

Final Voyage

by John F. Ratterman

*I've sailed my ship in troubled times,
I've navigated stormy climes.
I've sailed a lifetime's oceans wide,
On ebbing current, flooding tide.*

*And every day my sails were full,
My halyards tight as I could pull.
My canvas bellied, fat in curl;
I didn't reef, I didn't furl.*

*My rigging sang a rhapsody,
O'er which I heard the sirens' plea,
While squalls my ship passed underneath,
A frothing bone between her teeth.*

*But that was when my ship was strong,
And journeys yet ahead were long;
Horizons always shimmered far,
As did my distant, beckoning star.*

*Now, final passage lies ahead,
Its shallow entrance tugs the lead.
And in the evening's waning light
Our destination looms in sight.*

*For now my ship's become a care;
Can it be that she's no longer yare,
No longer strong enough to lay
Her final course in peril's way?*

*Her hull is tired, her timbers weak,
And gaps between her planking leak.
Her rigging sags, is scarcely tight
Enough to keep her masts upright.*

*Her pennant's ragged, ensign torn,
From headwinds off our "Capricorn."
Her sails are tattered, thin and worn
From passages around our "Horn."*

*Her keel is warped from knock-down rolls,
From driving hard on rocks and shoals.
I've driven head-to-windward hard,
On points around my magnet's card.*

*Yet, oh, my ship, I'll sail you through,
Our miles ahead are just a few.
The line we plotted at the start
Now's but a few tics on the chart.*

*Your rudder's fixed by some great Force,
My hand no longer guides our course.
As, drawn, we near and gently glide
Across life's final, Great Divide.*

*But as our passing fades to gray,
One final thing, my ship, I pray:
At sunset's final going-down,
We'll see an instant's emerald crown*