeping Willow Tree
That ship built in the lowlands low, low, low
That was born to ride the waves high ho.

*This is a version of "The Golden Vanity" (Child ballad #286) found in Helen Hartness Flanders' **Ancient Ballads Traditionally Sung in New England**. Margaret MacArthur brought it to life on her 1982 Front Hall Records recording "**Make the Wildwoods Ring**", and I learned it from her singing and that of John Roberts.*

From Judy Cook's CD "Far From The Lowlands"

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