

Ballad: Babette's Love

Babette was a charming fisher girl from Boulogne, known for her beauty and innocence, spending her days in the Halle or catching shrimp. Her heart is set on marrying an able mariner named Bill, who works for the General Steam-Boat Navigation Company and spends his off-hours dreamily overlooking the port, thoughts possibly adrift to his distant home in Chelsea.

Jacot, a customs officer smitten with Babette, confesses his love, only to be rejected as she finds him undesirably thin and declares her affection for the sailor, Bill. Despite Jacot's distress, expressed in a mix of French exasperations, Babette's resolve remains firm, her dreams tethered to her mariner.

The captain of the Panther, a man of strict morals, hears of Bill's romance with Babette and is dismayed that one of his sailors might indulge in such distractions, particularly on foreign soil. Reflecting on the situation with sorrow and a sense of moral disappointment, he confronts Bill, acknowledging the sailor's unintended charm and the affection he's kindled in Babette.

With a sense of duty and perhaps a touch of paternal influence, the captain instructs Bill to make an honest woman of Babette, offering his blessings for their union. This development, stemming from an innocent crush and leading to a mandated rectification of a sailor's unwitting entanglement, encapsulates the intertwined themes of love, duty, and social propriety.

The ballad closes on a note of impending marriage, arranged with a blend of coercion and blessing, drawing together the lives of a local fisher girl, an honorable sailor, and the watchful eyes of authority figures, encapsulating the societal norms and expectations of love and marriage within their community.