

John Masefield (1878-1967)

6 *Mother Carey*

(As Told Me By The Bo'sun)

Mother Carey? She 's the mother o' the witches
'N' all *them* sort o' rips;
She 's a fine gell to look at, but the hitch is,
She 's a sight too fond of ships. 5
She lives upon a iceberg to the norred,
'N' her man he 's Davy Jones,
'N' she combs the weeds upon her forred
With pore drowned sailors' bones.

She 's the mother o' the wrecks, 'n' the mother 10
Of all big winds as blows;
She 's up to some deviltry or other
When it storms, or sleets, or snows
The noise of the wind 's her screamin',
"I'm arter a plump, young, fine,
Brass-buttoned, beefy-ribbed young seam'n 15
So as me 'n' my mate kin dine."

She 's a hungry old rip 'n' a cruel
For sailor-men like we,
She 's give a many mariners the gruel
'N' a long sleep under sea. 20
She 's the blood o' many a crew upon her
'N' the bones of many a wreck,
'N' she 's barnacles a-growin' on her
'N' shark's teeth round her neck.

I ain't never had no schoolin' 25
Nor read no books like you,
But I knows 't ain't healthy to be foolin'
With that there gristly two.
You're young, you thinks, 'n' you're lairy,
But if you're to make old bones, 30

Steer clear, I says, o' Mother Carey
'N' that there Davy Jones.

1902

(From *The Collected Poems of John Masefield*. 1923;
London: William Heinemann, 1925)