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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

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We, the authors of this small book of poems, wish to say a few words to the reader before the poems begin. These poems were written as an experiment. We wished to learn whether the language used by ordinary men and women might also serve the purposes of poetry. Many poems of our time use grand phrases and artificial expressions. We wished instead to try a simpler path.

In common life we often see strong emotions. We see love between parents and children, kindness between neighbours, sorrow among the poor, and joy in the presence of nature. Such feelings belong to all human beings. Yet poetry has sometimes turned away from them, choosing subjects that are distant from daily experience. We believe that this is a mistake.

Therefore many of the poems in this book describe humble people and ordinary events. A poor woman gathering firewood, a shepherd with his flock, a child speaking with simple honesty, or a lonely traveller walking beside a river—these are not small subjects. They show the true passions of the human heart.

In writing these poems we have tried to use language close to that of conversation. We do not mean careless language, but words that men and women might truly speak. The feelings we describe are serious, and we hope that clear and simple speech may show them with greater truth.

Some readers may at first find this style strange. They may look for ornaments that they are used to hearing in poetry. But we ask such readers to consider whether the poems describe real human life. If they do, perhaps the reader may discover that poetry can live even in the simplest words.

We also believe that nature has great power over the human mind. Mountains, rivers, forests, and quiet fields do not merely please the eye. They shape our thoughts and calm our spirits. Many of the following poems therefore take place in lonely valleys, beside lakes, in woods, or on open hills. In such places the mind

often becomes more gentle and thoughtful.

Some of the poems are stories drawn from real events. Others are inventions, though even these attempt to remain faithful to the feelings of real life. A few poems speak in the voice of characters rather than in the voice of the author. When this happens, the reader should remember that the speaker is not always the poet himself.

One poem in this book, “The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere,” was written in imitation of older English poetry. Its language sometimes follows the manner of ancient ballads. Yet we hope that the meaning of the tale remains clear to modern readers.

We do not pretend that every line in this book will please every reader. Poetry, like all art, requires careful reading and patient thought. A person who spends time with the best writings of the past will slowly learn to judge what is beautiful and what is false.

Still, we do not wish to frighten away readers who have little experience with poetry. Anyone may judge for himself whether these poems speak truthfully about human life. If the reader finds in them some natural image of human feeling, then our purpose will be satisfied.

We offer these poems with hope but also with modesty. If they succeed, they may show that poetry does not depend on rich language alone. It may also grow from simple words, spoken honestly, about the lives of ordinary people.

With this hope we place the poems before you.

[The original work is a collection of poems, but this Simplified Edition retells them as prose stories.]

The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere

Part 1

It was the day of a wedding. The doors of the hall stood open, and guests walked in and out with cheerful voices. Music sounded from within, and laughter rose into the air. Outside the hall, three young men were walking together toward the celebration.

Suddenly an old sailor stepped forward and stopped one of them.

The man was strange to look at. His beard was long and grey, and his skin was brown from sun and wind. But the most striking thing about him was his eye. It shone with a bright and steady light, and when he looked at someone, that person could not easily turn away.

The young man tried to move past him.

“Why do you stop me?” the young guest said. “The wedding feast has begun. The bride and groom are waiting. I must go inside.”

The old sailor lifted one thin hand and held the young man by the arm.

“Listen to me,” he said quietly. “I have a story to tell.”

The wedding guest laughed with impatience.

“Your tale must wait,” he said. “The musicians have begun to play. I hear the sound of the instruments. My friends are already inside.”

But the old sailor did not release him.

The guest tried to pull his arm free. Then the sailor raised his shining eye and fixed it upon him.

At once the young man became still.

It was as if an invisible force held him in place. The noise of the wedding faded in his ears. The music and laughter seemed far away.

Slowly he sat down upon a stone beside the road.

“Very well,” he said. “Speak, old sailor. I will hear your story.”

The sailor nodded once.

“Long ago,” he began, “I sailed upon a ship. It was a strong vessel with a brave crew. We left our harbor with good hopes and fair weather.”

The old man paused, as if seeing the past before his eyes.

“The harbor lay behind us,” he continued. “The hills grew smaller as we sailed out into the open sea. The church tower, the lighthouse, and the houses along the shore slowly disappeared.”

The wedding guest listened in silence.

“At first our voyage was pleasant,” the mariner said. “The sun rose from the sea each morning and shone brightly upon our sails. The wind pushed us steadily forward. The sailors laughed and sang as they worked.”

The old sailor moved his hand slowly, as if tracing the movement of the ship across the water.

“Each day the sun climbed higher in the sky,” he said. “At noon it stood directly above our mast. At evening it sank again into the sea.”

The wedding guest heard faint music from the wedding hall.

He shifted slightly, remembering where he was.

“The bride must have entered the hall by now,” he thought.

But the sailor’s voice held him still.

“Our voyage continued southward,” the mariner said. “The wind grew stronger. Dark clouds gathered above us. Soon the sea rose in great waves.”

His voice deepened.

“A terrible storm came.”

The wedding guest leaned forward.

“The wind roared like a wild animal,” the old sailor said. “It drove our ship forward day and night. The waves struck the sides of the vessel again and again. We were pushed farther and farther from the lands we knew.”

The sailors fought to control the ship.

“For many days the storm drove us onward,” the mariner continued. “We could not choose our path. The wind forced us into distant seas.”

At last the storm ended.

But when the clouds cleared, the sailors saw something strange.

The sea around them had grown cold and grey.

Before them floated huge mountains of ice.

The wedding guest shivered.

The old sailor spoke slowly.

“We had reached a frozen world.”

Ice surrounded the ship on every side. Great white cliffs of frozen water rose from the sea. Some of the ice shone green like glass. Some cracked and groaned with terrible sounds.

The sailors looked around with fear.

“We saw no birds,” the mariner said. “No fish. No living thing. Only ice and snow.”

The ship moved carefully between the drifting mountains of ice.

Strange noises echoed across the frozen sea.

The ice cracked.

It roared.

It groaned like a living creature.

The wedding guest felt a chill run through him.

“Then,” the old sailor said softly, “something appeared in the mist.”

Out of the fog a great white bird flew toward the ship.

It was an albatross.

The sailors cried out with joy.

“A bird!” they shouted. “A living creature!”

They welcomed it gladly.

The bird circled the ship and landed upon the mast. The sailors gave it food, and it ate from their hands.

Soon after the bird appeared, the ice began to break.

A strong wind rose behind the ship and pushed it out of the frozen sea.

The sailors believed the bird had brought them good fortune.

Every day the albatross followed the ship.

It flew beside the sails.
It perched upon the ropes at night.
The sailors spoke to it kindly.
They believed it was a blessing sent by heaven.
The old sailor fell silent.
His bright eye darkened.
The wedding guest waited.
At last the mariner spoke again.
“But one day,” he said quietly, “I did a terrible thing.”
The old man lifted his hand slowly.
“With my crossbow,” he said, “I shot the albatross.”

Part 2

The wedding guest stared at the old sailor with wide eyes.
“You killed the bird?” he said.
The mariner nodded slowly.
“Yes,” he replied. “I killed the albatross.”
For a moment neither of them spoke. The sound of music from the wedding hall drifted faintly through the evening air. Yet the young man felt as if he were far away from the celebration, sitting beside the dark sea of the sailor’s memory.
The old mariner continued his tale.
“After I shot the bird, the ship still moved forward across the wide ocean. At first nothing seemed to change. The wind continued to blow behind us, and the sails were full.”
The sailors looked at the dead bird lying upon the deck.
Some of them spoke with anger.
“Why did you kill it?” they asked. “That bird helped us. It came when we were trapped among the ice.”
The mariner lowered his head.
“They said I had done a cruel and foolish thing,” he said. “They believed the

bird had brought the wind that freed us from the frozen sea.”

For a time the sailors looked at him with dark and angry eyes.

But soon the weather changed.

The fog that had surrounded the ship began to disappear. The sky grew bright and clear. The sun rose high and warm above the sea.

The sailors began to speak differently.

“Perhaps the bird had brought the fog and mist,” some of them said. “If that is true, the mariner did well to kill it.”

The men argued among themselves.

Some blamed the mariner.

Others defended him.

The wedding guest listened closely.

“But the sea had already begun to change,” the mariner said quietly.

The strong wind that had carried the ship forward slowly began to fade.

At first the sailors did not notice.

The sails still moved gently.

The ship continued across the water.

But soon the wind disappeared completely.

The sails hung loose.

The ship stopped.

The ocean stretched around them in every direction.

No wave moved.

No wind blew.

The ship lay silent upon the water as if painted upon a picture.

“Day after day we remained there,” the mariner said. “The sun burned above us, and the sea did not move.”

The sailors looked out over the endless water.

There was water everywhere.

Yet none of it could be drunk.

Their fresh water slowly ran out.

Their tongues became dry.

Their lips cracked in the heat.
The wedding guest leaned forward, troubled.
“Could you not sail away?” he asked.
The mariner shook his head.
“There was no wind,” he said. “Without wind a sailing ship cannot move.”
The sun rose each morning into a cloudless sky.
At noon it stood above the mast like a burning eye.
The sailors felt its heat upon their backs and faces.
Day after day the ship remained still.
The ocean around them began to change in strange ways.
Slimy creatures floated in the water.
Some moved slowly with twisting legs.
At night strange lights danced upon the sea.
The water glowed with green and blue flames.
The sailors watched these sights with fear.
Their thirst grew worse.
Soon they could hardly speak.
Their tongues were dry in their mouths.
Their lips were black and cracked.
The mariner paused again.
“Then the sailors began to blame me,” he said.
The crew looked at the man who had killed the bird.
Their eyes were full of anger.
Slowly they took the dead albatross.
Instead of hanging a cross upon the mariner’s neck for prayer, they tied the dead
bird around his shoulders.
The wedding guest shuddered.
“They made me carry the bird,” the mariner said. “It hung around my neck as
a sign of my crime.”
The sailors believed the bird’s death had brought their suffering.
And as the days passed, their anger grew stronger.

The sun burned above them.

The sea remained still.

And the mariner walked the deck with the heavy bird hanging upon his chest.

“We were alone upon that silent ocean,” the old sailor said.

His voice fell almost to a whisper.

“But our worst fear had not yet come.”

The wedding guest felt a chill.

“What happened next?” he asked.

The mariner lifted his bright eye and looked toward the dark horizon of memory.

“One day,” he said slowly, “we saw something far away upon the sea.”

At first it looked no larger than a small cloud.

Then it grew slowly larger.

The sailors stared at it with hope.

“A ship!” someone cried.

The mariner shook his head.

“Yes,” he said. “A ship.”

His voice became low and fearful.

“But it was no ship of living men.”

Part 3

The strange shape upon the sea moved slowly toward the silent ship.

At first the sailors believed it was their salvation. Their dry lips opened in hope, and their eyes shone with sudden life.

“A ship!” one of them whispered.

They watched it carefully as it drew nearer across the still ocean.

But something about its movement seemed strange.

There was no wind.

Yet the distant vessel moved steadily forward.

The mariner remembered the moment clearly.

“The sun was sinking toward the west,” he said. “Its light shone red across the

sea. The strange ship moved between us and the sun.”

For a moment the sailors could not see it clearly. The bright light behind it made the shape dark and uncertain.

Then the vessel came closer.

The mariner’s voice grew quiet.

“It was not a ship of the living.”

The wedding guest leaned forward in fear.

The mariner continued.

“Its sails looked thin like spider webs. Its wooden ribs were bare like the bones of a skeleton.”

The sailors felt cold terror.

Two figures stood upon the deck of the strange vessel.

One was a woman.

Her skin was pale like death. Her lips were red, and her hair shone yellow in the fading light. Her eyes were bright and cruel.

Beside her stood another shape.

It was not truly a man.

Its body was thin and dark, like the bones of a corpse. Its empty eyes seemed to stare through the world itself.

The mariner spoke slowly.

“The woman was called Life-in-Death.”

The wedding guest felt his heart beat faster.

“And the other figure,” the mariner said, “was Death.”

The two terrible beings sat together upon the deck.

Between them lay a pair of dice.

They were playing a game.

The sailors watched in silent horror.

The woman threw the dice upon the deck.

Then she cried out with a terrible voice.

“The game is finished. I have won.”

The moment she spoke those words, the ghostly ship moved past the mariner’s

vessel and vanished into the darkening sea.

The sun disappeared below the horizon.

Night fell suddenly.

The moon rose into the sky, pale and cold.

Under its light the sailors stood upon the deck.

They turned their faces toward the mariner.

The wedding guest whispered, "What did they do?"

The mariner's voice trembled slightly.

"They looked at me," he said.

One by one the sailors turned their eyes upon the man who had killed the albatross.

Their faces were pale.

Their lips were dry.

And in each pair of eyes burned a silent curse.

Then something terrible happened.

One after another the sailors fell to the deck.

No cry escaped them.

No groan.

Their bodies struck the wood with a heavy sound.

One by one they died.

Two hundred men lay motionless upon the deck of the silent ship.

The mariner alone remained alive.

The wedding guest covered his face.

"All of them died?" he asked.

The mariner nodded slowly.

"Yes. All of them."

The night wind passed over the still ocean.

The mariner stood alone among the dead.

Yet something even more terrible remained.

"Their eyes," the mariner whispered.

The wedding guest looked up.

“Their eyes remained open,” the old sailor said. “Each one looked at me as he died.”

The mariner shivered slightly as he spoke.

“Their bodies lay upon the deck,” he continued. “But their eyes did not change.”

The silent accusation in those dead faces followed him everywhere.

He tried to look away.

But the memory of their gaze burned within his mind.

“Seven days and seven nights I remained alone upon that ship,” the mariner said.

The sea stretched endlessly around him.

The dead sailors lay where they had fallen.

The moon rose and sank.

The stars moved across the sky.

Yet the mariner could not die.

“I tried to pray,” he said softly.

But whenever he lifted his thoughts toward heaven, his heart felt empty and dry.

No prayer would come.

The dead men’s eyes seemed to watch him from every side.

The wedding guest sat silent, deeply troubled.

The mariner continued.

“One night the moon rose softly into the sky,” he said.

The ocean glowed beneath its light.

The mariner looked down into the water beside the ship.

There he saw strange creatures moving through the sea.

They were long water-snakes.

Their bodies shone with beautiful colors—blue, green, and shining gold.

They twisted and swam through the glowing water, leaving trails of light behind them.

The mariner watched them for a long time.

Something in their movement filled his heart with wonder.

Without thinking, he spoke aloud.

“Beautiful creatures,” he said.

And suddenly, deep within his heart, he felt love for them.

The moment that feeling came, something changed.

The mariner raised his hands.

At last he could pray.

As he prayed, the heavy weight around his neck suddenly loosened.

The dead albatross slipped from his shoulders.

It fell quietly into the sea.

And the long punishment of the mariner had truly begun.

Part 4

When the dead albatross fell into the sea, the mariner felt a strange change within his heart.

For many days he had been unable to pray. His mind had been dry and empty, and every thought had seemed heavy with guilt and fear. But now, after he had blessed the shining creatures of the sea, the power of prayer returned to him.

The wedding guest listened closely.

The mariner continued.

“That night,” he said, “I felt sleep come gently over me.”

It had been a long time since he had slept. His body was weak from thirst and sorrow. Yet now his eyes slowly closed, and he rested at last.

While he slept, rain began to fall.

When the mariner awoke, he felt cool drops upon his face.

His lips were wet.

His throat was no longer dry.

He lifted his hands and caught the falling rain.

The fresh water revived him.

The wedding guest breathed with relief.

“So the rain saved you,” he said.

The mariner nodded.

“Yes,” he replied. “The rain saved my life.”
Yet the ship itself remained still.
The sails hung loose upon the masts.
The dead sailors lay where they had fallen.
The ocean stretched silent around the lonely vessel.
Then something strange happened.
Dark clouds gathered in the sky. Lightning flashed across the heavens, and
thunder rolled far away over the sea.
Yet the wind did not blow.
The mariner heard a sound above him.
It was not thunder.
It was something else.
He looked up.
A strange light moved across the sky, like banners of fire dancing among the
clouds.
Soon the sails began to stir.
A faint wind touched them.
The ship trembled.
Then slowly it began to move.
The mariner stared in wonder.
No sailor stood at the ropes.
Yet the ship sailed forward across the sea.
The wedding guest whispered, “Who guided it?”
The mariner answered quietly.
“Not living men.”
As the lightning flashed across the sky, the mariner saw something terrible.
The dead sailors were rising.
One by one they stood up from the deck.
Their faces were pale and empty.
Their eyes did not move.
They spoke no word.

Yet their bodies began to work.
They climbed the ropes.
They pulled the sails.
They steered the ship.
The mariner watched them with horror.
“They moved like lifeless tools,” he said. “Their bodies obeyed some hidden power.”

One of the corpses stood beside him and pulled a rope with silent strength.

The mariner trembled.

The body belonged to the son of the mariner’s own brother.

Yet the dead man did not look at him.

He said nothing.

He simply worked.

The ship sailed forward through the dark sea.

As dawn came, the strange work of the dead men ended.

They dropped their arms.

They gathered silently around the mast.

Then something even stranger happened.

Soft sounds began to rise from their mouths.

It was not speech.

It was music.

The sounds floated gently into the air like songs of birds.

Some were like the call of a lark in the morning sky.

Some were like the sweet song of small birds in a forest.

The mariner listened in amazement.

“It was as if angels were singing through their bodies,” he said.

The music filled the air around the ship.

Then slowly the sounds faded.

The wind died again.

The sails became still.

The ship stopped upon the quiet sea.

At that moment the mariner heard voices above him in the air.
They were not human voices.
They seemed to come from spirits unseen.
One voice spoke with stern authority.
“Is this the man who killed the albatross?”
Another voice answered gently.
“Yes. But he has begun his penance.”
The wedding guest shivered.
“What did they mean?” he asked.
The mariner looked at him with his shining eye.
“They meant that my punishment was not finished.”
The voices continued their strange conversation in the sky.
They spoke of the spirit of the sea.
They spoke of the bird that had loved the sailors.
And they spoke of the long suffering that still waited for the man who had killed it.
When the voices faded, the mariner fell into a deep and troubled sleep.
The ship began to move once more.
But this time the mariner did not know who guided it across the silent ocean.

Part 5

The mariner lay upon the deck as if in a deep dream.
He did not know how long he slept. The ship moved quietly across the sea, though no wind could be felt. The sails hung almost still, yet the vessel glided forward as if some hidden power pushed it from beneath the water.
When at last the mariner opened his eyes, the moon stood high in the sky.
Its pale light shone across the silent ocean.
Around him the dead sailors still stood upon the deck.
They were gathered near the mast, motionless and silent, like statues carved from stone.

Their eyes remained fixed upon him.
For a moment the mariner could not move.
The memory of their terrible gaze returned to his mind.
But soon something within him changed.
Slowly he lifted his head.
This time he was able to look away from the dead men's faces.
His eyes turned toward the dark horizon.
He saw little at first—only the wide ocean stretching under the moon.
Yet he felt a strange movement of air against his cheek.
A soft breeze touched his face.
The mariner raised his hand.
“It was a gentle wind,” he said. “But it seemed to blow only for me.”
The sails above him stirred faintly.
The ship moved more quickly across the water.
The breeze felt cool and pleasant, like the wind of spring across a quiet meadow.
For the first time since the terrible events began, the mariner felt a small sense of hope.

The wedding guest listened closely.
“Did the ship finally return home?” he asked.
The mariner nodded slowly.
“Yes,” he said. “At last I began to see signs of land.”
The night passed quietly.
When dawn came, the mariner looked toward the distant horizon.
At first he saw only the pale light of morning.
Then, far away, something appeared.
A dark shape rose above the sea.
It was a hill.
The mariner's heart beat faster.
Soon he saw more shapes.
A church tower stood upon the hill.
Nearby rose the roof of a small building.

It was the lighthouse that guarded the harbor of his homeland.
Tears filled the mariner's eyes.
"Is it truly my country?" he whispered.
The ship moved closer.
The harbor appeared before him.
The water there was calm and clear, shining like glass beneath the light of the moon.
The mariner fell to his knees and prayed.
"O God," he said, "let me live to reach the shore."
But as the ship drifted quietly into the harbor, something strange began to happen again.
The mariner saw shapes rising from the water.
They looked like shadows glowing with faint red light.
Slowly the shapes moved toward the ship.
The mariner watched them with wonder and fear.
Soon he understood what they were.
Each glowing shape stood beside the body of a dead sailor.
The shapes were spirits.
They shone softly like small flames in the night.
The mariner realized that these were heavenly spirits sent to guide the ship home.
One spirit stood beside each dead body.
The spirits lifted their arms slowly.
Their hands shone like torches in the darkness.
The mariner felt a deep peace fill his heart.
Though they spoke no words, the silent presence of the spirits felt kind and gentle.
Their quiet light seemed like music to his soul.
At that moment he heard a sound from across the harbor.
The splash of oars.
Voices calling across the water.

A small boat was approaching the ship.
In the boat were three men.
The pilot who guided ships into the harbor.
The pilot's young son.
And a holy hermit who lived alone in the woods near the sea.
The hermit was known as a wise and gentle man.
He often spoke with sailors who returned from distant voyages.
"He will hear my confession," the mariner said softly.
The small boat drew nearer to the silent ship.
But just as it reached the vessel, a terrible sound rose from beneath the water.
It was a deep, rumbling noise.
The sea itself seemed to groan.
The mariner cried out in fear.
Suddenly the great ship began to sink.
The wood of the vessel split with a loud crash.
In a moment the ship disappeared beneath the waves.
The mariner was thrown into the dark water.
For an instant he thought he would drown.
But the next moment he found himself inside the small pilot's boat.
The wedding guest stared in amazement.
"How did you escape?" he asked.
The mariner answered quietly.
"The sea released me."
The small boat spun wildly upon the water where the great ship had sunk.
The pilot looked at the mariner with terror.
When the old sailor tried to speak, the pilot cried out in fear and fainted.
The pilot's son laughed wildly.
"Look!" the boy shouted. "The devil himself knows how to row a boat!"
But the hermit remained calm.
He lifted his eyes toward the mariner and prayed.
Soon the boat reached the shore.

The mariner stepped onto the land of his homeland.
But the strange punishment of his crime was not yet finished.

Part 6

When the mariner stepped onto the land of his own country, his body trembled with exhaustion.

The long and terrible voyage had ended, yet his heart still felt heavy with the memory of what he had done. The hermit stood beside him upon the shore, watching him carefully.

The pilot's boat rocked gently behind them.

The pilot himself had now awakened, though fear still filled his eyes. He stared at the strange sailor who had appeared from the sinking ship.

The hermit spoke first.

"Who are you?" he asked quietly. "What manner of man stands before me?"

At those words a sudden pain seized the mariner.

His whole body shook.

It felt as if a powerful force inside him demanded to be released.

The mariner clutched his chest.

Then the words burst from him.

He began to tell his story.

Every terrible moment returned to his mind—the voyage, the ice, the albatross, the silent sea, the dying sailors.

The hermit listened in silence.

The mariner spoke until the entire tale had been told.

When the story ended, the strange pain left him.

His body became calm again.

But from that day forward, the mariner discovered something strange about himself.

At certain times the same painful feeling would return.

It came without warning.

His heart would grow heavy, and his spirit would feel restless.
The only way to release that pain was to tell his story again.
The wedding guest listened with deep attention.
The mariner continued.
“Since that day,” he said, “I have traveled from land to land.”
He walked along roads and across fields.
He visited towns and villages.
Among the many faces he saw, there was always one person who seemed
chosen to hear his tale.
“When I see that person,” the mariner said, “I know at once.”
The strange power inside him tells him who must listen.
When the moment comes, he stops the chosen person and begins his story.
Only after he has spoken the whole tale does the painful feeling leave him.
The wedding guest suddenly felt uneasy.
The mariner’s bright eye rested upon him.
The old sailor smiled faintly.
“Yes,” he said, “you were chosen tonight.”
From the wedding hall behind them came the sound of joyful voices.
The celebration was continuing.
Music filled the air.
The bride and her friends were singing in the garden near the hall.
The mariner listened to the distant song for a moment.
Then he spoke again.
“Long ago,” he said, “I learned a great lesson upon the sea.”
The wedding guest waited.
The old sailor’s voice became calm and gentle.
“The lesson is simple,” he said.
The mariner lifted his eyes toward the quiet sky.
“All living things belong to the same creation.”
The sea creatures, the birds, the animals of the earth, and human beings—all
are part of the same world made by God.

To harm them without reason is a terrible sin.
To love them is to honor their Creator.
The wedding guest listened silently.
The mariner spoke the final words of his lesson.
“He who prays well,” he said, “is the man who loves well.”
The old sailor continued.
“He loves both man and bird and beast.”
The quiet road seemed very still.
The wedding guest felt the truth of the words settle deeply within him.
The mariner lowered his voice.
“The God who made all things loves all things.”
The old sailor turned away.
Without another word he walked slowly down the road and disappeared into the darkness.
The wedding guest remained standing beside the quiet path.
The joyful sounds of the wedding still echoed from the hall.
Yet he did not return to the celebration.
Slowly he turned away from the door of the feast.
The strange tale had changed him.
When morning came the next day, the wedding guest rose from his sleep a sadder and a wiser man.

Part 7

The wedding guest remained standing on the quiet road long after the old mariner had disappeared into the darkness.

From the nearby hall came the cheerful sounds of the wedding feast. Laughter echoed from the open doors, and music rose into the night air. The bride and her companions were still singing in the garden.

Yet the young man did not return to the celebration.

The story he had just heard weighed heavily upon his mind.

He remembered the old sailor's shining eye and the strange power that had held him still. More than that, he remembered the terrible voyage—the frozen sea, the lonely ship, the dying sailors, and the endless punishment that followed one careless act.

Slowly he began to understand.

The mariner had not stopped him by chance.

Something in the sailor's heart had known that this young man must hear the story.

The wedding guest walked a few steps along the road and then sat down quietly upon the same stone where he had listened before.

The night air felt cool and calm.

Above him the stars shone softly.

His thoughts returned to the mariner's final words.

"He prayeth well who loveth well," the sailor had said.

The wedding guest repeated the words softly to himself.

He thought of the lonely ship upon the silent sea.

He thought of the albatross that had followed the sailors in friendship.

He thought of the terrible moment when the mariner had raised his crossbow and killed the harmless bird.

Such a small act had brought such terrible suffering.

The young man understood now that the story was not only about a sailor's voyage. It was about the deep connection between all living things.

The mariner had learned that lesson through pain.

The wedding guest had learned it through listening.

For a long time he remained silent beside the road.

At last the sounds of the wedding grew quieter. Some of the guests had begun to leave the hall. The music faded slowly into the distance.

But the young man did not move.

He felt that something within him had changed.

Before that night he had come eagerly to the wedding feast, thinking only of joy and celebration. Now his thoughts had become more serious.

The wide world seemed different to him.

The creatures of the earth—the birds, the animals, the living things of sea and sky—were no longer small or unimportant.

They were part of the same great life that surrounded all human beings.

The wedding guest finally rose from the stone.

He turned once toward the distant road where the mariner had walked away.

The old sailor was gone.

Yet his story would not be forgotten.

The young man returned slowly toward the village.

He did not enter the wedding hall again.

Instead he walked quietly to his home.

When the morning sun rose the next day, the wedding guest awakened from his sleep.

The bright light of dawn filled the room.

Outside he heard birds singing in the trees.

Their voices sounded clearer than they had ever sounded before.

The young man listened carefully.

The memory of the mariner's tale returned to him.

And as he rose to begin the new day, he felt that he was no longer the same careless guest who had walked toward the wedding feast the night before.

He had become, as the old sailor had said,
a sadder and a wiser man.

The Foster-Mother's Tale

One evening a young woman named Maria came to visit an old woman who lived near a quiet country road. The old woman was known in the village as a kind and faithful foster-mother. Many years earlier she had cared for children who did not belong to her, raising them with patience and affection.

Maria greeted the old woman warmly.

"Mother," she said gently, "I have come because a strange thing has happened."

The foster-mother looked at her with concern.

"What troubles you, my child?" she asked.

Maria hesitated for a moment before answering.

"A man came to see me today," she said. "He spoke of you as if he knew you well. He said you had once cared for both me and my brother Albert when we were children."

The old woman shook her head slowly.

"I do not remember such a man," she said.

Then she smiled softly.

"Yet anyone who speaks kindly of those old days is welcome in my thoughts. I remember you and Albert well. When you were small children, you would stand beside my chair in the evening and tell me everything you had learned that day."

Maria smiled faintly at the memory.

"You taught us many things," she said.

The old woman nodded.

"Those were happy times," she replied. "Sometimes you would ask me to sing, and sometimes you would try to teach me the polite way of speaking that you had learned from your tutors."

For a moment both women remained silent.

Then Maria spoke again.

"But the man who came today left me uneasy," she said. "He told me a strange story. It sounded almost like a dream."

The foster-mother's face grew serious.

“What kind of story?” she asked.

Maria looked around to make sure no one else was near.

“He said that you knew the story well,” she answered.

The old woman lowered her voice.

“Then perhaps it is the tale my husband’s father once told me,” she said.

Maria leaned closer.

“Tell it to me,” she said.

The old woman nodded slowly and began her story.

“Long ago,” she said, “my husband’s father was a woodcutter who worked in the forest near the old chapel. One day, while he was cutting trees, he discovered something very strange.”

Maria listened carefully.

“Beneath a large tree,” the old woman continued, “he found a baby.”

The child had been wrapped in moss and soft wool. The strange covering looked as though it had been made by nature itself.

The woodcutter was astonished.

“Who could have left a child alone in the forest?” he wondered.

He carried the baby home.

Soon the lord of the nearby castle agreed to pay for the child’s care, and the boy was raised in the household.

The child grew into a handsome young boy.

But he was very unusual.

“He did not behave like other children,” the foster-mother explained.

The boy had little interest in ordinary lessons.

He refused to learn prayers.

Yet he loved the sounds of nature.

He knew the names of many birds and could imitate their songs perfectly. When autumn came, he gathered seeds from wild plants and planted them carefully among the old tree stumps in the forest.

Maria listened with growing curiosity.

“Did he ever learn to read?” she asked.

The old woman nodded.

“Yes,” she said. “A grey-haired friar who lived near the forest took a liking to the boy. The friar taught him to read and write.”

The boy proved to be very intelligent.

Soon he spent much of his time at the castle or at the friar’s convent.

As he grew older, his learning increased greatly.

But something in his mind began to change.

“He read too many books,” the foster-mother said quietly. “And he thought too deeply about things that troubled his mind.”

The young man began to question the beliefs that others held sacred.

He spoke boldly about his ideas.

Some people admired his cleverness.

Others feared him.

One day he stood beside the lord of the castle near the old chapel wall.

The two men were speaking seriously when the earth suddenly shook beneath them.

The ground trembled with a deep groan.

The chapel wall nearly fell upon them.

The lord became terrified.

Soon afterward he fell ill with fever.

During his sickness he confessed many troubling thoughts.

He believed the strange ideas of the young man had angered heaven.

As a result the young man was seized and imprisoned in a dark underground cell.

The foster-mother paused.

Maria’s eyes were wide with interest.

“What happened to him?” she asked.

The old woman sighed.

“My husband’s father loved the young man like a son,” she said.

One night he heard the prisoner singing from the underground cell.

The song was full of longing.

The young man sang of wide open lands, of forests and rivers, and of a life lived freely in nature.

The old woodcutter's heart could not bear the sound.

At great risk he secretly opened a hidden passage that led into the prison.

Through that passage the young man escaped.

"And after that?" Maria asked eagerly.

The foster-mother continued.

"The young man soon joined a group of explorers sailing to the newly discovered lands across the ocean."

The old woodcutter's younger brother sailed with him.

Years later that brother returned to Spain and told the rest of the story.

Soon after reaching the new world, the strange young man took a small boat and sailed alone up a great river.

The river was so wide that it looked like a sea.

He disappeared into the wilderness.

No one ever saw him again.

The foster-mother finished her tale.

The room fell silent.

Maria thought for a long time about the mysterious young man who had vanished into the unknown lands.

At last she spoke softly.

"It is a sad and beautiful story," she said.

The old woman nodded.

"Yes," she replied quietly.

"And perhaps somewhere in that distant wilderness, the strange youth finally found the freedom he had always desired."

Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree

A traveler walking beside a quiet lake might one day notice an old yew tree standing alone on a lonely part of the shore. The place is far from any village. No house stands nearby, and few people pass that way.

Beneath the spreading branches of the ancient tree lies a small seat made of stones. Moss has grown over it through many years, and grass rises between the cracks.

A traveler who feels tired from the road might stop there to rest.

The wind moves gently across the lake. Small waves touch the shore with a soft sound that calms the mind. Even though the place is quiet and lonely, it holds a certain peaceful beauty.

Yet the stones beneath the tree are not there by accident.

Long ago a man placed them there.

The traveler who sits in that lonely place may wonder about him.

Who was the man who built this seat beside the quiet water?

What kind of life did he live?

The answer belongs to a sad story.

The man who once rested beneath this tree was not an ordinary person. When he was young, he possessed a powerful mind and a proud spirit.

He believed that he would do great things in the world.

Filled with ambition, he left his home and traveled among other people. He hoped to find wisdom, friendship, and honor.

But the world did not welcome him as he had expected.

Wherever he went he encountered jealousy, criticism, and cold neglect. His proud spirit could not easily bear such treatment.

Slowly his heart grew bitter.

Instead of continuing his search for friendship, he turned away from society.

"I will live alone," he decided.

He returned to this lonely valley beside the lake.

Here he found a place far from human voices. The silent hills and quiet water

became his only companions.

Under the branches of the yew tree he built the stone seat where he would spend many hours each day.

Sometimes sheep passed quietly along the hillside.

Sometimes a small bird called from the rocks near the shore.

These were often the only living creatures he saw.

The man sat for long periods in silence, staring at the barren ground around him. Thin grass and small wild plants grew among the rocks.

Looking at this lonely scene, he began to imagine that it reflected his own life.

“My life has become empty,” he thought.

Yet sometimes he raised his eyes from the ground and looked across the lake toward the distant hills.

The landscape there was beautiful.

Green valleys stretched toward the horizon.

Forests covered the mountainsides.

Rivers shone in the sunlight.

When the lonely man looked upon this scene, his heart filled with a strange mixture of sorrow and admiration.

He knew that other people lived happily in those distant places. Families worked together in the fields. Friends shared laughter and kindness.

These thoughts brought tears to his eyes.

He imagined the joy that others felt in their daily lives.

But he believed that such happiness was no longer possible for him.

His pride had pushed him away from the world of human companionship.

So he remained alone beside the quiet lake.

Day after day he returned to the seat beneath the yew tree.

The place became a monument to his solitude.

Years passed.

The lonely man grew older and weaker.

Finally, one day, he died in the silent valley where he had lived apart from the world.

No great stone marks his grave.

No monument tells his story.

Only the seat beneath the ancient yew tree remains.

Travelers who rest there may never know the life that once unfolded in that quiet place.

Yet the story offers a warning to anyone who hears it.

Pride often appears strong and noble.

But when pride turns a person away from others, it becomes a form of weakness.

True wisdom does not live in isolation.

It grows through kindness, understanding, and respect for all living things.

A person who looks only inward and thinks only of himself becomes blind to the beauty of the world around him.

The traveler who rises from the stone seat may carry this lesson away.

When the mind becomes quiet and thoughtful, true knowledge often leads to love.

And the greatest dignity belongs to those who remember their small place within the wide and living world.

The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem, Written in April, 1798.

One calm evening in early spring, a small group of friends walked slowly through the countryside. The sun had already set, and the sky had begun to darken into the gentle colors of night.

They came to a narrow bridge covered with soft moss and stopped there to rest. Beneath the bridge a quiet stream flowed silently across its bed of green plants. The water moved so gently that it made almost no sound.

The air was warm and peaceful.

Though the stars were faint above them, the evening felt full of quiet beauty.

One of the friends leaned against the old stones of the bridge and listened carefully.

“Do you hear it?” he asked.

From the nearby woods came the clear song of a nightingale.

The sweet voice of the bird filled the darkening air.

Another of the friends smiled thoughtfully.

“Many poets call the nightingale a sad bird,” he said. “They say its song is full of sorrow.”

The speaker shook his head.

“That is not true,” he replied.

He listened again to the quick, lively notes of the bird.

“There is nothing sorrowful in nature,” he said. “The sadness that poets hear in the nightingale comes from their own troubled hearts.”

Sometimes, he explained, a lonely person wanders through the night thinking about loss, disappointment, or unreturned love.

When such a person hears the voice of the nightingale, he imagines that the bird is sharing his sorrow.

But the bird itself is not sad.

The nightingale sings because it is full of life and joy.

Its quick, bright music pours into the evening air like laughter.

The friends remained quietly on the bridge, listening.

From every part of the woods the nightingales answered one another.
One bird sang from a bush beside the path.
Another replied from deep within the forest.
Soon their voices seemed to fill the entire grove.
The notes rose and fell rapidly, weaving together into a rich and joyful harmony.
It sounded almost as if hundreds of small musical instruments were playing together in the dark.

One of the friends began to speak again.
“Not far from here,” he said, “there is a large forest beside an old castle.”
The castle once belonged to a great lord, but now it stands empty.
The gardens around it have grown wild.
Grass covers the broken paths, and thick bushes fill the once-tidy grounds.
Yet in that wild forest the nightingales gather in great numbers.
Their voices echo from tree to tree across the moonlit woods.
Sometimes the birds sing so loudly that it seems almost like daytime.
The friends imagined the scene as he described it.
“In that forest,” he continued, “lives a gentle young woman who often walks alone through the quiet paths.”

She loves the voices of the birds and knows many of their songs.
Sometimes she walks beneath the trees while the moon hides behind passing clouds.

For a moment the forest grows completely silent.
Then the moon appears again, shining softly through the branches.
At once the nightingales begin to sing together with joyful excitement.
Their music fills the forest as if a hundred invisible harps were suddenly playing in the night.

The friends smiled at the picture.
They remained on the bridge for a long time, enjoying the peaceful evening.
Finally one of them spoke about his small child.
“My little son cannot yet speak clearly,” he said. “But when he hears a beautiful sound, he lifts his tiny hand beside his ear and asks us to listen.”

The father laughed softly.

“I hope he will grow up surrounded by these sounds of nature,” he continued. “The songs of birds, the shining of the moon, the quiet movement of streams—these will shape his mind better than many books.”

He remembered one night when his child had awakened crying from a troubled dream.

To calm him, the father carried the boy outside into the orchard.

The moon was bright above the trees.

When the child saw its gentle light, he suddenly stopped crying.

His tears still shone in his eyes, but he looked upward in silent wonder.

The memory made the father smile again.

“Nature has a special power over young hearts,” he said.

The friends listened once more to the nightingale’s lively music.

The bird’s quick notes rushed joyfully through the dark forest.

At last the group prepared to leave.

They crossed the mossy bridge and began walking toward their homes.

As they went, the nightingale’s song continued behind them in the quiet woods.

The sweet voice followed them through the warm spring night.

The Female Vagrant

Part 1

A woman once told her story while sitting beside a quiet road. Her voice was gentle, but her words carried the weight of many years of sorrow.

“Long ago,” she began, “my life was very different.”

She had grown up in a small cottage beside the River Derwent. The cottage stood near green fields where sheep grazed peacefully, and the clear river flowed quietly past the door.

Her father lived there with her.

He was a good and honest man.

Though he owned little land and possessed no great wealth, he was content with the simple life he had built. A small field, a flock of sheep, and the fish he caught in the river were enough to support them.

For the young girl, those early years were filled with happiness.

She slept lightly each night and woke each morning with joy. The bright days passed quickly as she helped her father with his work.

Sometimes she helped to spread the fishing nets along the shore of the river.

Sometimes she climbed the hills to guide the sheep across the high pastures.

From the cliffs she could see far below into the deep valley where the river shone in the sunlight.

“Those days were full of simple pleasures,” she said.

Her father taught her to pray beside her bed when she was still very young.

Later he taught her to read.

She loved books and eagerly searched for them in the houses of neighbors and friends. Reading became one of her greatest joys.

The small garden beside their cottage was another source of happiness.

Flowers grew there among the vegetables and herbs.

Peas climbed along the wooden fence.

Mint and thyme filled the air with their fresh scent.

Roses and lilies bloomed in the warm sunlight.

On Sundays she would gather flowers from the garden to decorate the house.

The village church bells rang softly across the fields on those mornings.

Their music drifted through the valley with peaceful beauty.

During the harvest season the countryside became lively and cheerful.

Neighbors gathered to shear sheep or gather crops, and laughter filled the fields.

The young girl enjoyed wandering through the tall grass searching for birds' nests.

In spring she gathered cowslip flowers covered with morning dew.

When she walked to the riverbank, the white swans sometimes glided toward her across the water as if greeting an old friend.

The memories made her smile faintly.

"My father was already growing old during those years," she continued.

His body had begun to bend with age, and he often leaned upon a wooden staff when he walked.

Yet he remained active and cheerful.

In the summer he liked to sit beneath a tall tree while bees hummed among the blossoms.

In winter he rested beside the warm fire inside their cottage.

The young girl remembered watching him prepare for the weekly market.

Though he was often in a hurry, he always dressed carefully before leaving the house.

Their faithful dog guarded the cottage door and barked loudly whenever a stranger passed along the road.

A small red-breasted bird had also become a familiar visitor.

Each morning it came to the window and tapped gently on the glass.

The girl laughed as she remembered these small moments of happiness.

Twenty years passed quickly in this peaceful life.

The seasons changed again and again.

But one day a great change came to the valley.

A large and beautiful house was built among the nearby woods.

Soon other houses appeared beside it.

A wealthy man had purchased much of the land.

At first the girl and her father paid little attention.

But the new landowner soon began to claim control over the surrounding fields and forests.

He did not like neighbors using land that he believed belonged to him.

The girl's father refused to sell the small cottage that had belonged to his family for generations.

He loved his home and wished to remain there.

But the rich man did not easily accept refusal.

Trouble soon followed.

In the markets the father found that merchants treated him unfairly.

Prices rose.

Buyers turned away.

His small income slowly disappeared.

One difficulty followed another.

At last the day came when nearly everything they owned was taken from them.

Even the river that had once provided fish for their table was closed to them.

Only the bed where the old man slept remained.

Father and daughter stood together outside their cottage.

Tears filled their eyes.

They were forced to leave the home they loved.

"I will never forget that moment," the woman said softly.

They climbed a nearby hill and looked back toward the valley.

The church tower rose above the trees.

The bells that once brought them joy now seemed to echo with sadness.

The old man prayed quietly.

His daughter could not pray.

Through her tears she watched their home grow smaller and smaller in the distance.

At last it disappeared from sight.

And the long journey of suffering had begun.

Part 2

After leaving their cottage beside the river, the young woman and her father began to wander from place to place.

The loss of their home weighed heavily upon the old man. Though he tried to remain strong for his daughter, his heart was filled with sorrow.

Yet during those difficult days the young woman was not entirely alone.

For many years she had loved a young man who lived in the same valley.

They had grown up together among the green hills. When they were children they sang songs while walking through the fields. As they grew older, their affection deepened into a quiet promise of marriage.

“I cannot remember when I first loved him,” the woman said. “It seemed as if that love had always been part of my life.”

The young man was kind and honest.

He understood the sorrow that had fallen upon her family, and he wished to help them if he could.

But his own life soon changed as well.

His father decided that the young man must leave the countryside and travel to a distant town. There he would learn a trade and earn a living as a craftsman.

When the time came for him to leave, both young people were filled with grief.

Their final farewell was full of tears and promises.

“We will meet again,” he told her.

She believed him.

And for a time their hope remained strong.

The young man found work in the distant town.

When he had earned enough money, he returned and married the woman he loved.

For a while their lives became peaceful again.

They found a small home where they could live together.

The woman's father also came to live with them.
Though their income was small, they worked hard and managed to survive.
Their days were filled with simple routines.
Each morning they rose early.
The husband worked at his trade, while the woman cared for their home.
The old father spent quiet hours resting beside the fire or sitting outside in the sunlight.
Soon their family grew.
The woman gave birth to three children.
Their small house echoed with the laughter and cries of the young ones.
Yet even during these happy years, a strange sadness sometimes touched her heart.
When she watched the children sleeping peacefully beside her, tears would suddenly rise to her eyes.
She did not always understand why.
Perhaps some quiet instinct warned her that their happiness might not last.
As time passed, her father grew weaker.
The years of hardship had worn down his strength.
At last he died quietly in their home.
Though the loss was painful, the woman later realized that he had been spared even greater suffering.
For soon after his death, their life began to collapse once more.
Work became scarce.
Her husband struggled to earn enough money to feed the family.
The loom stood silent.
The fire in the hearth grew cold.
Their small savings disappeared.
Hunger began to enter their home.
The woman looked at her children with growing fear.
One day the sound of a drum echoed through the streets of their town.
Soldiers marched through the crowd, calling for men to join the army.

The country had entered a time of war.
Many poor men saw no other choice but to enlist.
The woman's husband tried to resist.
He knew that joining the army would separate him from his family.
But the hunger of his children and the hopelessness of their situation finally forced his decision.
With sorrow in his heart he joined the soldiers.
Soon afterward the families of the new recruits were gathered together and sent toward the coast.
Ships waited there to carry the army across the sea.
The woman and her children traveled with many others.
The journey was long and miserable.
They waited for months beside the harbor.
The ships did not leave immediately.
Crowds of poor families were forced to live in cramped camps near the water.
Disease spread quickly among them.
The air grew foul.
Fever passed from one person to another.
Many died without even the sound of a funeral bell.
The woman watched these terrible events with growing fear.
She prayed that her family might survive the long delay.
But their suffering was only beginning.
At last the ships prepared to sail.
The sails were raised.
The long line of vessels slowly left the harbor.
The land of their home faded into the distance behind them.
The woman stood on the deck with her children beside her.
She watched the shoreline disappear.
And deep within her heart she felt that the life she had once known was now gone forever.

Part 3

The ships carrying the soldiers and their families moved slowly across the wide ocean.

At first the voyage seemed calm. The sea stretched endlessly around them, shining beneath the pale light of the sky. Yet the peace did not last long.

As the ships sailed farther from their homeland, the winds grew stronger.

Soon great storms rose from the ocean.

Dark clouds covered the sky. Huge waves crashed against the sides of the ships. The wind roared through the sails like the voice of some angry spirit.

The woman held her children tightly as the ship rolled upon the stormy sea.

Many passengers grew sick from fear and exhaustion.

Yet even this suffering was only the beginning.

After many difficult weeks the ships reached a distant land across the ocean. It was a strange and unfamiliar country.

The soldiers were ordered to prepare for battle.

Camps were built near the shore.

The families of the soldiers lived among rows of tents and temporary shelters.

Life there was filled with hardship.

Food was scarce.

Disease spread quickly through the crowded camps.

The woman watched helplessly as suffering grew around her.

Soon war began.

The sound of guns and explosions echoed across the land. Smoke filled the air above the battlefield.

The woman waited anxiously for news of her husband.

Each day wounded soldiers returned to the camp.

Some were carried on stretchers.

Some walked slowly with bandaged limbs.

Many never returned at all.

Then the worst news came.

Her husband had died in battle.
The woman felt as though the ground beneath her had vanished.
Yet her sorrow did not end there.
War brought hunger and sickness to the camp.
Disease spread rapidly among the families of the soldiers.
One by one her children became ill.
The woman tried desperately to care for them.
She held them through long nights of fever and pain.
But she could not save them.
Within a single terrible year all three of her children died.
The loss crushed her spirit.
Her tears seemed to dry within her heart.
She moved through the camp like someone walking in a dream.
At last the war ended.
The surviving soldiers and their families prepared to return home.
The woman boarded one of the ships again.
She had no husband.
She had no children.
She returned across the ocean alone.
During the voyage the sea appeared calm and beautiful.
The sunlight sparkled across the quiet waves.
For a moment the peaceful scene seemed almost comforting.
But the woman knew that peace existed only in nature.
Within her heart the pain remained.
She stood on the deck and looked out over the endless water.
The silence of the sea seemed vast and empty.
No voice spoke to her.
No friend stood beside her.
“The ocean itself has moments of rest,” she said.
“But the human heart does not easily find such peace.”
At last the ship reached the shore of her homeland.

The woman stepped onto the land she had once called home.
Yet nothing there belonged to her anymore.
She had no family.
She had no house.
She had no place to go.
The towns and villages seemed full of strangers.
Everywhere she looked she saw houses, warm fires, and families gathered around their tables.
But none of those doors opened for her.
Hunger and exhaustion weakened her body.
She wandered through the streets searching for food.
Yet she could not even bring herself to beg.
Her strength slowly faded.
At last she collapsed near the ruins of an old fort beside the sea.
There her body finally failed.
She remembered nothing more until she awoke in a hospital.
Kind strangers had found her and carried her there.
Food and rest slowly returned her strength.
But her memory remained clouded for a long time.
She listened to the sounds of other patients around her.
Some groaned in pain.
Some spoke bitterly of their suffering.
Yet the woman felt strangely empty.
Her grief had become too deep for tears.
Eventually she recovered enough to leave the hospital.
But when she stepped once more into the open world, she realized that her long life of wandering had only just begun.

Part 4

After leaving the hospital, the woman stepped out into the open air with

uncertain steps.

The sky above her was clear, and the morning sun shone warmly upon the earth. Yet the brightness of the day brought little comfort to her heart.

She stood for a long time beside the road, unsure where to go.

Once she had possessed a home, a husband, and children who depended on her. Now all of those things had vanished.

The world seemed wide and unfamiliar.

At last she began to walk.

Her journey had no clear direction. She followed roads through fields and villages, sometimes stopping for rest beside a stream or beneath the shade of a tree.

Occasionally kind strangers gave her a little food.

Some allowed her to sleep for a night in a barn or empty shed.

But most people passed her by without noticing.

She had become a wanderer.

“I traveled through many places,” she said quietly.

Sometimes she walked along the shore of the sea. The wide waters reminded her of the terrible voyage that had taken her far from home.

At other times she crossed lonely hills where only the wind and the sheep kept her company.

She learned to live with very little.

A small piece of bread could satisfy her hunger for the day.

A clear stream could provide the water she needed.

When night came, she often slept beneath the open sky.

The stars became her silent companions.

Yet even in this life of hardship she sometimes discovered moments of quiet beauty.

In the early morning she watched the sun rise over the fields.

In the evening she listened to birds singing in the trees.

These small gifts of nature helped her endure the loneliness of her wandering.

But memories of her former life never left her.

She often remembered the cottage beside the River Derwent where she had spent her childhood.

She remembered her father sitting beside the fire.

She remembered the laughter of her children playing near the door of their small home.

These memories sometimes filled her heart with deep sorrow.

Yet they also reminded her that life had once been full of love.

One evening, after many years of wandering, she came to a quiet village.

The houses stood close together beside a narrow road.

Smoke rose gently from the chimneys.

Children played near the doors while their mothers prepared the evening meal.

The peaceful scene stirred powerful emotions within her.

She sat beside the road and watched the families moving about their daily tasks.

The sight of their happiness did not fill her with bitterness.

Instead it awakened a quiet feeling of gratitude.

Though her own life had been filled with suffering, she felt glad that others still lived in peace.

“Perhaps my story can remind people how precious such happiness truly is,” she said softly.

As the sun sank below the hills, the bells of the village church began to ring.

Their gentle sound drifted across the fields.

The woman closed her eyes and listened.

The music reminded her of the church bells that had once rung across the valley of her childhood home.

Tears slowly filled her eyes.

But these tears were not only tears of sorrow.

They carried a kind of quiet acceptance.

Life had taken everything from her—home, family, and youth.

Yet she had survived.

She had learned that even in the deepest suffering the world still contained moments of beauty and kindness.

The bells continued to ring softly in the evening air.

The woman rose from the roadside and began walking again along the quiet path.

Her journey had no final destination.

But she moved forward with calm determination.

The road stretched before her beneath the fading light of day.

And though she walked alone, the memory of all she had lived through remained with her as both a sorrow and a strength.

Goody Blake and Harry Gill

In a quiet country village there once lived an old woman named Goody Blake. She was very poor.

Age had bent her body, and years of hardship had made her weak. Her clothes were thin and worn, and her small cottage offered little protection against the cold winds of winter.

Yet she worked as well as she could.

Each day she searched the fields and hedges for small sticks of wood. These sticks were the only fuel she possessed to keep a little fire burning in her home.

Without them she would freeze during the long winter nights.

Not far from her cottage lived a young farmer named Harry Gill.

Harry was not poor.

He owned land, animals, and a comfortable house. His fields were wide and fertile.

But Harry had a serious fault.

He loved his property too much.

He believed that every small branch or fallen stick belonged to him.

Whenever he saw the old woman gathering wood along the edges of his land, anger filled his heart.

“She is stealing from me,” he said.

The villagers tried to explain that Goody Blake gathered only the smallest twigs—pieces that no one else wanted.

But Harry refused to listen.

He watched her carefully.

Often he hid behind bushes or trees, hoping to catch her in the act of taking wood from his land.

Winter came.

The air grew bitterly cold.

Snow covered the ground.

During those freezing days Goody Blake continued to search the hedges for

sticks.

One evening she approached a thorny bush growing beside Harry's field.

The branches of the bush were dry and brittle.

They would burn easily in her small fire.

Slowly she broke off a few twigs and placed them in her bundle.

But Harry Gill had been watching.

Suddenly he rushed forward from his hiding place.

"Stop!" he shouted.

The old woman turned in fear.

Harry seized the bundle of sticks from her hands.

"Thief!" he cried angrily.

Goody Blake trembled.

"Please," she said weakly, "I take only what I need to warm my poor cottage."

But Harry's anger had grown too strong.

"You steal from my land!" he shouted.

The old woman lifted her hands toward him.

Her voice shook with cold and despair.

"God bless you," she said quietly. "I wish you no harm."

Harry laughed bitterly.

"Keep your blessings," he said. "They mean nothing to me."

The old woman looked at him sadly.

Then she spoke words that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

"God help you," she said. "You will never be warm again."

Harry pushed her away and drove her from the field.

That night he returned to his comfortable house.

A large fire burned brightly in the hearth.

Yet as he sat beside the flames, something strange happened.

He began to shiver.

At first he thought the room was cold.

He moved closer to the fire.

But the trembling continued.

The warmth of the flames did not help him.
His body shook more and more.
“I am freezing,” he said.
His family wrapped him in blankets.
They added more wood to the fire.
Still Harry could not stop shivering.
The trembling followed him everywhere.
It lasted through the night.
It lasted through the next day.
Doctors were called to examine him.
They could find no cause for the strange sickness.
Harry remained cold even during the warm days of summer.
Years passed.
The shivering never left him.
Wherever he went, people saw his body trembling with constant cold.
Some believed that the old woman’s words had brought a curse upon him.
Others said that guilt had frozen his heart.
Whatever the truth may be, the villagers never forgot the lesson of his story.
A small act of cruelty toward the weak can bring great suffering in return.
And sometimes the punishment for such cruelty lasts for a lifetime.

Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House, and Sent by My Little Boy to
the Person to Whom They Are Addressed

My friend, I write these lines while standing only a short distance from my house.

The morning is quiet.

Around me the fields lie calm beneath the open sky. The air moves gently through the trees, and the sound of leaves in the wind fills the stillness of the place.

Nothing here feels hurried.

Nature continues its work slowly and peacefully.

I pause along the path and look around.

The simple beauty of the countryside surrounds me. The green grass stretches across the hillside. Small birds move among the branches of the trees. The light of the sky rests softly upon the earth.

In such a place the mind grows calm.

Thoughts come quietly, without effort.

It seems as if the natural world itself invites reflection.

I think of you while standing here.

Though you are not beside me today, I imagine you walking through these same fields. I imagine you listening to the wind and watching the gentle movement of the clouds.

The friendship between us makes such thoughts feel natural.

Even when we are separated by distance, the same world surrounds us both.

The same sunlight touches our homes.

The same wind moves across the hills.

My little boy now carries these lines to you.

He walks along the path that leads from my house toward yours. To him this journey is only a simple errand.

Yet the small act carries a quiet meaning.

A child moves between two friends, bringing a few lines written in a peaceful hour.

When he arrives, you may smile at the sight of the young messenger standing at your door.

Perhaps you will read these lines and imagine the place where they were written.

If so, think of the calm morning that surrounds me now.

Think of the quiet fields, the open sky, and the gentle wind moving through the trees.

These simple scenes have given me a moment of peace.

I send that same peaceful feeling to you through these words.

Accept them as a small greeting from a friend who stands not far from home, enjoying the quiet companionship of nature.

Simon Lee, the old Huntsman

In a quiet valley surrounded by gentle hills there once lived an old man named Simon Lee.

Many years earlier Simon had been famous throughout the countryside as a great huntsman. In his youth he had ridden swiftly across the fields with the hunting parties of the local lords.

He had been strong, quick, and full of energy.

No one could follow the movement of the hunting dogs better than Simon Lee.

When the hounds raced through the forest chasing the fox, Simon rode behind them with skill and confidence.

The riders trusted him.

The dogs obeyed him.

His name was well known in every village across the valley.

But time passes quickly.

The strong young hunter slowly became an old man.

His hair turned white.

His back bent.

The quick strength that had once filled his body disappeared.

Simon now lived quietly with his wife in a small cottage near the edge of the valley.

The house was very simple.

It stood beside a narrow path surrounded by bushes and rough grass.

Simon and his wife possessed little money.

They survived by doing small tasks for neighbors.

Sometimes Simon tried to work in the fields.

Sometimes he cut small branches of wood for fuel.

But age had taken most of his strength.

Even simple work left him tired and breathless.

One morning a traveler walked along the narrow path that passed near Simon's cottage.

The day was bright and clear.
The traveler noticed an old man struggling beside the path.
Simon was trying to cut the root of a small tree that had grown across the road.
He held a simple axe in his hands.
But the work was very difficult.
Each time he struck the wood, the axe moved slowly and weakly.
The old man paused again and again to catch his breath.
The traveler watched for a moment.
At last he stepped forward.
“Let me help you,” he said kindly.
Simon looked up with surprise.
His tired face showed both gratitude and embarrassment.
“Thank you,” he said softly.
The traveler took the axe.
With a few strong blows he cut through the root that had troubled the old man.
The small tree fell aside.
The path was clear.
Simon stood quietly beside him.
For a moment he did not speak.
Then his eyes filled with tears.
“You have done me a great kindness,” he said.
The traveler smiled.
“It was a small thing,” he replied.
But Simon shook his head.
“For a young man it is small,” he said. “For an old man it is much.”
He explained that he had been trying to finish the task for a long time.
Each blow of the axe had cost him great effort.
The traveler suddenly understood how difficult life had become for the old
hunterman.
Simon continued to speak.
“There was a time when I could run all day across the hills,” he said.

“Now even the smallest work leaves me weak.”
The traveler listened quietly.
He thought about the strange way life changes.
Youth brings strength and confidence.
Old age brings weakness and struggle.
Yet the heart of a person often remains the same.
Simon still possessed the proud spirit of the huntsman he had once been.
The traveler felt deep respect for him.
“Do not thank me too much,” he said gently.
“Today I helped you. Tomorrow someone may help me.”
Simon nodded slowly.
His tears continued to fall.
But they were not tears of sadness alone.
They were also tears of gratitude.
The traveler left him standing beside the cleared path.
As he walked away through the quiet valley, he thought about the simple event
he had just witnessed.
The memory of the old huntsman remained with him.
It reminded him that the smallest act of kindness can carry great meaning.
Sometimes a single moment of help can warm the heart of another person more
deeply than we ever expect.

Anecdote for Fathers

One morning a father walked along a country road with his young son.

The boy was only five years old.

His name was Edward.

The father loved the child dearly and often enjoyed speaking with him as they walked together through the countryside.

The day was bright and clear.

The two travelers stopped beside a small bridge that crossed a quiet stream.

Near the bridge stood a tall mountain covered with trees.

The father pointed toward the distant peak.

“Edward,” he asked, “which do you like better—the mountain before us or the one behind us?”

The boy looked first in one direction and then in the other.

“I like that one best,” he answered, pointing toward the mountain that stood behind them.

The father smiled.

“And why do you like that mountain best?” he asked.

The boy thought for a moment.

Then he replied simply.

“Because it is higher.”

The father laughed gently.

But for some reason he continued asking questions.

“Are you sure that is the reason?” he said.

The boy looked uncertain.

“Yes,” he said again. “Because it is higher.”

The father decided to test his son’s answer.

He wanted to discover whether the boy truly understood what he was saying.

So he began asking the same question in different ways.

“Suppose the mountain before us were higher,” he said. “Would you then like that one better?”

The boy hesitated.
The father asked again.
“Tell me the real reason,” he said.
Edward became confused.
He had already given the answer that seemed most natural to him.
Yet his father continued to question him.
The boy’s face slowly showed signs of worry.
At last he changed his answer.
“Perhaps it is not because it is higher,” he said quietly.
The father continued his questioning.
Again and again he tried to force the child to explain his choice.
Edward now felt completely uncertain.
The father had turned a simple conversation into a complicated puzzle.
The boy began to invent different reasons, hoping that one of them would satisfy his father.
But each answer only brought more questions.
Finally Edward could say nothing more.
The father realized that he had gone too far.
What had begun as a playful conversation had turned into something uncomfortable for the child.
The boy had only spoken naturally at first.
His father’s constant questioning had confused him.
The father felt ashamed.
“I have learned an important lesson today,” he said to himself.
Children often speak with simple honesty.
Their answers do not always follow strict logic, but they come from genuine feelings.
When adults question them too harshly, they may destroy that natural honesty.
Instead of helping children understand the world, such questioning may only fill them with doubt and confusion.
The father looked at Edward with affection.

The boy had already forgotten the strange conversation.

He was watching a bird flying above the stream.

The father smiled quietly.

Sometimes the wisdom of children is clearer than the clever arguments of adults.

The simple heart of a child often understands the world in ways that reason alone cannot explain.

From that day forward the father remembered his mistake.

Whenever he spoke with his son, he tried to listen more carefully and question less.

In this way he hoped to protect the natural honesty that lives in every child's mind.

We Are Seven

A traveler once met a small country girl beside a lonely path in the hills.

The day was quiet and bright.

The girl stood alone among the grass and wild flowers. She was about eight years old. Her hair fell freely around her face, and her eyes shone with a calm and thoughtful expression.

The traveler greeted her kindly.

“Good morning,” he said. “Tell me, little girl, how many brothers and sisters do you have?”

The girl answered without hesitation.

“We are seven,” she said.

The traveler smiled.

“Seven? That is a large family,” he replied. “Where do they live?”

The girl began to explain.

“Two of my brothers live in the town of Conway,” she said. “Two others have gone to sea. My sister and my brother stay with me and my mother near the church.”

The traveler counted carefully.

“That makes six,” he said. “Where is the seventh child?”

The girl pointed toward the nearby churchyard.

“Two of us lie there,” she said quietly.

The traveler looked surprised.

“Do you mean that two of your brothers or sisters are dead?” he asked.

The girl nodded.

“Yes,” she replied. “My sister Jane and my brother John lie buried in the churchyard.”

The traveler tried to explain gently.

“If two of your brothers and sisters are dead,” he said, “then your family now has only five children.”

But the girl shook her head.

“No,” she said firmly. “We are seven.”

The traveler looked puzzled.

“But if two are dead, how can there still be seven?” he asked.

The girl answered patiently.

“Their graves are beside the church,” she explained. “My cottage stands very near that place.”

She described the churchyard.

The graves lay under a small green hill covered with grass. A small wooden fence surrounded them.

Often she sat beside the graves while the evening light fell across the quiet ground.

Sometimes she brought her sewing with her and worked there beside the resting place of her sister and brother.

At other times she sang songs while sitting near the graves.

In winter she sometimes carried her dinner there and ate beside the quiet stones.

“My sister Jane died first,” the girl said.

“She grew very pale and weak. One day she lay down in her bed and never rose again.”

The traveler listened carefully.

“Then my brother John died too,” she continued.

“He had always been a lively boy who ran quickly across the fields. But sickness came to him, and soon he was buried beside Jane.”

The girl spoke calmly.

To her the two children were not truly gone.

Their graves were part of her daily life.

She visited them often.

She spoke of them as if they were still members of the family.

The traveler tried once more to explain.

“But if they are buried in the churchyard,” he said, “they are no longer living with you.”

The girl looked at him quietly.

Then she repeated her answer.

“We are seven.”

The traveler sighed.

He realized that the child’s understanding of family was deeper than his own reasoning.

To the girl, death had not broken the bond between brothers and sisters.

Love remained.

Memory remained.

The family still felt complete.

At last the traveler stopped arguing.

He smiled gently at the little girl and continued along the path.

As he walked away, he reflected on the conversation.

The clear and simple heart of the child had shown him something important.

Human affection does not always follow the rules of logic.

Even death cannot easily divide those who love one another.

Lines Written in Early Spring

One quiet spring morning a man walked slowly through a small grove beside a field.

The air was soft and gentle.

Young leaves had begun to grow upon the branches of the trees. The fresh green color shone brightly in the sunlight.

Birds moved happily among the branches.

Their songs filled the peaceful air.

The man sat down upon a small patch of grass beneath the trees.

Around him nature seemed full of calm joy.

The branches of the trees stretched outward as if reaching toward the sky.

The small flowers beside the path opened their petals to the warm sunlight.

Every part of the scene appeared alive with quiet happiness.

The man listened to the birds.

One bird sang from a nearby branch.

Another answered from deeper within the grove.

Their music seemed playful and free.

Watching the gentle movement of the plants and listening to the lively voices of the birds brought a deep feeling of peace to his mind.

He believed that nature itself was filled with goodness.

Every living thing appeared to follow a simple law of harmony and joy.

The plants stretched toward the light.

The birds flew freely through the air.

Even the small insects moved through the grass with energy and purpose.

Yet while the man observed this peaceful scene, a troubling thought entered his mind.

He began to think about the world of human beings.

Human life did not always follow the same peaceful order that he saw in nature.

Men often treated one another with cruelty.

Greed, pride, and anger caused suffering throughout the world.

These thoughts filled his heart with sadness.

“If nature was created in harmony,” he wondered, “why have human beings broken that harmony?”

The man looked again at the living world around him.

A gentle breeze passed through the trees.

The branches moved softly in the wind.

The birds continued their joyful singing.

Nature seemed untouched by the troubles of human life.

The man felt a quiet sorrow as he considered this difference.

It seemed as if human beings had forgotten something that the rest of nature still remembered.

Perhaps the world had once been filled with harmony for all living things.

Perhaps human pride had destroyed that harmony.

The thought troubled him deeply.

Yet the beauty of the spring morning continued to surround him.

The fresh green leaves moved gently above his head.

The birds sang without worry.

The flowers beside the path seemed to smile toward the sky.

The man realized that even in a world filled with human suffering, nature still offered moments of peace.

Anyone who stopped to listen carefully could still hear the quiet music of life within the natural world.

Slowly he rose from the grass.

The morning light shone warmly across the grove.

As he walked away from the trees, he carried both feelings with him.

The joy he had seen in nature.

And the sadness he felt when thinking about the troubled world of human beings.

These two thoughts remained together in his mind as he continued along the quiet path.

The Thorn

There is a lonely place upon the side of a small hill.
Travelers who pass along the nearby road may notice a strange sight there.
Upon the hill stands a single thorn bush.
It is not large or beautiful.
Its branches are thin and twisted.
The bush grows beside a small mound of earth covered with moss.
Nearby lies a muddy pool of water.
The place appears lonely and sad.
For many years people in the nearby village have spoken about this strange spot.
They say that something terrible happened there long ago.
The story concerns a young woman named Martha Ray.
Martha had once been known as a cheerful and lively girl.
She lived in the village and was loved by many people.
A young man named Stephen Hill admired her greatly.
He often walked beside her along the country paths.
For a long time the two seemed certain to marry.
But something unexpected happened.
Stephen suddenly left the village.
Soon afterward the villagers learned that he had married another woman.
The news struck Martha with terrible force.
Her heart seemed to break under the weight of sorrow.
From that day forward she changed.
She wandered alone across the hills.
Often she was seen near the lonely thorn bush.
The villagers began to notice strange things about her.
Sometimes she sat beside the mound of earth for many hours without speaking.
At other times she cried loudly as if calling to someone who could not answer.
One stormy night people heard her voice echoing across the hills.
The wind howled through the trees.

Rain fell heavily.
Yet through the storm Martha's cries could still be heard.
The next morning the villagers searched the hillside.
They found Martha sitting beside the thorn bush.
Her clothes were wet from the rain.
Her face was pale and exhausted.
She said very little.
Soon after that day the strange mound of earth appeared beside the thorn bush.
No one knew exactly how it came to be there.
Some people believed that Martha herself had made it.
Others believed that something terrible had happened during the stormy night.
The villagers began to whisper dark stories.
Some said that Martha had once been seen carrying a small child.
Others believed that the mound beside the thorn bush was a grave.
But no one could prove the truth.
Martha continued to wander across the hills.
She often returned to the thorn bush and the mound of earth.
There she sat alone for hours.
Sometimes she cried.
Sometimes she spoke softly as if comforting an unseen child.
The villagers watched her with uneasy curiosity.
Yet none of them truly understood her sorrow.
Years passed.
The thorn bush remained.
The small mound of earth remained beside it.
Travelers who pass that lonely place today may still wonder about the strange story.
They may hear the wind moving through the thin branches of the thorn bush.
They may see the dark water of the small muddy pool beside the hill.
And they may feel a quiet sadness as they imagine the sorrow that once lived in that lonely place.

The Last of the Flock

Not far from the quiet hills where sheep once grazed peacefully, there lived a poor shepherd with his wife and children.

His name was never widely known, for he was an ordinary man who worked quietly among the fields.

For many years he had cared for a small flock of sheep.

The animals were his only wealth.

Their wool provided clothing.

Their lambs brought a little money each spring.

Their presence filled the hills with gentle life.

The shepherd loved his animals.

Each morning he led them across the green slopes where they could feed upon the grass.

In the evening he brought them back safely to their pen beside his small cottage.

His children often ran among the sheep, laughing as the lambs followed them across the fields.

Those were peaceful days.

But times changed.

Prices for wool began to fall.

The small income from the flock no longer provided enough food for the family.

One difficult winter the shepherd faced a painful decision.

To survive, he was forced to sell several of his sheep.

The animals were taken away to the market.

The shepherd watched them go with a heavy heart.

Each sale felt like the loss of a friend.

Yet he hoped that by selling a few sheep he might save the rest.

But the following year brought even greater hardship.

The fields produced less grass.

The price of wool fell again.

Soon the shepherd had no choice but to sell more animals.

Slowly the size of his flock grew smaller.

The hills that had once seemed full of moving white shapes now appeared strangely empty.

The shepherd often walked alone across the fields where his sheep had once grazed.

The silence of the empty hills saddened him deeply.

At last only a few sheep remained.

The shepherd looked at them with sorrow.

He remembered the time when the flock had filled the valley with life.

Now only a handful of animals stood beside him.

Yet the greatest sorrow still remained.

One day a wealthy neighbor approached him with an offer.

The neighbor wished to buy the last of the flock.

At first the shepherd refused.

These final animals were the last connection to the life he had known for so many years.

But poverty pressed heavily upon him.

His children needed food.

His home needed repairs.

With great reluctance he agreed to sell them.

The day came when the buyer arrived to collect the sheep.

The shepherd watched as the animals were led away.

The fields around his cottage suddenly felt empty and silent.

The shepherd walked slowly through the valley where his flock had once moved together like a flowing white cloud.

Now the hills belonged to others.

The life he had known as a shepherd had ended.

Yet the memory of those quiet years remained within his heart.

Even though the flock was gone, the love he had felt for those animals would never completely fade.

Sometimes he still walked across the empty fields.

The wind moved gently through the grass.

For a moment he could almost imagine that the sheep still grazed quietly around him.

But when he looked again, the hills were empty.

And the shepherd understood that some losses in life can never truly be replaced.

The Dungeon

I once walked into a dark prison beneath a great stone building.
The air inside was cold and heavy. Thick walls surrounded the narrow space,
and only a small opening high above allowed a faint light to enter.
I stood still and looked around the gloomy chamber.
Chains hung from the walls.
Iron bars closed the small windows.
The floor was rough stone worn by many years of suffering.
In that dark place prisoners were once held for long periods of time.
They were kept there not only to punish their bodies, but also to break their
spirits.
I thought about the men who had lived in that dungeon.
They had entered it with living minds and human hopes.
But the darkness slowly worked upon them.
When a person remains long in such a place, the mind begins to weaken.
The eye forgets the sight of sunlight.
The ear forgets the sounds of ordinary life.
The body grows weak, and the heart loses courage.
Day after day the prisoner sits in silence.
No friendly voice speaks to him.
No open sky appears above him.
Only darkness surrounds him.
Such punishment harms more than the body.
It destroys the human mind.
I felt troubled as I stood there thinking about this cruelty.
Is justice served by crushing the spirit of a human being?
Can wisdom grow in a place where hope is taken away?
It seemed to me that such punishment was deeply wrong.
A person who has done wrong must answer for the crime.
But punishment should not destroy the soul.

The human mind grows stronger through freedom, learning, and kindness.
Darkness and isolation can only produce despair.
As I left the dungeon and stepped again into the open air, I felt relief.
The sky above me appeared wide and bright.
The wind moved freely across the earth.
The living world outside the prison walls reminded me of something important.
True justice must allow the human spirit to grow.
Only in the open light of life can the mind recover its strength.

The Mad Mother

Part 1

I walk along the hillside with my child in my arms.

The wind moves through the grass around me, and the wide sky stretches above the hills.

My boy rests against my breast.

I hold him close so that he may feel my warmth.

Some people say that I have lost my reason.

They call me mad.

But they do not understand the love I feel for my child.

My boy is all that I have.

When he smiles, my heart grows strong again.

When he sleeps quietly against me, I forget the sorrow that others believe has broken my mind.

Once I lived among other people.

I had a home and a place in the world.

But misfortune came into my life.

Pain and grief drove me away from those who had once known me.

Now I wander through the fields and hills.

Yet I am not alone.

My child walks beside me or rests in my arms.

His small voice brings comfort to my heart.

I speak to him as we travel.

“Do not fear,” I tell him.

“Your mother will always care for you.”

Sometimes I see people watching us from a distance.

They whisper to one another.

They believe that my mind has become confused.

But they do not see what I see.

They do not feel what I feel.
My love for this child gives meaning to every step I take.
The hills, the wind, and the open sky seem friendly to us.
The world may think that I have lost my reason.
But I know something deeper than reason.
I know the strength of a mother's love.
As long as my child lives beside me, I will never truly be alone.

Part 2

I walk onward across the hillside with my child resting in my arms.
The wind moves gently through the grass, and the wide sky stretches above us.
The hills roll softly into the distance, and the earth beneath my feet feels steady and strong.
My boy stirs slightly and looks up at me.
I smile and press him close.
“Do not be afraid,” I tell him softly. “Your mother is here.”
Some people say that my mind is broken.
They whisper to each other when they see me walking alone with my child through the fields.
They say that grief has driven me into madness.
But they do not understand what lives inside my heart.
My thoughts are not empty.
My mind is not lost.
My love for this child gives me strength.
I feel the warmth of his small body against my own, and I know that I must go on.
There were times when sorrow nearly crushed my spirit.
There were nights when I thought that I could not continue living.
The memory of my troubles pressed heavily upon me.
But then my child would cry beside me.

His voice would call me back to the world.
I would hold him in my arms and feel that life still demanded my care.
In those moments I understood that I could not surrender to despair.
I speak gently to him as we walk.
“Look at the hills,” I whisper.
“Look at the wide sky above us.”
The world is large and full of life.
The wind moves freely across the fields.
The birds fly without fear.
The river flows quietly through the valley below.
All these things belong to us as well.
My boy listens with quiet curiosity.
His small hand reaches toward the grass as we pass.
He laughs softly when the wind touches his face.
His joy reminds me that the world still holds beauty.
People may believe that I wander without reason.
But I know where I am going.
I follow the open paths of the hills.
I move where the air is free and the sky is wide.
No dark walls surround us here.
No heavy doors close upon our lives.
Out here the earth itself feels kind.
When the wind blows across the fields, it cools my troubled thoughts.
When the sun rises over the hills, it brings warmth to both my body and my spirit.
My child rests quietly against me.
Sometimes he sleeps as we walk.
I watch his face carefully.
Even in sleep he seems peaceful and safe.
That sight fills me with a deep calm.
Whatever others may say about me, I know this truth.

I will protect this child.
As long as he lives beside me, I will not lose my strength.
The world may judge me harshly.
But my heart remains steady.
My love for him will guide every step I take across these hills.

Part 3

My child, listen to me.
The wind moves across the hills, and the clouds pass slowly above us. The world is wide and open, and you rest safely here in my arms.
They say that I am mad.
Let them say it.
They do not know the truth of my heart.
I have walked through sorrow.
I have known fear and loneliness.
But I have never stopped loving you.
When others turned away from me, you remained.
When my thoughts grew dark and heavy, your small voice called me back to life.
You gave me reason to rise each morning.
You gave me strength to continue walking through the world.
Look around us, my boy.
These hills belong to no one.
The wind that touches your face cannot be locked away.
The sunlight that warms the earth shines freely for all.
In this wide world we will find our place.
I will not allow fear to rule my life.
I will not allow sorrow to steal my courage.
As long as I can hold you close, I will go forward.
Your laughter fills the air like the song of a bird.

When I hear it, my heart grows strong again.
I feel as if the whole earth is moving beside us.
The fields, the sky, the flowing streams—all seem to share in our journey.
My boy, if the world calls your mother foolish, do not believe them.
A heart that loves deeply cannot truly be broken.
Others may measure life by reason and careful judgment.
But love follows a different law.
Love gives courage even when the mind grows tired.
Love gives hope even when the road seems long.
I look at your face and see the future shining there.
Whatever hardships may come, we will face them together.
The wind may grow cold.
The path may become steep.
Yet I will not abandon you.
I will walk beside you through every valley and every hill.
One day you will grow strong.
You will stand tall beneath the open sky.
And perhaps you will remember these wandering days.
Perhaps you will remember that your mother carried you through the wide
fields of the world with a heart that never lost its love.
For now you rest quietly in my arms.
The hills stretch peacefully around us.
The wind moves through the grass.
And I walk forward with you beside my heart.

The Idiot Boy

Part 1

In a small village surrounded by hills lived a poor woman named Betty Foy.

Betty had only one child, a boy named Johnny.

Johnny was about twelve years old, but his mind was simple and childlike. The villagers often called him “the idiot boy,” though Betty loved him deeply and protected him from every harsh word.

To Betty, Johnny was a treasure.

He was cheerful and gentle.

He laughed easily and loved to wander through the fields.

But he understood little about the dangers of the world.

Betty often worried about him.

One night a serious problem arose in the village.

A neighbor named Susan Gale had become very sick.

She lived some distance away, and there was no one nearby who could quickly fetch a doctor.

Betty grew anxious.

She knew that Susan needed help immediately.

At last she decided to send Johnny to the nearby town to bring the doctor.

The idea frightened her.

Johnny had never traveled far alone before.

Yet there seemed to be no other choice.

Betty prepared the small horse that stood beside her cottage.

It was a slow and gentle animal named Dobbin.

She placed Johnny carefully upon the horse’s back.

The moon shone faintly above the dark hills.

The night was quiet and still.

Betty spoke to her son with great care.

“Johnny,” she said, “ride to the town and ask the doctor to come quickly to

Susan Gale's house."

Johnny listened with wide, uncertain eyes.

Betty repeated the instructions many times.

She pointed along the road that led toward the town.

"Follow the path," she said. "Do not stop anywhere."

Johnny nodded happily.

Riding the horse seemed like a grand adventure to him.

At last Betty gave Dobbin a gentle push.

The horse began to walk slowly down the dark road.

Johnny rode away beneath the moonlight.

Betty stood watching until both horse and rider disappeared into the shadows.

For a while she tried to remain calm.

But soon worry filled her thoughts.

Johnny had never traveled so far alone.

The road passed through lonely woods and quiet fields.

What if he became lost?

What if he forgot his instructions?

Betty tried to comfort herself.

Dobbin was a patient horse.

Perhaps the animal would guide the boy safely along the road.

Yet the hours passed slowly.

The night grew deeper.

Betty could no longer rest.

At last she decided to follow Johnny.

She wrapped her shawl tightly around her shoulders and hurried down the road.

The moonlight helped her see the path.

She called her son's name again and again.

"Johnny! Johnny!"

But no answer came from the quiet hills.

Betty walked farther and farther into the darkness.

Her heart beat with growing fear.

She imagined every terrible possibility.
Perhaps Johnny had fallen from the horse.
Perhaps he had wandered away into the woods.
The night seemed endless.
Betty continued searching along the road, calling her son's name into the silent countryside.

Part 2

Betty Foy hurried along the dark road, calling again and again for her son.
“Johnny! Johnny!”
The hills returned only the sound of her own voice.
The night was still.
The moon moved slowly across the sky, shining faintly through thin clouds.
Betty's heart filled with fear.
She walked faster.
The road curved through quiet fields and small wooded areas. At every turn she hoped to see the small horse Dobbin standing beside the path.
But the road remained empty.
The longer she searched, the more terrible her thoughts became.
“What if Johnny has fallen?” she whispered to herself.
She imagined the boy lying somewhere beside the road, hurt and alone.
Her voice trembled as she called again.
“Johnny!”
Suddenly she thought she heard a sound.
It came from the distance.
Betty stopped and listened carefully.
A faint voice drifted through the night air.
It sounded like laughter.
Betty hurried toward the sound.
Soon she saw a shape moving slowly along the path.

It was Dobbin.
The small horse walked quietly through the moonlight.
And upon its back sat Johnny.
The boy looked happy and calm.
Betty ran toward him.
“Johnny!” she cried. “Where have you been?”
The boy laughed.
“Mother!” he said cheerfully.
Betty took hold of the horse and helped Johnny down to the ground.
Her hands trembled with relief.
“Did you find the doctor?” she asked.
Johnny shook his head.
“No,” he said.
Betty stared at him in confusion.
“No?” she repeated.
Johnny smiled and began to explain.
He had ridden slowly along the road.
The moon had shone brightly above him.
Along the way he had seen many interesting things.
An owl had flown silently across the path.
Frogs had been singing beside a small pond.
The quiet countryside had filled him with wonder.
Johnny had stopped many times to watch and listen.
Eventually Dobbin had wandered away from the road and walked toward a nearby field.
There Johnny had sat peacefully for a long time, enjoying the sounds of the night.
Betty listened with mixed feelings.
Part of her felt angry that the boy had forgotten his important task.
But another part of her felt deep relief.
Johnny was safe.

Nothing terrible had happened.
She looked at the boy's smiling face.
His simple joy softened her heart.
At that moment another sound reached them from the distance.
A voice called from the road behind them.
It was a man approaching quickly on horseback.
Betty turned and saw the village doctor riding toward them.
"Good evening!" the doctor called.
Betty stared in surprise.
"Doctor!" she said. "How did you know we needed you?"
The doctor smiled.
"Another neighbor came to fetch me earlier," he explained. "I am already on my way to Susan Gale's house."
Betty felt an enormous wave of relief.
Everything would now be taken care of.
She lifted Johnny back onto Dobbin.
The boy laughed happily as the small horse began to walk home.
Betty followed beside them along the quiet road.
The moonlight shone peacefully across the hills.
The long night of worry had ended.
And though Johnny had failed in his task, his cheerful spirit had remained unchanged.
As they returned toward their cottage, Betty realized something important.
Her son's simple mind allowed him to see beauty and joy even in the darkest night.
Perhaps that innocence was not a weakness after all.

Part 3

When morning came, the sun rose gently over the hills surrounding the village.
Soft light spread across the fields.

The long night of worry had passed, and the quiet countryside seemed peaceful once again.

Betty Foy had not slept much.

Though she had brought Johnny safely home, the excitement of the night still filled her thoughts.

Early in the morning she heard footsteps outside her cottage.

A neighbor was passing along the road.

Betty hurried to the door.

"Tell me," she asked anxiously, "how is Susan Gale?"

The neighbor smiled reassuringly.

"She is better," he said. "The doctor arrived in time. She will recover."

Betty felt a great weight lift from her heart.

All the fear of the night faded away.

Susan was safe.

Johnny was safe.

The world seemed calm again.

Inside the cottage Johnny still slept peacefully.

The boy had returned home tired but cheerful after his strange night ride.

Betty looked at him as he slept.

His face showed the calm innocence that had always touched her heart.

Many people in the village laughed at Johnny.

They called him foolish because he did not think or speak like other boys.

But Betty knew that Johnny possessed a different kind of happiness.

He did not worry about the future.

He did not carry heavy thoughts about the troubles of life.

He simply lived in the moment.

When Johnny awoke, he stretched happily and looked around the room.

"Good morning, mother," he said with a bright smile.

Betty returned the smile.

"Good morning, Johnny," she replied.

The boy quickly began telling her again about his journey through the

countryside.

He spoke excitedly about the owl he had seen in the moonlight.

He described the frogs singing beside the pond.

He remembered the quiet fields shining under the stars.

To Johnny, the night had been full of wonder.

Betty listened patiently.

She realized that the boy had experienced the world in a way she had not.

While she had filled the night with fear, Johnny had filled it with curiosity and delight.

The small horse Dobbin had carried him slowly across the countryside.

The moon had lit his path.

And the peaceful sounds of nature had kept him company.

Betty began to laugh softly.

The long night of worry now seemed almost strange.

Johnny had not been afraid at all.

For him the journey had been an adventure.

Soon neighbors began arriving at the cottage.

They had heard the story of Johnny's night ride.

Some laughed kindly.

Others shook their heads at the strange behavior of the boy.

But many also smiled warmly.

The story had brought unexpected joy to the village.

The idea of Johnny wandering peacefully through the moonlit countryside had become a tale people would remember for years.

Betty watched her son as he spoke happily with the neighbors.

At that moment she felt certain of one thing.

The world might see Johnny as a foolish boy.

But to her he was a gift.

His innocent spirit carried a kind of happiness that many wiser people had forgotten.

The sun rose higher in the sky.

The village returned to its ordinary work.

Yet the story of Johnny's quiet ride through the moonlit hills remained in the minds of those who heard it.

It reminded them that simple hearts sometimes see beauty where others see only trouble.

And that even a night filled with worry can become, in the end, a story worth remembering.

Lines Written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening

Evening came slowly over the River Thames.

The day had been bright, but now the light was becoming soft and mild. A man stood quietly near the river at Richmond and looked out over the peaceful scene before him.

The water moved gently. It reflected the pale gold of the sky and the darker shapes of the trees along the bank. Small ripples passed over the surface, but nothing disturbed the deep calm of the hour.

The man felt the quiet beauty of the place enter his heart.

The air was still.

The last light of day rested upon the river, the distant hills, and the grassy fields beyond. Everything seemed touched by peace.

He looked at the boats moving slowly upon the water.

He looked at the trees standing in silence.

He looked at the sky as the colors of evening grew deeper.

It seemed to him that the whole world had become gentle.

Nothing forced itself upon the mind.

Nothing called for hurried thought.

The quiet of the evening worked upon him like a blessing.

He felt that in such an hour a person could forget many troubles.

The noise of ordinary life seemed far away.

The busy world of work, argument, pride, and desire had fallen silent for a little while.

In its place there was only this calm river and the soft closing of the day.

The man thought about the strange power of such moments.

Nature did not speak in words, yet it changed the heart.

A peaceful scene at evening could teach more than many speeches.

It could soften anger.

It could quiet restless thoughts.

It could remind a person that beauty still lives in the world.

As the light faded further, the trees along the riverbank became darker shapes against the sky.

The water still shone faintly.

The first signs of night appeared above the quiet land.

Yet even as darkness came, the peace of the place did not lessen.

It grew deeper.

The man remained there for some time, unwilling to leave.

He knew that such hours pass quickly.

Evening does not stay.

The light must fade.

The river must darken.

Night must come.

But that was part of the beauty.

A calm evening is precious because it does not last.

It is a gift received for a little while.

At last the man turned away from the river.

The scene behind him remained quiet and beautiful.

And as he walked on into the coming night, he carried within him the stillness of the Thames at evening.

Expostulation and Reply

One morning a thoughtful man sat quietly beside a small path that ran through the countryside. A friend came walking toward him across the grass.

The friend stopped and looked at him with a troubled expression.

“William,” he said, “why do you spend so much time sitting alone?”

The man looked up calmly.

“I enjoy these quiet hours,” he answered.

But the friend shook his head.

“You waste your mind,” he said. “You sit here dreaming while books full of knowledge remain unread.”

The friend believed strongly in study.

He thought that a wise person must gather learning from many books and many teachers.

“You should be reading,” he continued. “You should be working hard to gain knowledge.”

The man listened patiently.

The gentle wind moved through the leaves of the nearby trees.

Birds sang softly in the branches above them.

At last the quiet man spoke.

“My friend,” he said, “our minds do not grow strong only through study.”

The friend looked surprised.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

The man pointed toward the wide fields around them.

“Look at the world,” he said.

Sunlight spread across the grass.

The hills rose peacefully in the distance.

The air carried the fresh scent of the earth.

“Nature itself teaches us,” the man continued.

“The mind receives thoughts quietly when it is calm.”

He explained that constant study sometimes burdens the mind.

When people read too many arguments and ideas, their thoughts may become confused.

But when a person sits quietly in nature, the mind opens gently.

Wisdom grows naturally.

The friend listened but remained uncertain.

“Books contain the experience of many great thinkers,” he said.

“How can simple silence teach as much as that?”

The man smiled slightly.

“We do not always learn by effort,” he replied.

“Sometimes the mind grows through quiet feeling rather than through hard study.”

He described how the human mind gathers knowledge in ways that are not always obvious.

When we watch the sky, listen to birds, or walk peacefully among fields, our thoughts begin to settle.

In that calm state, understanding appears without force.

It is as if nature speaks gently to the heart.

The friend looked around again at the quiet countryside.

The scene did seem peaceful.

The wind moved slowly across the grass.

The birds continued their cheerful songs.

“Perhaps there is truth in what you say,” he admitted.

The thoughtful man nodded.

“Books are useful,” he said. “But they are not the only teachers.”

The friend stood silently for a moment.

At last he laughed softly.

“Very well,” he said. “Today I will sit with you for a while.”

The two men sat together beside the path.

They watched the quiet movement of the natural world around them.

And for a time, neither of them spoke.

The Tables Turned

After speaking with his friend about books and quiet thought, the man rose and pointed toward the open countryside.

“Come,” he said. “Leave your books for a little while.”

His friend still held a small volume in his hand.

The pages were full of careful arguments written by learned men. He had planned to spend the whole morning studying them.

But the bright world outside the window seemed inviting.

The sun shone across the fields.

The wind moved gently through the branches of the trees.

The man spoke again.

“Why sit inside and read when the world itself is full of living lessons?”

The friend hesitated.

He had always believed that wisdom came mainly from books.

“Books contain knowledge gathered over many years,” he said.

“Surely they deserve our attention.”

The other man nodded.

“Yes,” he replied. “But too much reading can become a problem.”

He stepped outside and motioned for his friend to follow.

“Come into the light,” he said.

The friend finally closed his book and walked outside.

The fresh air touched his face.

The wide sky stretched above them.

At once he felt the difference between the quiet room and the living world outside.

The man pointed toward a small bird sitting on a branch nearby.

“Listen,” he said.

The bird began to sing.

Its clear voice rose into the morning air.

The notes were bright and lively.

The song seemed full of energy and happiness.
“That little bird can teach more about life than many books,” the man said.
The friend looked at him with surprise.
“How can that be?” he asked.
“Because nature speaks directly to the heart,” the man answered.
Books often divide knowledge into many complicated ideas.
They fill the mind with arguments and doubts.
But nature offers something simpler and deeper.
When people listen to the voices of birds, watch the movement of clouds, or walk through quiet fields, they begin to feel the harmony of the world.
That feeling can guide the mind toward wisdom.
The friend listened thoughtfully.
The bird continued its song.
The wind moved softly through the leaves.
The scene seemed calm and balanced.
“A wise mind is not only one that reads,” the man continued.
“It is one that observes and feels.”
The friend slowly began to understand.
Perhaps he had spent too much time searching for truth in printed words.
The world itself contained lessons that required no pages.
He looked again at the open landscape.
The sunlight rested gently upon the earth.
A few clouds drifted slowly across the sky.
The song of the bird filled the quiet morning.
“Very well,” he said at last.
“Today I will leave my books behind.”
The man smiled.
“Good,” he replied.
“Let nature be your teacher for a while.”
Together they walked along the path beside the fields.
The books remained inside the house.

Outside, the living world offered its quiet instruction to anyone willing to listen.

Old Man Travelling

A traveler once walked along a quiet road that passed through the countryside. The day was calm, and the air carried the soft warmth of afternoon.

As he moved slowly along the path, he noticed an old man walking ahead of him.

The old man moved very slowly.

His body was thin and bent with age. Each step required careful effort.

Yet there was something steady and determined in his movement.

The traveler watched him for a moment.

The road stretched across open fields and gentle hills. No houses stood nearby, and the quiet landscape seemed almost empty.

The traveler wondered about the old man.

Where could such a weak and aged person be going alone?

At last he approached and spoke kindly.

“Good sir,” he said, “may I ask where you are traveling today?”

The old man stopped.

He turned his face slowly toward the traveler.

His eyes were calm, though they showed the weight of many years.

For a moment he did not answer.

Then he spoke in a quiet voice.

“I am going to the place where my son lies buried.”

The traveler felt a sudden silence fall upon the moment.

The words carried deep sorrow, yet the old man spoke them with simple calm.

“How far must you go?” the traveler asked gently.

The old man lifted his hand and pointed toward the distant hills.

“Many miles,” he said.

The traveler looked at the long road stretching across the fields.

The journey would be difficult even for a strong young person.

For an old man it seemed almost impossible.

“You should rest,” the traveler suggested. “The road is long.”

But the old man shook his head slowly.

“I must go,” he said.

The traveler could see that no argument would change his decision.

The old man had accepted the difficulty of the journey.

His purpose gave him strength.

For a moment the traveler felt a deep respect for the quiet determination before him.

The old man began walking again.

His steps remained slow but steady.

The traveler watched him move along the road.

The figure of the old man gradually grew smaller against the wide landscape.

The traveler remained standing for some time.

The simple meeting had touched his heart.

Life often moves quietly forward through moments of sorrow and duty.

The old man had not spoken many words.

Yet his silent journey expressed something powerful about love and memory.

Even great distance and great age could not prevent him from visiting the resting place of his son.

At last the traveler continued his own path.

But the image of the old man walking patiently across the hills remained with him long afterward.

The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman

A woman walked slowly across a wide and lonely land.

Snow covered the ground.

The wind moved across the open plains with a cold and endless sound.

The woman carried a small child in her arms.

Her body was weak from hunger and exhaustion, yet she continued to move forward.

Not long before, she had traveled with her husband and their people across this vast wilderness. They had followed the rivers and forests in search of food and shelter.

But winter had come suddenly.

The snow grew deep.

Food became scarce.

The journey became dangerous.

One day the husband made a terrible decision.

The group could not move quickly enough with the woman and her small child.

He believed that if they stayed together, all of them might die.

So he left her behind.

The man promised that he would return.

He told her that he would send help.

But the woman knew in her heart that he would never come back.

Now she wandered alone in the freezing wilderness.

The cold air burned her lungs.

The snow slowed every step she took.

Still she held her child close to her body to keep it warm.

She spoke softly to the baby.

“Do not fear,” she whispered.

The child did not understand the danger around them.

It looked up at her with innocent eyes.

The woman remembered happier days.

She thought about the time when her people had lived peacefully beside the rivers.

In those days the forests had provided food.

The lakes had been full of fish.

Her husband had been strong and kind.

But the world had changed.

Hunger and cold had driven them across the wild land.

Now she walked alone.

Her strength slowly faded.

She reached the edge of a frozen lake.

The wide white surface stretched far into the distance.

The woman looked across it.

The empty silence of the place seemed endless.

She sat down beside a fallen tree.

The child rested quietly in her arms.

The woman felt her strength slipping away.

Yet she did not cry.

Instead she spoke gently to her child.

“Perhaps someone will find you,” she said.

She imagined travelers passing through the forest in the coming spring.

Perhaps they would discover the child and carry it to safety.

That thought gave her a small comfort.

The wind moved softly across the frozen lake.

Snow drifted across the ground.

The woman closed her eyes for a moment.

She felt no anger toward her husband.

Only sadness remained.

She understood that fear and hunger had driven him to abandon her.

Slowly she placed the child beside her.

She wrapped it carefully in her clothing to protect it from the cold.

Then she looked one last time across the silent wilderness.

The sky above the snow was pale and distant.
The wind carried no voices.
The woman's long journey had reached its end.
Yet even in that lonely moment her thoughts remained with the small life she
had tried to protect.
The wide wilderness continued its silent existence.
And the story of the forsaken woman became part of that lonely land.

The Convict

One evening, when the sun had already sunk below the hills, a traveler walked alone along a narrow road.

The light of the sky was fading.

Long shadows stretched across the fields.

The quiet hour between day and night had begun.

As the traveler moved along the road, he noticed a man sitting beside the path.

The stranger looked worn and troubled.

His clothes were rough and dirty.

His face was pale.

It seemed clear that he had known much suffering.

The traveler slowed his steps.

For a moment he wondered whether he should speak.

But the lonely appearance of the man stirred his sympathy.

“Good evening,” the traveler said gently.

The stranger lifted his head.

His eyes looked tired but calm.

“Good evening,” he answered.

For a time the two men remained silent.

The traveler soon learned that the stranger was a convict.

He had been a prisoner for many years.

His life had been filled with hardship and punishment.

Now he had been released.

Yet freedom had not brought him peace.

The world outside the prison walls seemed strange and uncertain.

The convict explained that he had committed a crime long ago.

In a moment of anger and misery he had done something that could never be undone.

For that act he had suffered many years in chains.

The traveler listened carefully.

The fading light of evening surrounded them.

The quiet countryside seemed far removed from the harsh life the convict described.

“Do you regret what you have done?” the traveler asked.

The convict lowered his eyes.

“Every day,” he replied.

“The memory of my crime follows me wherever I go.”

Yet he also spoke of something else.

During his long imprisonment he had learned patience.

He had thought deeply about the mistakes of his life.

Slowly he had begun to understand the harm he had caused.

The traveler felt compassion for the man.

“What will you do now?” he asked.

The convict looked toward the distant hills.

“I do not know,” he said.

“I must begin again.”

The world might still judge him by the crime of his past.

But he hoped that time and honest living might slowly rebuild his life.

The traveler wished him well.

The two men parted quietly as the last light of evening faded from the sky.

The traveler continued along the road.

Behind him the lonely figure of the convict remained seated beside the path.

The meeting had stirred many thoughts.

The traveler realized that human life is often shaped by both guilt and hope.

A single moment of wrongdoing can bring years of suffering.

Yet even a life marked by error may still search for redemption.

As night finally settled over the countryside, the traveler carried this reflection with him along the darkening road.

Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

July 13, 1798

Part 1

Five years have passed since I last stood in this place.

Once again I find myself looking down upon the quiet valley of the River Wye. The river moves slowly through the deep green landscape below me. Its winding path glitters in the light, and the tall cliffs rise calmly above its banks.

I remain still for a long moment.

The scene before me feels both familiar and strangely new.

Five long years have passed since I last saw these hills and woods. Yet the forms of nature seem unchanged. The trees grow thick along the slopes. The farms lie quietly in the valley. Thin lines of smoke rise gently from hidden cottages among the trees.

The peaceful beauty of the place fills my mind.

I look across the wide landscape and feel a quiet joy.

During the years that separated me from this place, the memory of these hills often returned to me. When I lived in crowded towns or walked along noisy streets, my mind would recall this valley.

I would see again the calm river and the silent woods.

Those memories brought comfort.

In moments when my mind felt troubled or restless, the thought of this place gave me strength.

Even when I was far away, the image of this valley lived quietly within me.

It came to me in lonely rooms.

It appeared during long walks through the city.

Sometimes it rose suddenly in my thoughts when I felt tired of the noise and confusion of ordinary life.

The memory of nature worked gently upon my mind.

It calmed my spirit.

It restored a sense of peace.
Now I stand here again, seeing the real landscape before me.
The quiet beauty of the valley seems deeper than I remembered.
I watch the river flowing through the woods.
I see the steep cliffs rising above the water.
I see the green fields stretching across the distant hills.
The whole scene appears full of calm life.
Yet I know that I myself am no longer the same person who stood here five years ago.

Time has changed me.
In those earlier days my love of nature was strong and passionate.
I ran through the hills like a young deer.
The sound of rivers and waterfalls filled me with wild excitement.
The cliffs and mountains seemed powerful and thrilling.
My feelings toward nature were full of youthful energy.
But the years have brought new understanding.
My love for nature has not disappeared.
Instead it has grown deeper and calmer.
I no longer feel only the excitement of youth.
Now I feel something quieter and more thoughtful.
When I look at the hills and rivers, I sense a deeper meaning within them.
Nature has become more than a source of pleasure.
It has become a guide for my thoughts.
The peaceful power of the natural world shapes my mind in ways that I cannot fully explain.

In the quiet presence of forests and rivers, I feel connected to something larger than myself.

It is as if a silent spirit moves through the world.
This presence lives in the light of the sun.
It moves through the wind that touches the trees.
It rests in the calm surface of the river.

And somehow it also lives within the human mind.
When I feel its influence, my thoughts become clearer.
My heart grows more patient and more kind.
The beauty of nature leads the mind toward quiet wisdom.
Standing here again above the valley, I feel that quiet influence once more.
The peaceful world before me seems to speak without words.
And I listen with gratitude.

Part 2

As I stand here looking over the valley, I feel how greatly my understanding has changed since those earlier days.

When I was younger, nature filled me with excitement and physical energy. The rushing of rivers, the dark forests, the steep mountains—these things thrilled me like a powerful adventure.

I loved them with the eagerness of youth.

At that time I did not think deeply about what I felt. The beauty of the world simply struck my senses with force.

The sound of waterfalls, the roar of wind through the trees, the sudden sight of wide landscapes—these things stirred my blood and filled me with wild happiness.

But now my feelings have grown calmer.

The years have given me a different understanding.

The joy I find in nature no longer comes only from excitement.

Instead it comes from quiet reflection.

The scenes of the natural world have become a source of deep thought.

When I look at these hills and woods, I feel something that goes beyond simple pleasure.

It is as if nature speaks to the inner part of my mind.

In the presence of such peaceful beauty, I feel my thoughts becoming more balanced and gentle.

The troubles of daily life grow smaller.

The restless desires of the world lose their power.
A deeper sense of harmony takes their place.
I believe that nature holds a kind of silent wisdom.
It teaches without speaking.
It guides without commanding.
When we spend time among rivers, forests, and open skies, our minds begin to change.
We become more patient.
We become more thoughtful.
Our hearts grow more capable of sympathy toward other people.
During the years when I was far from this valley, the memory of these landscapes often returned to me.
Those memories did not remain only as pictures in my mind.
They worked quietly upon my spirit.
In moments of confusion or sadness, the memory of nature gave me strength.
Even when I walked through crowded streets, I could recall the calm of the woods and rivers.
The memory itself carried a healing power.
It reminded me that the world contains beauty beyond the noise and struggle of human life.
Sometimes, when I felt weary from the demands of the world, these memories brought me peace.
They restored a sense of balance to my thoughts.
I began to understand that nature shapes the mind in ways that are both gentle and lasting.
The quiet influence of natural beauty remains within us long after we leave the place where we first experienced it.
That influence becomes part of our character.
It forms our sense of what is good and meaningful.
Standing here now, looking over the valley once again, I feel gratitude for the power that nature has had in my life.

The river below me flows as it always has.
The woods remain calm and deep.
The hills rise in silent strength around the valley.
And in their presence my mind finds once more the quiet harmony that I have
carried within me for so many years.

Part 3

As I stand here above the valley, I turn my thoughts toward the person who
walks beside me today.

My dear sister, you are here with me now.

When I look at you, I see in your eyes the same bright love for nature that once
filled my own heart in youth.

Your voice carries the joy of those earlier days.

Your laughter echoes the excitement that I once felt when I wandered freely
through forests and hills.

Watching you, I remember my own younger self.

In your happiness I see the image of the past.

This thought fills me with quiet pleasure.

I am glad that you can feel such joy in the beauty of the natural world.

Your mind receives the sights and sounds of nature with freshness and wonder.

The flowing river, the moving trees, the open sky—these things bring you
delight.

And in seeing your joy, I feel my own happiness renewed.

Yet I also think about the years that may come.

Life does not remain unchanged.

Time moves forward.

There will be days when the world seems difficult.

There may be moments when sorrow or disappointment enters your life.

In those hours I hope you will remember this place.

I hope that the memory of this valley will remain with you.

Perhaps you will recall the quiet river moving between the hills.
Perhaps you will remember the deep green woods and the calm evening light.
If such memories stay within your heart, they may bring you comfort.
Just as the memory of this place has comforted me during the years of my absence.

I know that the beauty of nature can become a lasting companion.
Even when we are far away from these hills and rivers, the memory of them can remain within us.

It can return in quiet moments.
It can strengthen us when our spirits feel weak.
My dear sister, I trust that nature will guide you kindly.
The gentle influence of these scenes may help shape your thoughts and character.

The calm beauty of the world can teach patience and compassion.
It can help us understand the lives of others.
It can remind us that we are part of something greater than ourselves.
As I speak these thoughts, the evening light spreads slowly across the valley.
The river below us continues its quiet movement.
The hills stand calm and silent beneath the wide sky.
We remain here together, sharing this peaceful moment.
And I feel certain that the memory of this place will live in both our hearts for many years to come.

Whatever changes may arrive in the future, the quiet beauty of this valley will remain.

Its influence will travel with us wherever we go.