**Chosen for the Sea** *by Jolie Marchant*

Hard backed and burly, fellers appear early

 in the morning sun.

Tough men of timber, linger

 in the shadow of death.

With reverence, noble oak is eyed.

Slant of fall is set.

Towering giant of liberty, stands rigid as

 saffron sunlight flickers above its crown.

A mosaic mantel of burnished leaves, gold and lime,

 freckled with frosted jade.

A kaleidoscope canopy.

Time is up for this puritan of the forest.

Cuts are angled, wedges knocked

 in blistered bark to counteract the arc.

Axe comes down with a whack, swings,

 attacks the unyielding king.

Spangles spark.

Saws released, frenzied beasts.

Metallic arms thrust reaching for the heart.

Jagged fangs grind into cuts as

 dust sprinkles onto razor teeth

 that grin, revealing their plaque.

A shudder’s felt as nutrients melt.

Pulpy core resins and minerals leak

 from their cherished home.

Smarting gums and haunted hormones

 follow through sinewy subways.

At the bellowing timberman’s call,

 bending boughs creak from limb to limb.

Scavengers fall from flaying branches that

 tremble in the path of shadows.

There’s a deathly pause.

The injured warrior tips the balance and waits

 poised on rooted toes.

Silently he hurls defiance.

Then roars.

His girth shakes, growth rings judder and flinch.

Crescendo of splintering cracks, snap.

A gasp, an expiring groan echo as he

 plunges and slams the ground.

Shockwaves raise his hulk, bounces back.

A heavy heart on trembling earth.

This hardwood king, felled, chosen for the sea.

Cherished and prized.

Within walls of ancient oak is his call,

 riding on waves to battle.