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Fergus O'Connor and the Mermaid

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Fergus O'Connor and the Mermaid

Fergus O'Connor and the Mermaid

"The fishing net is heavy filled,
So rise it steady and slow --
I'll have me haul to sell today,
So heave, me fellows, ho!"

But strange to tell the net was filled
Though they had caught few fish,
For yet a mermaid in their web
Was raised against her wish.

Her hair was yellow gold, green-flecked;
Her skin, sun-tanned and hale;
Her lips and nipples, a brownish rose;
And golden green, her tail.

"I beg your pardon, holy one,
That you be tangled so --"

"Then loose the net, O fisherman,
And let me silent go."

"Of course, of course, but first you'll give,
In gratitude most rare,
Likely a gift, a little thing,
Since you're not shown at the fair?"

"What gift dost thou demand, my lord,
Who holds my life in fee?"

"Oh not so brutal is me hold --
I'll ask but wishes three."

"My spells are ocean born, my lord;
They do no touch elsewhere."

"Myself am sure you'll shape them well,
You'll spell with utmost care."

"Thy wish is my command, my lord;
I'll try to do thy will."

The sun was shining on the boat;
The winds were almost still.

"I like the simple phrase 'me lord,'
But fishers have no gold;

Likely a chest or two of coin
Would make me name extolled."

"That takes of magic none, my lord,
For thirty fathoms deep,

A galleon lies with gold enough
To make the English weep."

"A lord needs power to prove his worth,
Else all his gold is dumb;
Whenever he his fingers snap,
A dozen lords should come."

She cupped her hands within the net,
And sang some words at will --
Not Latin from an ancient scroll
Nor Gaelic older still.

A dark cloud rose upon the verge,
The breeze picked up a bit,
The waves grew stronger in the wind --
Against the boat they hit.

"And third, I'd like the gentry girl
Who lives above the bay --
Sole heir she is of that fine house,
Of all that pride and sway."

The mermaid sang again her song,
So soft, as the tide had ebbed;
She raised her right hand in the net,
Her fingers spread and webbed.

The cloud now covered half the sky,
The wind was blowing strong;
She smiled to see the rising waves
Which with the storm belonged.

"You fool, you fool," she cried to him,
"Kill me or kill me not --"

The clouds have come, the winds are high,
The waves rise at this spot.

"You fool, you fool, your death is here --
You'll sink to gold below;

A foolish girl will cry about
Dead fishers she did not know."

"But power! me power! you gave me power --
I'll make the storm hold fast."

"The only power that you've received
Is in the mighty blast."

by Joe R. Christopher