

A sailor coming home on leave

Unknown singer

Collected by Derek Sarjeant in a Chatham pub

Sing 7:4 (Jan/Feb 1963) p.44

Roud 60



The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the song, with lyrics underneath: "A sail- or com-ing home on leave, did find gis house with-out a light. He". The second staff continues the melody for the second line of the song, with lyrics underneath: "crept in- to his daugh-ter's room and found her han- ing from a beam". The music is written in a simple, folk style with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

1. A sailor coming home on leave ,
did find his house without a light
He crept into his daughter's room
and found her hanging from a beam.
2. He took his knife and cut her down
And on her breast these words he found:
I loved a sailor loved him true,
O see what true love can do.
3. O Father dear don't weep for me,
He was a sailor young and free,
He took me down a shady lane
And for his love I'll die of shame.
4. Go dig my grave, go dig it deep
And place white lilies at my feet
And at my head go place a dove
To signify I died of love.
5. He dug her grave, he dug it deep,

He placed white lilies at her feet
And at her head he placed a dove,
To show that she had died of love.

6. Now all you maidens bear in mind
A sailor's love is hard to find,
So if you find one good and true,
Don't change the old love for the new.

“the tune is surely one of the most persistent found in oral tradition. And so is much of the lyric too”.

Derek Serjeant recorded this song on his *Man of Kent* EP (Oak, 1963), where the liner notes say "Derek collected this song from an old seaman in one of the Medway Towns".