

## Natalie Merchant

# "Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience"

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I had a silver penny  
And an apricot tree  
And I said to the sailor  
On the white quay

Sailor O sailor  
Will you bring me  
If I give you my penny  
And my apricot tree

'A fez from Algeria  
An Arab drum to beat  
A little gilt sword  
And a parakeet?'

And he smiled and he kissed me  
As strong as death  
And I saw his red tongue  
And I felt his sweet breath

You may keep your penny  
And your apricot tree  
And I'll bring your presents  
Back from sea.'

O the ship dipped down  
On the rim of the sky  
And I waited while three  
Long summers went by

Then one steel morning  
On the white quay  
I saw a grey ship  
Come in from sea

Slowly she came  
Across the bay  
For her flashing rigging  
Was shot away  
All round her wake  
The seabirds cried  
And flew in and out

Of the hole in her side

Slowly she came  
In the path of the sun  
And I heard the sound  
Of a distant gun

And a stranger came running  
Up to me  
From the deck of the ship  
And he said, said he

O are you the boy  
Who would wait on the quay  
With the silver penny  
And the apricot tree?

I've a plum-coloured fez  
And a drum for thee  
And a sword and a parakeet  
From over the sea.'

O where is the sailor  
With bold red hair?  
And what is that volley  
On the bright air?

O where are the other  
Girls and boys?  
And why have you brought me  
Children's toys?'

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