
THE WHALE

TERENCE HEYWOOD*

The spirit of a man should never fail,
But like the whale,
Who at the shark's approach swallows her young,
Should rescue its convictions. She'll then sail
Stately in tempestuous waters all among
Her foes until where peace is
Her paunch-protected children she releases.

Nor does the whale despair when from a distance
She sees a feeble flopping on the beach
And knows it is her child: she sends assistance,
Spouting prodigious volume when at reach,
And down the child will slide,
A stranded hulk refloated by the tide,
To find again a shelter by the mother's side.

And when at last,
Worried by shoals, herself has run aground,
The savage mob dischunk her all around,
Leaving the ruined fabric of that vast
Vault to the eager builders.

In houses of whalebone
No dreams have they
Save of perpetual drowning to a low moan.

But, they say,

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