

Eino, a Sailor

(KOISTINEN V. AMERICAN EXPORT LINES, INC., 83 N.Y.S. 2D 297 (1948))

Brainerd Currie

*They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters,
Tend, given shore leave, to prize their nips
And seek commerce with men's daughters.
Peril and storm ride the brooding deep,
But the seaman has his solace;
Ancient the law that insures his keep
Though his hurt flow from his follies.
Ward of the admiralty is he,
Be he cruising or pub-crawling;
He needs protection, who goes to sea,
From the perils of his calling.
Maintenance is to be his, and cure,
Though his case be somewhat perviewous –
His, that's to say, if his heart be pure
And his doings in ship's service.*

Brainerd Currie was Professor of Law at the University of Chicago when he wrote this poem.

*The steamship John N. Robins was a bonny ship and fine;
She proudly flew the standard of the good old Export Line.
Her bows had split the seven seas, yet all the crew were free
From any form of casualty but water on the knee.*

*The manly men who manned her were as manly as could be;
Her fo'c's'le housed as staunch a crew as ever put to sea;
And Eino Koistinen was first of all this manly clan –
His shipmates picked him from their midst and made him
chanty-man.*

*As Eino was a-tiring of his daily mess of caviar,
The ship a landfall made; she raised the coast of Jugoslavia.
Half wages, shore leave all around – he didn't mind a bit
When just before high noon that day they cleared the port of
Split.*

*The very name of this fair port suggested rare champagne,
So Eino headed for a bar, as shelter from the rain.
He had a drink or two, and then he sought another bar,
For Eino shared the classic disposition of the tar.*

Eino, a Sailor

*All in the port of Split, my lads,
All in the port of Split,
He plied his right to see the sights
(See Benedict, op. cit.).*

*And then, as is a sailor's wont, and singing "Abel Brown,"
He sallied forth to stroll the streets, for he would see the town.
Imagine his surprise to meet a girl whose blandishments
His iron will could not resist, despite his good intents.*

He let her take him to her room, for heav'nly contemplation.
(This be a basic hazard of the seaman's occupation.)
Judge Carlin later heard the case; his findings was laconic:
"Whate'er the motive, it was not especially platonic."

Once there, consideration like an angel came to rout
Th' offending Adam from his soul, and turn his mind about.
So says His Honor; and the bloke is surely off his base
Who dares to doubt that this is just exactly what took place.

But then he was confronted with the ire of woman scorned;
Such fits she threw, such scenes she staged, he wished he'd not been
borned.
Demanding compensation for her outraged chastity,
She locked them both inside the room and threw away the key.

As, clamoring for exit, Eino kicked against the door,
He thought of seas and ships, and wished he hadn't come ashore.
Then suddenly it opened, and against the lintels loomed
A man of mien so menacing he knew that he was doomed.

He knew the monster for a crimp, but held himself to blame;
He knew he'd been the victim of the ancient badger game.
No haven met his scanning eye, to leeward or to windward;
He would have walked right out the door, had not his way been
hindered.

With cool deliberation, then, and prudence for his book,
He chose his course – a circle great – and hoisted up his hook.
Straight through the window sash he sailed, in one great, soaring
dive –
A paneful navigation, but at least he's still alive.

Eíno, a Sailor

*The proctors wouldn't let them pay for maintenance and cure,
So Eíno had to go to court to prove his heart was pure.
The proctors saw in Eíno's acts a maritime transgression,
And said his hurt resulted from his moral indiscretion.*

*But Carlin, J., presided, and he saw the issues clear;
He had the glitt'ring vision of a bright-eyed mariner:
"I know Eíno was naughty, I know he made a slip,
But all that Eíno did was in the service of the ship.*

*"In the service of the ship, my lads,
In the service of the ship.
Eíno he broke his blushin' leg
In the service of the ship.*

*"Confronted with dilemma, as Ulysses was of yore,
He acted as a master would, although he stood ashore.
'Twi'xt Scylla and Charybdís, 'twixt the whirlpool and the rock,
He made the choice that seems him best, and proctors shall not
mock.*

*"How came he to this parlous pass is neither here nor there.
If you must know, it was because he had a sailor's flair.
With seamanship and courage, and at hazard of his skin,
He saved an able seaman's life to go to sea again.*

*"In the service of the ship, my lads,
In the service of the ship.
Eíno he broke his blushin' leg
In the service of the ship."*

*Eino's gone down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the
sky,
And all he asks is a shore leave, and a buck to get him by,
And a brisk walk, and a low dive, and the brown ale foaming,
And a brisk walk, and a low dive, and the brown ale foaming.*

*Eino's gone down to the seas again, where the wind's like a
whetted knife;
For in his way, and the court's way, he saved a sailor's life.
And all he asks is a laughing lass and a dimly lighted foyer,
And privacy, and a sweet dream, and a good sea lawyer.*

