

The Whaleboat Essex

One moon bright night way out on the sea
With the stars and the sky all clear
With our holds all full, to the sound of a gull
Homeward bound we steered
A bonus to come, asleep with the rum
I dreamed a most terrible tale
And my thoughts went away to some friends far away
Who like me had gone hunting the whale.

A silence was heard as around went the word
And the news went man to man
And those of us working the decks were struck dumb
By the news from Whaler Town
Some men grieved, some disbelieved
Such a fearful a fish was found
It had taken but two of the lives of the crew
When the whaler boat Essex went down

*So lads think twice, take my advice
Don't go to Whaler Town
Don't hunt the whale, take heed the tale
How the whale boat Essex went down.*

Their morning broke with a cry 'Theres a whale'
To your boats be as quick as you like
And the oars sped along with a chase and a song
And the harpooneer's strike
The lance goes in but the whale won't give in
Each strike makes him more bold
Till his breath in a rush through his spout he did push
Made the whalermen's blood run cold

The whale turned around and he made not a sound
And silence fell on the view
Then like the devil hell bent, he screamed as he went
With his evil eye on the crew
He smashed the ships side with his head and they cried
Such a sight they'd never seen
They were all full of fear and they prayed not to die
As he struck them again and again

Some say it was vengeance but none really knew
Why those whale men were scattered and slain
But he smashed with his head till the sea turned red
And none of the Essex remained
Some died by his jaw some died by his tail
And some by the sharks as they raved
But a few who survived, took to a small boat
In the hope that they might be saved

The heat of the day and the cold bitter night
Took its toll on every man
They knew by the stars they'd gone too far
Where a boat might rescue them
No water no bread starvation ahead
So hungry they were to survive
They would plunder they said their comrades dead,
And asked God what he would provide

After weeks some died but some were to live
By the grace of their comrades alone
As shipmates one by one fell asleep
The ungodly butchered their bones
Till a ship on the wings of an angel it came
And those who were found to a've survived
Why they were carried on board clinging to their lives
With a deathly stare in their eyes

And I couldn't stop thinking of ghosts and bones
As our ship ploughed home on the sea
That they were scattered and lost all over the main
Brought this hard old sailor to tears
And the old yellow sun, set in the mist
Made the sea on our bow turn gold
I swore that I'd not go whaling again
And go to sea no more.

Words & Music Richard Grainger 2005

