

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

32 *The Widow's Party*

“Where have you been this while away,  
    Johnnie, Johnnie?”  
Out with the rest on a picnic lay.  
    Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!  
They called us out of the barrack-yard 5  
To Gawd knows where from Gosport Hard,  
And you can't refuse when you get the card,  
    And the Widow gives the party.  
    (*Bugle: Ta—rara—ra-ra-rara!*)

“What did you get to eat and drink, 10  
    Johnnie, Johnnie?”  
Standing water as thick as ink,  
    Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!  
A bit o' beef that were three year stored,  
A bit o' mutton as tough as a board, 15  
And a fowl we killed with a sergeant's sword,  
    When the Widow give the party.

“What did you do for knives and forks,  
    Johnnie, Johnnie?”  
We carries 'em with us wherever we walks, 20  
    Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!  
And some was sliced and some was halved,  
And some was crimped and some was carved,  
And some was gutted and some was starved,  
    When the Widow give the party. 25

“What ha' you done with half your mess,  
    Johnnie, Johnnie?”  
They couldn't do more and they wouldn't do less.

Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!  
They ate their whack and they drank their fill,                   30  
And I think the rations has made them ill,  
For half my comp'ny's lying still  
                  Where the Widow give the party.

“How did you get away — away,  
                  Johnnie, Johnnie?”   35  
On the broad o' my back at the end o' the day,  
                  Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!  
I comed away like a bleedin' toff,  
For I got four niggers to carry me off,  
As I lay in the bight of a canvas trough,                           40  
                  When the Widow give the party.

“What was the end of all the show,  
                  Johnnie, Johnnie?”  
Ask my Colonel, for I don't know,  
                  Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!                                   45  
We broke a King and we built a road —  
A court-house stands where the Reg'ment goed.  
And the river's clean where the raw blood flowed  
                  When the Widow give the party.  
                  (*Bugle: Ta—rara—ra-ra-rara!*)                                   50

*1890*

(From *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*. Definitive edition.  
London, 1940)