

Penlee

The cold sea covets one more life
The crewman leaves his tender wife
Drags on his boots and overcoat
Now he's running for the boat

He fights his way down to the shore
The rocket's bangs have gathered more
With anxious nod he greets the Coxn
Joins his brothers on the Watson

The whistle shrieks, the diesels roar
The hammer clangs – she's out the door
Pounding headlong down the slip
Her passage planned to save a ship

The breakers pound the valiant vessel
To tunes of tortured straining metal
As if the hull begins to crack
But Lifeboatmen just don't turn back

They find their quarry in dire plight
Awash and plunging in the night
They try to close, to pass a line
The last report – she's doing fine

Then distant drumbeats swell until
A Sea King hovers o'er the kill
This clattering storm bird of the night
Upon its cone of trembling light

With inch precision searching swells
For a clue some soul to tell
But all she finds this night so evil
Is wreckage and the stench of diesel

The ship is lost, the Lifeboat too
Along with company and crew
The greatest gift a man can give
To give his life that another might live

So we recall with painful pride
Ten years on the men who died
And others like them, hundreds more
Serving round our nation's shores

So when it's blowing, raining, night
Let's not forget these heroes plight
Let's pray for them and what they do
Our ever gallant Lifeboat crews

Ed Fletcher