Folklife Today
October 2018: Haunting Tunes for Halloween

[0:04] John Fenn: Welcome to the Folklife Today podcast. I’m John Fenn, and I’m here with my colleague Stephen Winick.

Steve: Hello!

John Fenn: We’re both folklorists at the American Folklife Center here at the Library of Congress. I’m the head of Research and Programs, and Steve is the Center’s writer and editor, as well as the creator of the blog Folklife Today. In honor of Halloween, we’re sharing haunting tunes from our archive here at the American Folklife Center. And Halloween is a special time here at the Center, isn't it?

Steve: That's right. We actually launched the blog Folklife Today at Halloween back in 2013, so this Halloween season marks the fifth anniversary of our blog.

[applause or cheering sound here]

Since we started the blog, we’ve covered a pretty wide range of subjects and collections in over five hundred individual posts. But we always do something special for Halloween, and this year we're extending that to this podcast.

John: So why DID you launch the blog at Halloween?

Steve: Well, two reasons. One was just that it's such a popular holiday, and such a rich folklore topic. But the other was that, for years, the most popular feature of the AFC website was an article written by the great folklorist Jack Santino, about Halloween, and we wanted to highlight that.

John: and that got you to thinking, didn't it?
Steve: Yeah, so I realized that the article is based on a lecture Jack gave here back in 1982, which we actually taped. So we can have Jack Santino tell you all why Halloween is such a big deal. We're posting audio of the full talk over at the blog. But we'll include an excerpt here. One of Jack's main points is that Halloween historically served a double function, going back to Samhain, the ancient Celtic festival on which it was based. Samhain was both a festival of the harvest, and a festival about the importance of death:

[1:45]

Jack Santino: Simply put, Halloween is directly descended from an ancient Celtic New Year’s day. The Celtic people were a pastoral people, and they reckoned the year differently than we do. The first day of the year was November first. It was also considered the first day of winter. The name of this particular holiday that they had for November first, for their New Year’s Day, was called Samhain. That’s spelled S-a-m-h-a-i-n, but it was pronounced SOW-en. And we have—we don’t know when it began, but we know that earliest recorded literature of the Celts refer endlessly to Samhain, as a time when crops had to be harvested and animals tended to. But as much as it was a day of harvest and agricultural chores, it was also a day of the dead. It was believed by the Celtic peoples that on Samhain, or at least at the time of Samhian, the souls of the people who had died the years previously would be able to move from this world into the other world. They believed that many many departed spirits were traveling from our world into the other world at the time of Samhain. And as result, they would leave out offerings of food and drink, to propitiate the spirits and to help them on their journey. They also built bonfires, once again, to either—, depending on what your analysis is, either to keep them away from the house, to scare them off—the spirits—, or to aid them in their journey. But these two themes, of the supernatural, the death, the wandering souls, connected to the theme of the harvest, that the crops have to be harvested, have
stayed with the celebration right down to this day, and the metaphor that the crops have to be harvested for the good of life, and the idea that man, too has to die for life to continue, was made. So that Death becomes a reaper. A Grim Reaper, a reaper of men.

[3:53]

John: Wow, so that's where we get the "grim reaper" from. We should say that Jack has since then written not one but two books about Halloween, so we're glad to have this early version of his thoughts on the holiday here in the archive. So, taking his point into account, we're featuring songs and tunes that involve our relationship with death—especially ones we find haunting. Do you have a personal fave from our archives?

[4:15]

Steve: Well, every ghost song is my favorite, but I think I have to go with “Pretty Polly.”

John: Oooh. That’s a good one. What do want to say about it?

Steve: "Pretty Polly" is one of American tradition's most popular murder ballads, and we have a lot of versions in the archive, including this version recorded especially for us by Ian Fitzgerald

[4:32]

Ian Fitzgerald:
Polly pretty Polly come go away with me
Polly pretty Polly come go away with me
Before we get married some pleasures to see
Oh he led her over mountains and valleys so deep
He led her over mountains and valleys so deep
Till Polly mistrusted and then began to weep

Oh Willie, oh Willie, I'm afraid of your ways
Oh Willie, oh Willie, I'm afraid of your ways
The way you've been rambling you'll lead me astray

Polly pretty Polly you're just about right
Polly pretty Polly you're just about right
See I dug you this grave the best part of last night

Oh she knelt down beside him and pleaded for her life
Oh she knelt down beside him and pleaded for her life
Oh let me be a single girl if I can't be your wife

Oh Polly, Pretty Polly that never can be
Polly, Pretty Polly that never can be
Your past reputation's been troubling me

He stabbed her in the heart and her heart’s blood did flow
He stabbed her in the heart and her heart’s blood did flow
And into the grave pretty Polly did go

Thank you very much.

John: It's so creepy how the protagonist already dug the grave and then he just leads her to it. But you said "every ghost song" earlier. That one's not really ghostly.
Steve: Well, not that version. But one funny thing about "Pretty Polly" is that American versions tend to be shortened, and that's an example. British versions, and Canadian ones as well, are often longer—and they're at least 50% more haunting because there's a supernatural element too. Ghostly versions were widely published on broadsides and in chapbooks in the 19th century with titles like “The Gosport Tragedy” and “The Cruel Ship Carpenter.” But they're still about Willie and Polly and he still digs her grave in advance and then murders her and throws her in. We have a version like this in Alan Lomax's 1938 collection from Michigan, sung by a lumberjack with French Canadian heritage, Fred Carriere. Let's just say that in his version, Polly isn't the only victim. And instead of giving it away, how about we give it a spin?

John: Sounds like a plan. Let’s hear it: Fred Carriere's "Pretty Polly."

Fred Carriere:

[8:52]

This song was composed by Fred Carriere.

It was in those western, those fair western shores
There lived a young damsel so handsome and fair.
She was courted by a young man who called her his dear
And was known as a trader, a ship carpenter

The king wanted seamen to go upon sea
What caused this young damsel to sob and to say,
“Oh William, oh William, don’t you go on sea
For don’t you remember what you’ve told to me?”
Early in the morning before it was day,
He called upon her those words he did say,
“Come Polly, come Polly, come along with me,
Before we get married our friends for to see.”

He led her through mountains and valleys so deep,
What caused this young damsel to sob and to weep.
She sobbed and she wept, those words she did say,
“I’m afraid to my heart you have led me astray.”

“Tis true, tis true,” young William did say
“For many long nights I’ve been digging your grave.”
When she saw her grave open and the spade lying by,
She wrung her poor hands and most bitterly cried.

“Oh pardon, oh pardon,” pretty Polly did say,
“I lived no longer than to become your wife.
I’ll sail this world round and set you quite free,
If you only will pardon my sweet babe-a-nee.”

“No pardon, no pardon, there is no time to stand.”
And for the time had drew a knife to hand.
He pierced her through the heart till her life blood it flowed
And into the grave her sweet body did throw

He covered her over so snug and secure,
So no one would find her he thought he’d made sure.
He jumped up on board ship to sail this world round
Before this young murder would ever be found.
He had not sailed for over a day
When the captain came up and those words he did say,
“There’s murderer on deck, boys, and the deed has been done
And the ship must be haunted or cannot sail on.”

Up stepped a sailor who says, “It’s not me.”
Up stepped another and the same he did say.
Up stepped young William who stamps and he swore,
And he says, “It’s not me, I will vow and declare.”

As he was returning from the Captain with speed
He met pretty Polly, which made his heart bleed.
She ripped him, she tore him, she ripped him in three
Saying, “This is for the murder of sweet babe-a-nee.”

[12:37]

John: Ahh, revenge. Ghastly revenge. So what about the fact that he says right on the disc there that he wrote the song?

Steve: I know, that's another great thing about the recording: Fake news! As a westerner, I'm sure you recognized the tune:

John: "Sweet Betsy from Pike?"

Steve: Right…which is also known in Britain as "Villikins and his Dinah," but it's the same tune, and it’s common in both countries. And the words are a really typical broadside text, right down to Polly ripping Willie in three pieces. In some English texts, it takes place in Worcestershire, which becomes "Western Shores" in Carriere's rendering! So Fred Carriere didn't really contribute much to writing the song, and we're left wondering what he meant by his comment!
John: Wow, that opens all kinds of questions! Why do you think the song so often gets shortened in American tradition?

Steve: That's a question no one really can answer. But it's not unique to this song. In a lot of older British songs, the supernatural elements kind of drop away in American versions. In fact, it's also true of another song picked by one of our staff members.

[13:39]

Folklife specialist Nancy Groce, is here with us, and she's got a version of "The Two Sisters" from American tradition. Welcome, Nancy!

Nancy: Thank you, it's good to be here!

Steve: Nancy, what's interesting to you about this song?

Nancy: One of my interests is in the connections between Scottish and American folklore, and many of the oldest English language versions of this ballad are Scottish -- but it became very popular in America and it’s found in many different versions. This particular version was performed by Kilby Snow, a traditional singer and autoharp player from Virginia, and it is in AFC’s Mike Seeger collection. Snow told Seeger he learned this song from his grandfather, who was in his mid-90s when 7-year old Kilby heard him sing this around 1912. Interestingly, although different versions of this ballad are found throughout Europe, Kilby thought that the story might have appealed to his grandfather because he was of Cherokee ancestry. Most European versions have two people involved, they’re two sisters, daughters of the king or a local nobleman, who are competing for the same suitor – which is why the ballad is best known by the title “The Two Sisters.” However, in Snow’s version, it is a courting couple – and what happens takes on a seriously
supernatural overtone. Kilby’s title for the song was “"Oh the dreadful Wind and Rain," and he told Seeger, “You just got to sing it or it keeps haunting you”:

Steve: So shall we hear the song?

[15:07]

Kilby Snow:

It was early one morning in the month of May
Oh the wind and rain
Two lovers went fishing on a hot summer day
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

He said to the lady, won’t you marry me
Oh the wind and rain
Then my little wife you'll always be
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

[Autoharp Solo]

Then he knocked her down and he kicked her around
Oh the wind and rain
Then he knocked her down and he kicked her around
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

He hit her in the head with a battering ram
Oh the wind and rain
He hit her in the head with a battering ram
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

[Autoharp Solo]
Then he threw her in the river to drown
Oh the wind and rain
Then he threw her in the river to drown
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

He watched her as she floated down
Oh the wind and rain
He watched her as she floated down
Crying the dreadful wind and rain

She floated on down to the miller’s mill-pond
Oh the wind and rain
She floated on down to the miller’s mill-pond
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

[Autoharp Solo]

Then the miller fished her out with his long fishing line
Oh the wind and rain
Then the miller fished her out with his long fishing line
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

He made fiddle pegs of her long finger bones
Oh the wind and rain
He made fiddle pegs of her long finger bones
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.

He made a fiddle bow of her long curly hair
Oh the wind and rain
He made a fiddle bow of her long curly hair
Crying the dreadful wind and rain.
The only tune that fiddle would play
Was oh the wind and rain
The only tune that fiddle would play
Was crying the dreadful wind and rain.

[18:13]

Steve: so let me get this straight: After the guy murders his girlfriend and throws her in the stream, the miller fishes out her body, and the first thing he thinks is "I could make an instrument out of that."

Nancy: Yes, that's about it. He makes fiddle pegs out of her bones and he uses her hair for the fiddle bow. I'm an ethnomusicologist, and as part of my training, I studied organology, which is the study of musical instruments.

Steve: OK, so as an organologist, you can tell us...would that actually work?

Nancy: Well, maybe.... We probably don’t need to try it. But what’s interesting is that most European versions have the traveling minstrel use the drowned sister’s body to make a harp and then he plays the harp in hall of the sisters’ father, the king. And the instrument reveals that the older sister has murdered the younger sister. Now, harps have a lot longer history in northern European music than violins; and harps are often involved with the supernatural. So all that fits nicely in with our Halloween theme. It’s also a haunting song.

Steve: Yeah, and two things that I notice about that: although Kilby Snow’s version doesn’t have the instrument specifically revealing who the murderer is, it does have the instrument refuse to play any tune except one called “Oh, the Dreadful Wind and Rain.” So the instrument’s responding to that murder in a certain way. And then of course, the other thing is that Kilby Snow’s instrument was called an autoharp.
Nancy: It was, and he was one of the greatest and most influential autoharp players in the world of folk music. But despite its name, organologists actually classify autoharps as zithers not as harps. But it's still a great haunting song with a hunting title.

Steve: Absolutely. Thanks again to Nancy Groce.

19:56

I'm Stephen Winick, and I'm here with American Folklife Center staff on the Folklife Today podcast, including my colleague and co-host for today’s episode, John Fenn.

John: We've gathered favorite haunting tunes from staff members here at the AFC. The next one was suggested by Jennifer Cutting, one of our amazing folklife specialists, who’s an ethnomusicologist by training. Jennifer helps researchers through our archive, including the Spanish-language collections. So here it is, "El Soldado."

Pablo Ruthing: Adiós, adiós lucero de mis noches,
dijo un soldado al pie de una ventana.
Me voy, me voy pero no llores alma mía
Que volveré mañana.

Ya se asoma en el oriente el alba
Ya se divisa la estrella de la aurora
En el cuartel tambores y cornetas
Están tocando a diana.

Horas después cuando la noche trágica
Cubrió de luto el campo de batalla
Y a la luz del vivac pálido y triste
Un joven expiraba.

Alguna cosa veía el centinela
Al sentirse morir, dijo en voz baja
Dejó el fusil, bajo luego los ojos
Y se enjugó una lágrima.

Hoy por doquier cuentan gentes medrosas
Que cuando se asoma en el oriente el alba
En el cuartel tambores y cornetas
Están tocando a diana.

Se ve vagar la misteriosa sombra
Que se detiene al pie de una ventana
Y murmura no llores alma mía
Que volveré mañana.

[22:55]

Steve: And while we were playing that song, Jennifer slipped in here silently, like a ghost. So welcome Jennifer!

Jennifer: Thank you!

John: Jennifer, what do we know about that song?

Jennifer: Well, it was collected in Carmel, California in 1939 by the folklorist Sidney Robertson Cowell. The singer was Pablo Ruthling, and Cowell says in her notes that he learned the song about 1920 in Mexico.

Steve: And is it a Mexican song?
Jennifer: well, we aren't sure! It has a longer title, which is “El Adios del Soldado,” and it's found all over Latin America. I've seen it attributed to Colombian and Bolivian authors, and also heard versions from Cuba. It probably comes from colonial times, when it was all New Spain. But lots of people believe it's a Mexican folksong, and it's very popular among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. I've heard it sung by Vicente Fernandez and even Linda Ronstadt!

John: And for our non-Spanish-speaking listeners, what's it all about?

Jennifer: Well, it’s about a young soldier who sings beneath his lover’s window at dawn, and he sings:

Me voy, me voy,
Pero no llores, alma mia,
Que volvere manana.,

which means:

“I'm going, but don’t cry, my heart, for I will return tomorrow.”

But that night, he dies in battle. And after that, superstitious people say, a mysterious shadow passes by her window each day at dawn and murmurs “don’t cry, my heart, for I will return tomorrow.

John: Wow, spooky! Thanks, Jennifer.

Jennifer: You're welcome.

[24:45]

Steve: In keeping with our Halloween theme, we might say The American Folklife Center is kind of a two-headed monster. We have two section heads, one of whom is John and the other of whom is Nicole Saylor. And Nicki leads leading our
amazing archive section, which is a team of archivists, folklorists, and ethnomusicologists who acquire, preserve, and provide access to one-of-a-kind collections. And she's here with our next pick. Welcome, Nicki, and thank you for joining us!

John: Yeah, welcome!

Nicki: Thank you for inviting me.

Steve: So, what did you pick?

Nicki: It's a recording from the Anne and Frank Warner collection, and it's an unknown singer performing one called "Skin and Bones." I was intrigued by the fact that it was recorded in Iowa, and as an Iowan, I’m always interested to see what we have in our archive from my state.

Steve: Yeah, I guess we don’t have THAT much from Iowa, so I guess it’s kind of cool when we get a good version of a traditional song from there. What do we know about this one?

Nicki: Not that much! Since it's an unknown singer, we would probably never have listened to the song if it hadn't been for Jeff and Gerret Warner, the sons of Frank Warner, who collected it. And we were lucky enough to have them in the studio a little while back, so we asked them how they came across it.

Steve: So let’s just drop into that conversation, where I’m talking to Jeff and Gerret Warner about “The Old Woman All Skin and Bones,” which was recorded by their father Frank in Iowa in 1941. And we’ll start out where they’re talking about what they knew about their father’s trips to Iowa.

[26:04]
Gerret Warner: We knew that Frank Warner was making western trips alone, that he would have done concert tours.

Jeff Warner: He worked for the Railroad YMCA

Gerret Warner: Right

Jeff Warner: And he toured…I don’t know who was sponsoring the tours…

Gerret Warner: No, I don’t either.

Jeff Warner: But he did sing in the Midwest. Whether he was in Iowa for one or the other we don’t know.

Gerret: I can’t figure out though, why he had a tape recorder…why he had any recording device

Jeff: a disc maker with him. He must have just taken it, because it was so cool, and fun, and relatively portable. When you have a pass on every railroad line in the country, you can do what you want.

Steve: How did you find the song? It’s by a singer whose name you don’t know…how did you come across it?

Jeff: When Tim Eriksen got on our case in the late 90s, to get this stuff in order, to put on the Appleseed label, we took a year, and we sat down and listened again to the entire collection. And we ranked everything we thought was fun and good and historical and important. And so it struck us. Because it’s quite complete. And it’s got the little “boo!” at the end. But it was just complete, fun, Midwest…a lot of reasons to put it on.

Steve: All right, so what do you know about the song?

Jeff: Do you have any other questions?
Steve: That’ll be pretty much it!

[Laughter]

Jeff: That’s how much we know about the song!

John: So they don't know THAT much about the song either. Luckily, we have some information on "Skin and Bones" in our files. Looks like it's a creepy classic that has been scaring kids since the eighteenth century, and it made it into print by 1810.

Steve: So let's hear it!

[27:40]

Unknown singer:
There was an old lady
All skin and bones
Mmm-mmm-mmm

She thought she’d go to church one day
To hear the parson preach and pray
Mmm-mmm-mmm

And when she got unto the stile
She thought she’d rest a little while
Mmm-mmm-mmm

And when she got unto the door
She thought she’d rest a little more
Mmm-mmm-mmm
She looked up, she looked down
She saw a corpse upon the ground
Mmm-mmm-mmm

The woman to the parson said
Will I look so when I am dead?
Mmm-mmm-mmm

The parson to the woman said,
You will look so when you are dead.
Mmm-mmm-mmm

The woman to the parson said:
Aaaaaaaaaaah!

[29:10]

John: Once again, "The Old Woman all Skin and Bones" from the Anne and Frank Warner collection.

Steve: And what I love about that song is...you know, I do have this medievalist background and even though it’s not that old it has that medieval feeling of the dance of death. And that theme of medieval iconography really stayed part of everyone's life and became popular again in the 19th century, so you get death themed photography and jewelry and art...and songs like this one. And it also connects with that grim reaper and skeleton imagery of bones that we’ve seen is so important to Halloween. Nicki, thank you so much for bringing it to us.

John: Yeah, thanks a lot for coming by, Nicki.

Nicki: All right, thanks for including me!

[29:50]
John: Speaking of bones, Steve and I both wanted to include this great old version of the fiddle tune "Turkey in the Straw," which comes with a story about a skeletal ghost. This was the subject of one of Steve's posts on the blog. We have with us Carl Fleischhauer, who recorded the tune from Burl Hammons, along with the story that goes with it. Carl, what do you remember about Burl and the tale?

[30:10]

Burl was one of ten children of a man named Paris Hammons. Paris Hammons lived on the Williams River in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. And he was kind of a woodsman, in the sense of living in the woods, not really working in the woods. And he was a fiddler, and his brothers were fiddlers, and so on. And so, Burl and his nine siblings grew up in a very musical household. And in addition to the fiddle playing, any number of family members were terrific raconteurs, so you get a story like the one Burl associates with “Turkey in the Straw” which is a typical well-told tale that goes with a musical selection.

[30:57]

Burl Hammons: Well, I was—where we lived, we lived down on the Williams River, when the—when I saw this thing, and so—And we always went to bed pretty early, my dad did, and—about eight, nine o’clock we always went to bed—and I laid down and I, didn’t seem like I could go to sleep. And I laid there a while and just directly I heared the click, open come the door, and in walked this skeleton of a man. And he was the tallest man, Lord, I’ve — he was really tall, a—must’ve been six or seven feet tall or looked like that.

And he had — I noticed he had a fiddle in his hand when he walked in; and he walked about the middle of the floor where I was a-sleeping. And he took off on that “Turkey in the Straw,” and boys I never had heared nothing played like that in
my life. And I shut my eyes to keep from looking at the skeleton of a man, but I was still listening at that tune. And, when I opened my eyes, he’d — I waited till he finished the tune before I opened my eyes, but he — when he finished it he was still a – standing but he just turned and walked to the door, and just “click” open come the door, and out he went.

And the next morning I was a-telling my dad about that. "Ah," he said, "that's a bunch of foolishness. Quit." He said, "That was only just a dream or something you had," he said. "Quit thinking of such stuff as that." "No," I said, "it was the truth." I said, I wished I could've played "Turkey in the Straw," heard somebody else play "Turkey in the Straw" like that. "Ah," he said, "that's foolishness."

And I never told no more about it, but I can still mind that--what ever it was, I don't know whether it was a dream or not, but I tell you I can still mind about it. A six or seven--a fellow only six or seven year old and still can mind that just as well as it was today, you know it's bound to be pretty plain, now--or he couldn't have minded that.

[32:47]

[Fiddle playing]

[34:00]

John: what a great story!

Steve: so what do you think about that story? What was striking about it to you?

Carl Fleischhauer: Well, it was unique. I myself had never heard a yarn about a skeleton playing the music, and Alan Jabbour said that as well. Although, of course, you can’t help think about the Devil in a way, in association with this. As
any folklorist knows, the association of the Devil and the fiddle and that kind of music has a long and honorable tradition.

Steve: It sure does.

Carl: So this could be connected to that. But Alan Jabbour and I were struck by the note of, shall we say, skepticism that sort of comes in the story. And that theme of skepticism, Alan and I noticed, was shot through any number of these supernatural stories. Although in this case, it’s a different dialogue. It’s the naïf talking to the skeptic, in a way, about the skeleton.

Steve: Yeah, the skepticism is still in the story, but embodied by his father as opposed to by him. So, another question, I suppose, would be: do you think there’s anything special about “Turkey in the Straw” that might have caused such a story to be attached to it?

Carl: Well, it’s a well known tune, although as Alan reported, Burl’s playing of it is somewhat unusual. He plays it in the key of G with the fiddle in standard tuning, and as Alan notes, in the high part, he omits the fourth degree and leaps up to a high B on one the phrases, which is someone unusual. And you know, I suppose you could pause at that point and think “ah, well, if it was quite different than anybody else maybe he DID hear it from a skeleton, I don’t know!

Steve: well, thank you very much, Carl. I will mention that there’s an entire blog post at Folklife Today about “Turkey in the Straw” and different versions of it in our collections, including this one. Carl, thanks so much for being with us!

Carl: Happy to be here, thank you!

[35:56]

John: That's why Halloween is one of my favorite times of year.
Steve: Me too! I mean, I love the spookiness of it, and the dress-up aspect as well, but the deep history too. You can read Jack Santino's article and now hear his lecture as well, and as he tells us, Halloween is an ancient festival concerned with our relationship to death, which underneath the trappings of scary ghosts and monsters, is a pretty profound idea.

[36:19]

John: and it also brings me to my own pick, a song called "Death is Awful."

Steve: Oh, that’s a great one!

John: This is Vera Hall's version of the widely known song "Oh, Death" or "Conversation with Death." We've got a lot of versions of this in the archive, including John Cohen's recording of Berzilla Wallin, Alan Lomax's recording of Bessie Jones, and this one, which is a 1939 recording of Vera Hall by John A. Lomax.

Steve: Let’s hear it!

[36:44]

Vera Hall:
Oh, death is awful,
Oh, death is awful,
Oh, death is awful
Spare me over another year.

If I was a flower in my bloom
It make death cut me down so soon
He'll shut your eyes and stretch your limbs,
This is the way that death begins

Oh, death is awful,
Oh, death is awful,
Oh, death is awful
Spare me over another year.

He'll fix your feet so you can't walk
He'll lock your jaws so you can't talk,
He'll close your eyes so you can't see,
At this very hour you must go with me

O death, have mercy,
O death, have mercy,
O death, just spare me over another year.
O death, have mercy,
O death, have mercy,
O death, just spare me over another year.

He'll fix your feet so you can't walk
He'll lock your jaws so you can't talk,
He'll close your eyes so you can't see,
At this very hour you must go with me

O death, have mercy,
O death, have mercy,
O death, just spare me over another year.

[38:54]

Steve: Again, that was John Fenn's favorite haunting song from the archive, "Death is Awful" from Vera Hall. And I guess...what's left, except to thank all the folks who helped us? Let's see, that would be Jack Santino, Todd Harvey, Jennifer Cutting, Nicki Saylor, Jeff and Gerret Warner, and the great Carl Fleischhauer.

John: as well as all the singers and musicians, many of whom have passed away: --, Fred Carriere, Pablo Ruthling, Kilby Snow, Burl Hammons, Vera Hall, and the unknown Iowan.

Steve: and our behind-the-scenes staff, Trelani Duncan and Mackenzie Kwok on the writing crew, and our intrepid engineer Jon Gold.

John: and of course, you the listener!

Steve: We'll see you next time, on Folklife Today!

[39:38]

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[39:46]