

BY THE SEA

THE mariners sleep by the sea.
 The wild wind comes up from the sea,
 It wails round the tower and it blows through the grasses,
 And it scatters the sand o'er the graves where it passes,
 And the salt and the scent of the sea.

The white waves beat up from the shore,
 They beat on the church by the shore,
 They rush round the gravestones aslant to the leeward,
 And the wall and the mariners' graves lying seaward,
 That are banked with the stones from the shore.

For the huge sea comes up in the storm,
 Like a beast from the lair of the storm,
 To claim with its ravenous leap, and to mingle
 The mariners' bones with the surf and the shingle
 That it rolls round the shore in the storm.

There is nothing beyond but the sky,
 But the sea and the slow-moving sky,
 Where a cloud from the grey lifts the gleam of its edges,
 Where the foam flashes white from the shouldering ridges,
 As they crowd on the uttermost sky.

The mariners sleep by the sea.
 Far away there's a shrine by the sea ;
 The pale women climb up the path to it slowly
 To pray to Our Lady of Storms ere they wholly
 Despair of their men from the sea.

The

The children at play on the sand,
Where once from the shell-broidered sand
They would watch for the sails coming in from far places,
Are forgetting the ships and forgetting the faces
Lying here, lying hid in the sand.

When at night there's a seething of surf,
The grandames look out o'er the surf,
They reckon their dead and their long years of sadness,
And they shake their lean fists at the sea and its madness,
And curse the white fangs of the surf.

But the mariners sleep by the sea.
They hear not the sound of the sea,
Nor the hum from the church when the psalm is uplifted,
Nor the crying of birds that above them are drifted.
The mariners sleep by the sea.

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