

# “OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING”

by Walt Whitman

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was  
    Growing,  
Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feathered guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouched on her nest, silent,  
And every day I, a curious child, never too close, never disturbing  
    Them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! Shine!  
Pour down your warmth, great sun!  
While we bask, we two together.  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,  
Maybe killed, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest,  
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appeared again.  
And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! Blow!  
Blow up sea winds along Paumanok's shore;  
I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glistened,  
The lone singer called on his mate, and  
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
Listened to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,

Soothe! Soothe!  
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,  
But my love soothes not me.  
Low hangs the moon --  
O I think it is heavy with love, with love.  
O night! Do I not see my love fluttering out among the  
Breakers?  
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! Loud!  
Loud I call to you, my love!  
Surely you must know who is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.  
Low-hanging moon!  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
O it is the shape of my mate!  
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.

Hither, my love!  
Here I am! Here!

But my mate no more with me!  
We two together no more.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating  
You,  
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before  
What there in the night

Whereto answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whispered me through the night, and very plainly before  
Daybreak,  
Lisped to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my aroused  
Child's heart,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me soft  
All over,  
Death, death, death, death.