

# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1798)

## PART I

An ancient Mariner  
meeteth three gallants  
bidden to a wedding feast,  
and detaineth one.

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

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,  
And I am next of kin;  
The guests are met, the feast is set:  
May'st hear the merry din.'

5

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
'There was a ship,' quoth he.  
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!  
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

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The Wedding-Guest is  
spell-bound by the eye of  
the old seafaring man,  
and constrained to hear  
his tale.

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

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

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'The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the  
ship sailed southward with  
a good wind and fair  
weather, till it reached the  
Line.

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.

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Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon——'  
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

30

The Wedding-Guest

The bride hath paced into the hall,

heareth the bridal music;  
but the Mariner continueth  
his tale.                      Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.                      35

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.                      40

The ship drawn by a  
storm toward the South  
Pole.                      '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 roar'd the blast,  
The southward aye we fled.                      45  
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And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of  
fearful sounds, where no  
living thing was to be  
seen.                      And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen:  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.                      55

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,  
Like noises in a swound!                      60

Till a great sea-bird,  
called the Albatross,  
came through the snow-  
fog, and was received  
with great joy and  
hospitality.                      At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hail'd it in God's name.                      65

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 steer'd us through!                      70

And lo! the Albatross  
proveth a bird of good  
omen, and followeth the  
ship as it returned  
northward through fog  
and floating ice.

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

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
It perch'd for vespers nine;  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmer'd the white moonshine.'

75

The ancient Mariner  
inhospitably killeth the  
pious bird of good omen.

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

80

## PART II

'The Sun now rose upon the right:  
Out of the sea came he,  
Still hid in mist, and on the left  
Went down into the sea.

85

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
But no sweet bird did follow,  
Nor any day for food or play  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

90

His shipmates cry out  
against the ancient  
Mariner for killing the bird  
of good luck.

And I had done an hellish thing,  
And it would work 'em woe:  
For all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!

95

But when the fog cleared  
off, they justify the same,  
and thus make  
themselves accomplices  
in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
The glorious Sun uprist:  
Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.

100

The fair breeze continues;  
the ship enters the Pacific  
Ocean, and sails  
northward, even till it  
reaches the Line.

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

105

The ship hath been

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,

suddenly becalmed. 'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea! 110

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, 115  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged. Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink; 120  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs 125  
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue, and white. 130

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, 135  
Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assuréd were  
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was wither'd at the root;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot. 135

The shipmates in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck. 140  
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

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.	'There passed a weary time. Each throat Was parch'd, and glazed each eye. A weary time! a weary time! How glazed each weary eye! When looking westward, I beheld A something in the sky.	145
	At first it seem'd a little speck, And then it seem'd a mist; It moved and moved, and took at last A certain shape, I wist.	150
	A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist! And still it near'd and near'd: As if it dodged a water-sprite, It plunged, and tack'd, and veer'd.	155
At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.	With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, We could nor laugh nor wail; Through utter drought all dumb we stood! I bit my arm, I suck'd the blood, And cried, A sail! a sail!	160
A flash of joy;	With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, Agape they heard me call: Gramercy! they for joy did grin, And all at once their breath drew in, As they were drinking all.	165
And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?	See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more! Hither to work us weal— Without a breeze, without a tide, She steadies with upright keel!	170
	The western wave was all aflame, The day was wellnigh done! Almost upon the western wave Rested the broad, bright Sun; When that strange shape drove suddenly Betwixt us and the Sun.	175
It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.	And straight the Sun was fleck'd with bars (Heaven's Mother send us grace!), As if through a dungeon-grate he peer'd With broad and burning face.	180