

**THE SIRENS
THREE: A POEM**

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The Sirens Three: A Poem by Walter Crane

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WALTER CRANE

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THREE: A POEM**





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THREE.

A POEM:

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED
BY

WALTER CRANE



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TO WILLIAM MORRIS.

*The Mage of Naishápír in English tongue¹
Beside the northern sea I, wandering, read;
With chaunt of breaking waves each verse was said,
Till, storm-possessed, my heart in answer sung;
And to the winds my ship of thoughts I flung,
And drifted wide upon the ocean dread
Of space and time, ere thought of life were bred,
Till Hope did cast the anchor, and I clung.*

*The book of Omar saw I, limned in gold,
And decked with vine and rose and pictured pause,
Enwrought by hands of one well-skilled and bold
In art of poesy and Freedom's cause,
Hope of humanity and equal laws:
To him and to this hope be mine enscrolled.*

WALTER CRANE.

September, 1885.



¹ Rabáiyát of Omar Khayyám. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald.



The Sirens Three.

I.

LOST on a sleepless sea, without avail
My soul's ship drifted wide, with idle sail
And slow pulsating oars, that night's blue gulf
Beat noiselessly to Time's recurring tale.

II.

The rolling hours like waves broke, one by one,
Upon the tide of thought time's sands outrun,
And cloudy visions hovered o'er my bed,
Piled to the stars, full soon like cloud undone:

III.

As, like the wan moon through her fleecy sea,
My spirit clove their rack unceasingly,
And struck at last upon an unknown ground,
More still than sleep, more strange than dreamlands be.

IV.

The echoes of lost thoughts wild music made,
Like Sirens, heard above the winds that played,
Above the rhythmic waves' tumultuous tone,
Upon the hollows of that coast decayed.

I

B

The Sirens Three.

V.

Yea, on the strand they stood, the Sirens three—
No More, and golden Now, and dark To Be,
Whose vocal harps are love, and hope, and grief;
To these they sang, and waved their hands to me.

VI.

Who thence, unto the shore, escaping, clung,
As from the dread insatiate ocean's tongue
That lapped the barren sand, and evermore,
Above its vain recoil, the Sisters sung.

VII.

Prone on that unknown land, outcast, forlorn,
My soul lay; watching for the eyes of morn;
As from a dying universe adrift,
A naked life—to what dim world new born?

VIII.

All former things had passed, the sea's salt tears
From Youth's frail ship had washed false hopes and fears,
And relics, treasured once, bestrewed the sand,
Wrapped in the clinging weed the seamaid wears.

IX.

The bodies of lost Faith and Love, outcast,
Spurned by the waves, and clinging to the mast,
Were flung upon the shore, mid drift and wreck,—
Time's fragile shells, which frailer lives outlast.

The Sirens Three.

X.

As at the world's end left, the last of men,
Or ere the first was sphered, beyond his ken,
Was I, mid tumbled kosmic fragments cast—
A babe at play within a mammoth's den :

XI.

Mid bones of power extinct, and its lost prey,
With shreds and shards of unknown primal day—
The formless Future, and the Past forgot,
The broken statue, and the sculptor's clay.

XII.

The blue-breast bird of space his fan outspread,
And shook the starry splendour o'er my head—
A wood of eyes that wonder at the world,
Glassed in the world's eyes' wonder, scanned and read :

XIII.

Each burning orb that did the sky emblaze
Upon my spirit lone cast piercing gaze ;
World beyond world enringed, and suns aflame
Shot from night's spangled cloud their storm of rays.

XIV.

As doth the glass to one bright point intense
Draw the sun's fervour to our shrinking sense ;
So, on my soul, the concentrated fire
Of countless suns that moment did condense.

XV.

My brain, an instant's Atlas, seemed to bear
The Universe immense, and all its care ;
For Thought's frail arms intolerable weight,
Since Nature's triumph still is Man's despair.