

Raven

(from the poem by Christina Rossetti)

“Croak, croak, croak,”
Thus the Raven spoke,
Perched on his crooked tree
As hoarse as hoarse could be.
Shun him and fear him,
Lest the bridegroom hear him;
Scout him and rout him
With his ominous eye about him.

Yet, “Croak, croak, croak,”
Still tolled from the oak;
From that fatal black bird,
Whether heard or unheard
“O ship upon the high seas,
Freighted with lives and spices,
Sink, o ship,” croaked the Raven:
“Let the Bride mount to Heaven”

In a far foreign land
Upon the wave-edged sand,
Some friends gaze wistfully
Across the glittering sea.
“If we could clasp our sister,”
Three say, “now we have missed her!”
“If we could kiss our daughter!”
Two sigh across the water.

Oh the ship sails fast
With silken flags at the mast,
And the home wind blows soft;
But a Raven sits aloft,
Chuckling and choking,
Croaking, croaking, croaking:-
Let the beacon-fire blaze higher;
Bridgroom, watch; the Bride draws nigher.

On a sloped sandy beach,
Which the spring-tide billows reach,
Stand a watchful throng
Who have hoped and waited long
“Fie on this ship that tarries
With the priceless freight it carries
The time seems long and longer:
O languid wind, wax stronger.”

A day and a night
They kept watch worn and white;
A night and a day
For the swift ship on its way:
For the Bride and her maidens
-- Clear chimes the bridal cadence --
For the tall ship that never
Hove in sight for ever.

Oh who knows the truth,
How she perished in her youth,
And like a queen went down
Pale in her royal crown:
How she went up to glory
From the sea-foam chill and hoary,
From the sea-depth black and riven
To the calm that is in Heaven.

They went down, all the crew,
The silks and spices too,
The great ones and the small,
One and all, one and all.
Was it thro' stress of weather,
Quicksands, rocks, or all together?
Only the Raven knows this,
And he will not disclose this. --

After a day and a year
The bridal bells chime clear;
After a year and a day
The Bridegroom is brave and gay:
Love is sound, faith is rotten;
The old Bride is forgotten: --
Two ominous Ravens only
Remember, black and lonely.