# Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1800)

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#### PART I

It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three. 'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye, Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

[...; 11.5-11]

He holds him with his glittering eye— The Wedding-Guest stood still, And listens like a three years' child: The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone: He cannot choose but hear; And thus spake on that ancient man, The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared, Merrily did we drop Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left, Out of the sea came he! And he shone bright, and on the right Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day, Till over the mast at noon—'

[...; 11.31-40]

And now the Storm-blast came, and he

Was tyrannous and strong: He struck with his o'ertaking wings, And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow, As who pursued with yell and blow Still treads the shadow of his foe, And forward bends his head, The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast, And southward aye we fled.

[...; 11.51-62]

At length did cross an Albatross, Thorough the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God's name. It ate the food it ne'er had eat, And round and round it flew. The ice did split with a thunder-fit; The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind; The Albatross did follow, And every day, for food or play, Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, It perched for vespers nine; Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white, Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

## PART II

[...11.83-94]

Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay, That made the breeze to blow! Nor dim nor red, like God's own head, The glorious Sun uprist:

Then all averred, I had killed the bird That brought the fog and mist. 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, The furrow followed free; We were the first that ever burst Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, 'Twas sad as sad could be; And we did speak only to break The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky, The bloody Sun, at noon, Right up above the mast did stand, No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day, We stuck, nor breath nor motion; As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, every where, Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ! That ever this should be! Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs Upon the slimy sea.

[... 11.127-38]

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks Had I from old and young! Instead of the cross, the Albatross About my neck was hung.

#### **PART III**

[...; 11.143-211]

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon, Too quick for groan or sigh, Each turned his face with a ghastly pang, And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men, (And I heard nor sigh nor groan) With heavy thump, a lifeless lump, They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,— They fled to bliss or woe! And every soul, it passed me by, Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

[...ll.142-215]

#### **PART IV**

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

'I fear thee and thy glittering eye, And thy skinny hand, so brown." — Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest! This body dropt not down.' Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone on a wide wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on: and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea, And drew my eyes away; I looked upon the rotting deck, And there the dead men lay.

[...; 11.244-271]

Beyond the shadow of the ship, I watched the water-snakes:

[...11.274-79]

They coiled and swam; and every track Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray; And from my neck so free The Albatross fell off, and sank Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing, Beloved from pole to pole! To Mary Queen the praise be given! She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, That slid into my soul.

[...; 11.297-327]

The loud wind never reached the ship, Yet now the ship moved on! Beneath the lightning and the Moon The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose, Nor spake, nor moved their eyes; It had been strange, even in a dream, To have seen those dead men rise. The helmsman steered, the ship moved on; Yet never a breeze up-blew; The mariners all 'gan work the ropes, Where they were wont to do; They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—We were a ghastly crew.

[...; 11.333-92]

How long in that same fit I lay, I have not to declare; But ere my living life returned, I heard and in my soul discerned Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man? By him who died on cross, With his cruel bow he laid full low The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself In the land of mist and snow, He loved the bird that loved the man Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice, As soft as honey-dew: Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done, And penance more will do.'

### PART VI

[...; 11.410-29]

I woke, and we were sailing on As in a gentle weather: 'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high; The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck, For a charnel-dungeon fitter: All fixed on me their stony eyes, That in the Moon did glitter.

[...; 11.438-42]

I viewed the ocean green, And looked far forth, yet little saw Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

[...; 11.452-99]

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, Yet she sailed softly too: Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze— On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed The light-house top I see? Is this the hill? is this the kirk? Is this mine own countree?

[...; 11.468-87]

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat, And, by the holy rood! A man all light, a seraph-man, On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand: It was a heavenly sight! They stood as signals to the land, Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand, No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

[...; 11.500-13]

PART VII

[...; 11.514-41]

The boat came closer to the ship, But I nor spake nor stirred; The boat came close beneath the ship, And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on, Still louder and more dread: It reached the ship, it split the bay; The ship went down like lead.

[...11.550-69]

And now, all in my own countree, I stood on the firm land!

[...; 11.573-81]

Since then, at an uncertain hour, That agony returns: And till my ghastly tale is told, This heart within me burns.

[...; 11.586-625 lines; 145 stanzas.]