

The Witch-Wife
By Cicely Fox Smith, 1899

The Witch-wife dwells by the Northern Sea
And it's oh but the wind pipes shrill!
Alone on the waveworn shore sits she,
Where the boisterous winds blow wild and free
From the icefields drear and chill.

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She sits by the reef where seamen drown  
When the sea-mist's swirling grey,  
And she wears on her brow a golden crown,  
For she rules the seals from the North Cape down  
To the coast of Noroay.

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Over her shoulders her dank locks stream
And it's oh but the wind blows cold!
And she sits as one who is lost in a dream;
But the curl of her lip and her eye's cold gleam
Bodes ill for the sailor bold.

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King Eric has sailed from Norway,  
O'er the wintry sea he roves,  
And he's hunted the seals for a month and a day  
Over the icepack cold and grey,  
The seals that the Witch-wife loves.

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And over the sea to his home he steers,
His long, long hunting o'er,
And "Lo!" he cries, "the light appears,
That ever my longing vision cheers
When I near my native shore."

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The good ship steers for the welcome light  
And it's oh but the waves roll cold!  
Lured to her doom in the dead of night  
By the treacherous lamps so calm and bright  
That the weird sea-maidens hold.

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She leaps on the rocks like a hunted thing,
And the waves now leap above.
Such was the fate of Eric the King,
Who hunted the seals to his ruining,
The seals that the Witch-maids love!