

# The Sea-Born Vine

By William Sharp

*(A Dionysiac Legend)*

The sun leapt up the rose-flushed sky  
And yellowed all the sea's pale blue;  
The Tyrrhene crew  
Uprose and hailed the God on high.

But Dionysos made no sign:  
The shipmen hailed their Lord again,  
Acclaimed His reign,  
Then stared upon their guest divine.

"The deep shall swallow thee, fair sir:  
The sea-things shall make thee their prey—  
The God obey  
Or meet swift death ere thou canst stir!"

*"Ere ye arose, my spirit bowed  
To the Great God unrisen then  
Take heed, O men,  
Your clamour grow not overloud."*

"A priest of Bacchus thou! Behold:  
One sea-wave here could whelm thy God—  
His mystic rod  
Would float foam-crown'd 'mid this wave-gold.

*"Ai Evoë!* thy voice might fill  
The waste of sea, the waste of sky,  
Yet thou wouldst die,  
Thy god supine on some green hill!"

*Ai Evoë!* the cry thrilled wide:  
The startled rowers shrank—they saw  
With trembling awe  
The conscious waters surge aside.

*Ai Evoë!* The waves turn green;  
In tendril masses twist and twine  
A mighty vine  
Uprises and o'erhead doth lean:

*Ai Evoë!* The tendrils cling  
About the shipmen as they swim:  
The Bacchic hymn  
The waves chant and the wild winds sing.

*Evoë!* Dionysos cries,  
The seamen and the boat no more  
The shingly shore  
Shall feel 'neath known or alien skies.

Blue dolphins guide the wave-born vine  
To caves near mystic Ind:  
Only the wind  
Murmurs for aye the tale divine.

Ye who deride the gods, beware:  
They are with us evermore; they brook  
No scornful look;  
Their vengeance fills our mortal air.

Yea, of the jealous gods, take heed  
One day the earth or sea shall ope  
And vanquish hope—  
An *Evoë* be vain indeed!