**Story of a** [**seal**](http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%A6%CF%8E%CE%BA%CE%B9%CE%B1)

**I**have always liked seals, especially since I heard the story I am about to tell you in Holland. It's true, if you believe the Dutch. These animals are the fishermen's dogs. They have the head of [a molossus](http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2256/Neoelliniki-Glossa_A-Gymnasiou_html-empl/extras/images/en_3_Molossos_wikimedia_commons.jpg), the eye of a bovine and the whiskers of a cat. During the fishing season they follow the boats and chase the fish when the fisherman misses or lets it escape. In the winter they are very cold and in every [igloo](http://ebooks.edu.gr/ebooks/v/html/8547/2256/Neoelliniki-Glossa_A-Gymnasiou_html-empl/extras/images/en_3_Iglu_wikimedia_commons.jpg) fisherman you see one hanging around, usually taking the best position in front of the fire, waiting for its share of whatever is boiling in the kettle.

A fisherman and his wife were going through great poverty-the year was very bad-and, when there was no more scales, the fisherman says to his wife: "This dirty fish is eating the bite out of our children's mouths. I feel like taking it and throwing it into the sea; let it go and find its own kind; they know some holes, and they winter over, burrowing under seaweed, and always digging out a fish to eat."

The fisherman's wife fell on her knees before her husband and begged him to spare the seal. But the thought of her children, who were starving to death, quickly directed this fit of magnanimity. At dawn the fisherman put the seal in his boat and after opening a few leagues, he unhooked her in a drying island. The seal started playing with the other seals and didn't even notice that the boat was leaving.

The fisherman returned to his hut, heartbroken by the loss of his mate. Once inside, he found the seal sitting round in front of the fire, drying her fur. They starved for a few more days. Then the fisherman, alarmed by the cries of his children asking for food, decided to take more forceful action. This time, he opened up very deep into the sea and threw the seal into the water, far from the shore. The seal was desperately trying to cling to the railing with its hand-like fins. The fisherman, irritated, smacked her with the paddle, causing her to break a fin. The seal blew something squeaky like a man and disappeared into the water, which was stained red with her blood.

The fisherman returned home a mental wreck. This time the seal wasn't waiting for him under the chimney. But that same night, there were voices outside in the street. The fisherman thought someone was being killed and went out to help the victim. In front of the door he found the seal that had crawled up to the house and was crying out loudly, raising its bloody flipper to the sky. They picked her up, took care of her, and never again thought of sending her away from the house; besides, from that moment on, the catch was better and better every time.

Cérard de Nerval, in Modern European Literature,

Anthology of Translations, Secondary School (optional), OEDB, 2000