

# The Drones, Sixteen Straws

One Sunday morning  
While I was out walking  
By the Brisbane's waters  
I chanced to stray  
There I found a prisoner  
Layed half in the water  
He'd seen me coming  
And he began to say

"I was a native of Erin's Ireland  
And before I was brought  
To this terrible place  
They dragged me away  
From my wife and newborn  
And my ailing parents  
I've been a prisoner at Port Macquarie  
Norfolk Island and Emu Plains  
At Castle Hill and cursed Toongabbie  
At all of these settlements  
I've worked in chains  
But of all the places of condemnation  
At each penal station of New South Wales  
To Moreton Bay I've found no equal  
The tyranny there makes all the rest pale

There I met O'Brien  
The defender from Ulster  
He'd left Ireland burning  
Came here for the wake  
He was a schemer  
A Jacobite nightmare  
He could not be broken  
But he became displaced  
The Jew had one hand  
He was a violent man  
He'd worn the 20 pound irons  
Since before time began  
Just before the dawn broke  
His starvation awoke  
He'd pick the corn from the filth  
He'd find laying around  
There ain't no walls at all  
So remote is the North  
The Commandant Logan  
Was the devil for sure  
His chief flogger was mad  
I heard a prison guard say  
He'd wash his lash in a bucket  
Then drinks the remains

Well I heard a rumour  
In the barracks one night  
The Jew and O'Brien had fashioned a knife  
They meant to kill Logan  
But my will was broke  
My brain reeled with this secret  
And the next day I spoke  
They put me back on the gang  
With no word of my actions  
O'Brien and the Jew  
Got 300 lashes  
O'Brien came off his triangle  
With exposed shoulder blades  
His skin never healed

He turned morbid and strange

We was out on the road gang  
Just digging a hole  
I was struggling with conscience  
My nerves had dissolved  
To 15 pairs of eyes  
O'Brien proposed,  
'Shall we go to the gallows  
Be done with our woes?  
You know the game  
Fair play's all I'm asking  
We'll draw 16 straws then nothing is wanting  
Why should we grasp at the  
straws of our lives  
When we're only condemned by our will to survive?'

16 straws we did then did draw  
I picked the long one  
The Jew picked the short  
He said 'pray God forgives you  
At least make it quick'  
14 pairs of eyes watched me  
Pounding a a shiv through his heart  
And for a few moments there was no  
stopping the blood  
Then O'Brien said 'friends!  
On a scaffold this ends  
But it's a long was to Brisbane  
And we are dangerous men'

Well Logan was wild  
We filled him with bile  
He'd seen the Catholic dodge  
Plain suicide  
We'd ascended his powers  
But not that of the King's  
Or the judge down the river's  
But we was happy to swing  
We were marched through the scrub  
Off to Brisbane for trial  
Chained into a whaler  
Set off at low tide  
With 6 nervous marines  
And 6 Enfield rifles  
The arse end of the world  
And indifferent blue sky

Well I turned to torpor  
At the stern in the sun  
But I gathered the others must have come undone  
I woke breathing smoke in a chaos of limbs  
A red coat squirting blood  
Through a hole in his chin  
And a volley of fire in my general direction  
There was panic and shot  
And the smell of powder burning  
I threw a rifle up over the side  
It was dark by the water  
But I could see the shore lights  
Crouched down in the back  
The wrong side of the guns  
Getting scorched by the powder  
I thought surely I'm done  
I seen ghoulish things

Men show limb from limb  
O'Brien was dead  
There were pieces of him  
I tore off my shirt  
I was quite badly burnt  
My eyes poured like well springs  
They were swollen and hurt  
I'm not sure who survived  
My whole trunk was on fire  
But they borke the chains off me  
And I bailed over the side.&quot;

Well I was amazed by this poor wretch's tale  
I'd heard not of the friends  
He had left in the whaler  
But I'd just seen the paper  
and I had to explain  
How his Commander Logan  
had died just this day  
&quot;He'd set out behind you  
He was out hunting game  
When he startled some natives  
Took a spear through his brain&quot;  
Then the prisoner said &quot;good&quot;  
I heard someone in boots  
I turned around and that's when  
The Royal Marines came