The I'm Alone

The I'm Alone
(Wade Hemsworth)

1. Remember, yes I remember well,
The most famous rum-runner of them all:
Remember, yes, I remember well,
The most famous rum-runner of them all,
It was the schooner from Lunenberg, I'm Alone
In the Gulf of Mexico she went down under fire
Of a Yankee cutter on the high seas outside treaty waters.

cho: Oh, I'm alone
A long way from Lunenberg she went down
Because Skipper John Randall wouldn't heave to
On the I'm Alone.

2. It was in nineteen hundred and twenty-nine
When the smuggling of liquor was a profitable pasttime
Many a Maritimer didn't see why
He shouldn't turn a profit, Uncle Sam was dry
Many a family took on style
Prohibition made it very worthwhile
To be a good Samaritan to long-suffering thirsty Americans.

3. Now the schooner's captain was a wild Newfoundlander
A hard-driving man, name of John Thomas Randall,
A decorated veteran of the First World War,
A sea-going gentleman adventurer.
From Belize, he'd take the I'm Alone
To the coast of Louisiana, and anchor south of Trinity Shoal
Where he would meet his man and discharge the cargo according to plan.

4. It was all clear sailing for the I'm Alone
With the profits of six or seven trips salted down
The coastguard had bothered her a couple of times
But Skipper John's seamanship had left them behind.
One March morning in the wind and the swell
She was reaching along under jumbo jib and storm trysail
When the cutter Dexter swept on the I'm Alone's starboard quarter.

5. Now the Dexter's captain was a a very rough man
He had sworn he'd never lose the I'm Alone again
He ran a string of signals, saying, "How do you do?

You know that I'll fire if you don't heave to."
Skipper John semaphored immediately,
"We're on the high seas, you have no jurisdiction over me!"
But the Dexter's captain sent several volleys
Through the I'm Alone's rigging.

6. The bullets tore the booms, the sails, the lines,
Even tore a hole in the Red Ensign.
When Skipper John saw that he was fit to be tied
At this disrespect shown to his national pride.
The crew said, "Sir, don't you trouble your mind -
We'll all go down together with the old Red Ensign flyin!'"
So he signalled to the Dexter, "Shoot and be damned to ya!
I'll not surrender!"

7. So the Dexter opened fire and it didn't take long
Before her guns had stitched a seam along the I'm Alone's waterline
Skipper John ordered every man to the sea
There was water on the bridge when he himself jumped free.
Stern in the air, the I'm Alone went down
A heavy sea a-runnin', a wonder only one man was drowned -
The bo'sun was the one who was pulled aboard the cutter
When his life had gone.

8. That's how it happened, there isn't much more -
The I'm Alone became an international affair
Skipper John and his seamen were all released,
The U.S. Government couldn't make a case.
That kind of violence is bound to happen
When a law like Prohibition sits up and begs to be broken
And we'll still remember the story of the I'm Alone
And Skipper John Randall.

Note: by Wade Hemsworth. See Janice Patton, The Sinking of the I'm Alone. Toronto, 1973. Set roughly to the calypso tune "It was Love and Love and Love Alone, That Made King Edward Leave de T'rone"
JB

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