

# John and Mary

by Andrew Horsfall

John was a prince and Mary a princess. This is largely the case in stories, because most other professions don't have so much time to devote to heroism and romance.

John was an explorer. He sailed before the Greeks and Phoenicians and Vikings, when the continents were a different shape, so almost all the beautiful names that he gave to islands and rivers and nations have been covered up by other names. If anyone remembered him, he would be called the father of discovery.

Mary was a songwriter. She was a captive most of her adult life, and had never been touched since she became a prisoner. Never a push. Never a hug. Her talent was so great that she never repeated a tune. She sang to please the king who enslaved her; but her best songs, about love and being at home, were kept from him. She knew they were not meant for him. They were sealed in clay jars and thrown into a river by the princess.

Have you ever heard in song or story how a sailor cannot leave the sea? John was the first person to be bound that way. When he was still very young, he had already discovered more land than his kingdom could fill, but he still sailed. The reason was Mary. Our discoverer found the unsung songs, and he continued to seek their writer.

Near the end of her life Mary was let out of captivity, because her creativity failed and her voice cracked when she tried to sing an old song again. Near the end of his life, John was abandoned by his crew then shipwrecked: left with only the jars he had found.

Mary found John sitting on rock on a rocky coast. Without introduction, she took the songs from him and sang them for their first time. As her last song ended, John gave her a genuine, soul-holding hug. Then legend says the sea washed both of them away.

Some people will read a lot into this story. I'm not as smart as them, so all I get out of it is this: when you're worn out, someone has a hug and a song for you.