



Ratcliffe Highway

As I was a-rolling down the Highway one morn
I spied a flash packet from old Wapping town
As soon as I seed her I slacked me main brace
I hoisted me stuns'l and to her gave chase

*Oh me riggings slack, aye me rattlin's are frayed
I've rattled me rigging down Ratcliffe Highway*

Her flag was three colours, her masthead was low
She was round at the counter and bluff at the bow
From larboard to starboard and so rolled she
She was sailing at large boys, she was running free

I fired me bow chaser, a signal she knew
She backed her main tops'l, and for me hove to
I lowered me jolly boat and rowed alongside
And I found madam's gangway was open and wide

I hailed her in English, she answered me clear
"I'm from The Black Arrow, bound for The Shakespeare"
So I wore ship with a "What do you know?"
Then I tipped her me flipper and took her in tow

I tipped her me flipper, me tow rope and all
And she let her hand on me reef tackle fall
She then took me up to her lilly-white room
And on her main rigging I fouled my jibboom

I entered her little cubby-hole, and swore "Damn your eyes"
She were nothing but a fireship rigged up in disguise
She had a foul bottom from sternpost to fore
And betwixt wind and water she ran me ashore

She set fire to me rigging as well as me hull
So off to the lazareet I had to scull
With me helm hard a-starboard as I rolled along
Me shipmates called "Hey Jack yer mainyard is sprung"

Now I'm safe in harbour, me moorings all fast
I'll lie here quite snug boys, 'til all danger is past
With me mainyard well served boys, all parcelled and tarred
Wasn't that a stiff breeze boys, that sprung me mainyard

Here's good luck to the girl with the black curly locks
Here's good luck to the girl boys, that gave me the pox
Here's good luck to the doctor that eased all my pain
If I see that flash packet, I'll board her again