

# The Ballad of Peppermint Billy

I

The wind races in the midland hamlets,  
The argent moon looks down and frowns  
    Fox the copse and hill he crowns,  
As curtained clouds hang down in ringlets.

The wind dances through the midland house,  
    Billy leaves the yard with silver ladles  
But dozen spoons the flagstone cradles.  
    As 'larm is raised and dogs give chase.

The wind cuts through midland thickets,  
    Billy's cornered as constable arrives  
    Urgently for home he strives,  
As for other worlds he's picked his tickets.

The wind murmurs in midland Assizes,  
    Billy to the jury swears  
But stolen silverware itself declares,  
    As 'transportation' the boy despises.

The wind races in the midland hamlets,  
The argent moon looks down and frowns  
    Fox the copse and hill he crowns,  
As curtained clouds hang down in ringlets.

II

The wind fills the t'gallants, billowing,  
    Plucking at the rigging; wild song  
Of Billy banished to the south 'ere long,  
    A full ten years of spirit winnowing.

The wind sings of sailors, sea and salt,  
    Peppermint Billy is in chains of woe  
But friendships forged in gloom below,  
    Joy his heart and senses do assault.

The wind scuds across the heaving waves,  
    Buffets Billy at work; on deck  
The stoutest tar his ropes to check,  
    As the foaming fury men enslaves.

The wind veers across the stinging briny,  
    Sun glows o'er the cerulean sea  
Calm before a storm, the moment be,  
    As boat in mighty ocean, speck so tiny.

The wind fills the t'gallants, billowing,  
    Plucking at the rigging; wild song  
Of Billy banished to the south 'ere long,  
    A full ten years of spirit winnowing.

III

The wind sings in the southern recesses,  
Eucalypts swing, a kookaburra sings  
The mountain bends her head and clings,  
As ruddled sky paints all in scarlet dresses.

The wind rustles through the southern skies,  
Peppermint Billy sojourns there  
Transported, stolen silverware,  
As felon loses friends and family ties.

The wind chirrups in the southern lands,  
Van Dieman's inhospitable but teaches  
Worked his ticket Bible preaches,  
As through his fingers run the golden sands.

The wind whistles in the southern ports,  
Under licence Billy sails  
North to England's midland vales,  
As to a sweetheart fly his thoughts.

The wind sings in the southern recesses,  
Tall trees swing, a kookaburra sings  
The mountain bends her head and clings,  
As ruddled sky paints all in scarlet dresses.

IV

The wind rustles in the midland fields,  
The gibbous moon hides her face and thinks  
Fox licks cubs as light sinks,  
As love unexpected its pleasure yields.

The wind whistles through the midland cities,  
Billy meets his brother's wife  
Blind romance a heady cup of strife,  
As Ann and Billy's love time pities.

The wind howls through the midland towns,  
The pair star-crossed enjoy their freedom  
Hotel room their sussurate fiefdom,  
As brother's grief his rejection crowns.

The wind scurries through the midland villages,  
Ann from Billy turns  
Bitter the news he learns,  
As love his broken heart it pillages.

The wind rustles in the midland fields,  
The gibbous moon hides her face and thinks  
Fox licks cubs as light sinks,  
As love thwarted its pleasure yields.

V

The wind sings in the eastern shires,  
The moon cocks her head and listens  
Fox from hounds his trail hastens,  
As bells ring out from countless spires.

The wind whistles through the eastern counties,  
The sunken church the Water rides  
Billy in the Toll House bides,  
As Death rides in to claim his bounties.

The wind through eastern hamlets tears,  
Edward and his grandson dead  
From the Toll House Billy flees,  
As hue and cry give way to prayers.

The wind scurries through the eastern parishes,  
Billy through the Vale of Belvoir  
Rushes headlong to a train,  
As news of the evil killing flourishes.

The wind sings in the eastern shires,  
The moon cocks her head and listens  
Fox from hounds his trail hastens,  
As bells ring out from countless spires.

VI

The wind echoes in the northern skies,  
Dale side the moon creaks  
As fugitive the covert seeks,  
As hounds give tongue and rumour flies.

The wind chirrup through northern recesses,  
Billy gone to ground he tires  
Perhaps not meets his heart's desires,  
As freckled boy's report the inn addresses

The wind whiffles through the northern ridings,  
Scent gone cold but Billy thirsts  
For friendly pint; the pub bursts,  
As Bobby and the publican hear the tidings.

The wind shuffles in the northern shires,  
Billy panics taken unawares  
To the open door he tears,  
As thronging mob his capture aspires.

The wind echoes in the northern skies,  
Dale side the moon creaks  
As fugitive the covert seeks,  
As hounds give tongue and rumour flies.

VII

The wind sings in the eastern borders,  
The moon looks down and ponders  
Fox his lonely trail he wanders,  
As bells ring out the peace disorders.

The wind screams through the eastern parishes,  
Billy now arrested, he entrains  
Back to Melton prison he remains,  
As judge and jury this murder punishes.

The wind caresses the eastern shires,  
Billy on the gallows swings  
To his Maker Billy wings,  
As debts are paid as law requires.

The wind whistles in the eastern counties,  
Billy's dead his story lives  
Melton's past a flavour gives,  
As peppermint does for children's parties.

The wind sings in the eastern borders,  
The moon looks down and ponders  
Fox his lonely trail he wanders,  
As bells ring out the peace disorders.