END OF AN ERA, LINGERING LOVERS OF BALEFUL BAY

In the Great Auk Inn at Keelsontown, The old salts toast the warlock winds Then tell their tales of love and sails And watch the birds dive down.

The sea still hums old threnodies For the green-eyed girl, Noreen, A clipper ship, the <u>Petrel</u>, And her captain caught between.

Their portraits hang above the bar; Men stare at hers and talk of him. The frames are carved from the <u>Petrel's</u> spar, Her binnacle brass as trim.

His name was Jason Wesley Woods; He owned that sailing ship. He ran her tight and record-fast, Her hold packed full of goods.

His name was soft as a sleeping surf But his will was anchor strong. Noreen was afraid of his fancy tongue And his eyes when he looked too long.

She fled, but he caught and kissed her well. "I've vowed to be rich," he said.
"I'll ply every port from here to hell,
But I must have you in my bed.

"You'll see a new world on your wedding trip, You'll get a new feel in your feet. You'll learn the ship with your ears and nails As you lean from the <u>Petrel</u>'s rails.

"Her teakwood is smooth and her ribs are sound, And she's soaked with a spicey smell. We'll take you and wake you to things unbelieved By folks who are tied to the ground.

"I'll teach you to handle both her and the crew, To respond to the wings of the sea With rhythm as heathen, caresses as light. I'll teach you to love only me." Noreen stayed long on the fog-struck beach With fringes of foam round her knees While staring for years at each square-rigged ship Slipping in on the morning breeze.

Her hope reached the depth of her scuttled pride. Then one day the <u>Petrel</u> returned. She barely believed her widened eyes As the crew came ashore for supplies.

None ever heard of an owner named Woods. She was bought from a Captain Quayle. One man remembered a rumor about A master who vanished-- a gale--

Noreen kept on swimming beyond the shoal, Her eyes on a distant gull Skimming and circling quicksilver patrol Over a half-sunken hull.

The ale is strong at the Great Auk Inn Like it was when canvas was king. The years wash back if you let time spin, And listen to figureheads sing.

The old sea dogs squint out at the bay Each dusk when the water looks brown, Then tell their tales of love and sails And watch the birds dive down.