

THE SEAFARER (end of the 10th century) – Part 1

This tale is true, and mine. It tells
How the sea took me, swept¹ me back
And forth²- in sorrow and fear and pain.
Showed me suffering in a hundred ships,
In a thousand ports, and in me. It tells
Of smashing surf³ when I sweated in the cold
Of an anxious watch,⁴ perched⁵ in the bow⁶
As it dashed⁷ under cliffs.⁸ My feet were cast⁹
In icy bands, bound with frost,
With frozen chains, and hardship groaned¹⁰
Around my heart. Hunger tore
At¹¹ my sea-weary soul.¹² No man sheltered
On the quiet fairness¹³ of earth can feel
How wretched¹⁴ I was, drifting¹⁵ through winter
On an ice-cold sea whirled¹⁶ in sorrow,
Alone in a world blown clear¹⁷ of love,
Hung with icicles.¹⁸ Is The hailstorms¹⁹ flew,
The only sound was the roaring sea,
The freezing waves. The song of the swan
Might serve for pleasure, the cry of the sea-fowl,²⁰
The death noise of birds instead of laughter,
The mewling²¹ of gulls²² instead of mead.²³
Storms beat on the rocky cliffs and were echoed
By icy-feathered terns²⁴ and the eagle's screams;
No kinsman could offer comfort there,
To a soul left drowning²⁵ in desolation.

1 **swept** : carried.

2 **Forth**: forward

3 **smashing surf**: breaking waves

4 **watch** : observation duties

5 **perched** : poised, balanced.

6 **bow [bau]** : the frontal part of a ship, shaped like a v.

7 **dashed**: flew.

8 **cliffs** : high rocks on the coast.

9 **cast** : (here) locked.

10 **groaned** : made a noise of lamentation

11 **tore at** : attacked.

12 **sea-weary** : tired of the sea.

13 **fairness** : beauty.

14 **wretched** ['retftd] miserable.

15 **drifting**: being carried by water.

16 **whirled**: rolling violently.

17 **blown clear**: (here) emptied.

18 **icicles**: frozen drops of water.

19 **hailstorms** : tempests of ice.

20 **sea-fowl** : seabirds.

21 **mewing** : crying.

22 **gulls** : seagulls, birds.

23 **mead [mi:d]**: alcoholic drink made of honey, spices and water.

24 **terns** : long-winged aquatic birds.

25 **drowning**: dying in water.

THE SEAFARER (Part 2)

<p>And who could believe, knowing but The passion of cities, swelled proud¹ with wine And no taste of misfortune, how often, how wearily², I put myself back on the paths of the sea. Night would blacken, it would snow from the north; Frost bound³ the earth and hail⁴ would fall, the coldest seeds. And how my heart Would begin to beat, knowing once more The salt wave tossing⁵ and the towering⁶ sea! The time for journeys would come and my soul Called me eagerly⁷ out, sent me over The horizon, seeking⁸ foreigners' homes. But there isn't a man on earth so proud, So born to greatness, so bold⁹ with his youth, Grown so brave, or so graced by God, That he feels no fear as the sails unfurl,¹⁰ Wondering what Fate has willed¹¹ and will do. No harp rings in his heart, no rewards, No passion for women, no worldly pleasures, Nothing, only the ocean's heave;¹² But longing¹³ wraps itself around him. Orchards¹⁴ blossom, the towns bloom,¹⁵ Fields grow lovely as the world springs fresh, And all these admonish the willing mind Leaping to¹⁶ journeys, always set In thoughts travelling on a quickening tide.¹⁷ So summer's sentinel, the cuckoo, sings In his murmuring voice, and our hearts mourn¹⁸ As he urges.¹⁹ Who could understand, In ignorant ease,²⁰ what we others suffer As the paths of exile stretch endlessly on?²¹ And yet my heart wanders²² away, My soul roams²³ with the sea, the whales' Home, wandering to the widest corners Of the world, returning ravenous with desire,²⁴ Flying solitary, screaming, exciting me To the open ocean, breaking oath²⁵ On the curve of a wave.</p>	<p>swelled proud : full of pride. wearily : tiredly. Frost bound : frozen. 4 hail : frozen rain. 5 tossing : moving in an agitated manner. 6 towering : enormous. 7 eagerly : enthusiastically. 8 seeking : searching for. 9 bold : courageous. 10 unfurl : unroll. 11 willed : decreed, decided. 12 heave : pushing motion. 13 longing : desire. 14 Orchards : groups of planted fruit trees. 15 bloom : flourish, prosper. 16 Leaping to : imagining, eagerly anticipating. 17 quickening tide : fast moving current. 18 mourn : lament. 19 urges : incites, beckons. 20 ease : comfort. 21 stretch endlessly on : continue without end. 22 wanders : moves without fixed destination. 23 roams : wanders, explores. 24 ravenous with desire : hungry with desire. 25 oaths : promises.</p>
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