

# Empire of the Clouds

Iron Maiden

To ride the storm, to an empire of the clouds  
To ride the storm, they climbed aboard their silver ghost  
To ride the storm, to a kingdom that will come  
To ride the storm, and damn the rest, oblivion

Royalty and dignitaries, brandy and cigars  
Grey lady giant of the skies, you hold them in your arms  
The millionth chance they laughed, to take down his majesty's craft  
"To India," they say, "magic carpet float away," an October fateful day

Mist is in the trees, stone sweats with the dew  
The morning sunrise, red before the blue  
Hanging at the mast, waiting for command  
His majesty's airship, the R101

She's the biggest vessel built by man, a giant of the skies  
For all you unbelievers, the titanic fits inside  
Drum roll tight, her canvas skin, silvered in the sun  
Never tested with the fury, with the beating yet to come

The fury yet to come...

In the gathering gloom, the storm rising in the west  
The coxswain stared into the plunging weather glass  
We must go now, we must take our chance with fate  
We must go now, for a politician he can't be late  
The airship crew awake for thirty hours at full stretch,  
But the ship is in their backbone, every sinew, every inch

She never flew at full speed, a trial never done  
Her fragile outer cover, her Achilles would become

An Achilles yet to come...

Sailors of the sky, a hardened breed  
Loyal to the king, and an airship creed

The engines drum, the telegraph sounds  
Release the cords that bind us to the ground  
Said the coxswain, "Sir, she's heavy, she'll never make this flight."  
Said the captain, "Damn the cargo! We'll be on our way tonight."  
Groundlings cheered in wonder, as she backed off from the mast  
Baptizing them her water, from the ballast fore and aft

Now she slips into our past...

Fighting the wind as it rolls you  
Feeling the diesels that push you along  
Watching The Channel below you  
Lower and lower, into the night

Lights are passing below you  
Northern France, asleep in their beds  
Storm is raging around you  
A million to one, that's what he said

Reaper standing beside her

With his scythe cuts to the bone  
Panic to make a decision  
Experienced men, asleep in their graves

Her cover is ripped and she's drowning  
Rain is flooding into the hull  
Bleeding to death and she's falling  
Lifting gas is draining away

"We're down, lads!" came a cry, bow plunging from the sky  
Three thousand horses silent as the ship began to die  
The flares to guide her path ignited at the last  
The empire of the clouds, just ashes in our past  
Just ashes at the last...

Here lie their dreams as I stand in the sun  
On the ground where they built, and the engines did run  
To the moon and the stars, now what have we done?  
Oh the dreamers may die, but the dreams live on

Dreams live on  
Dreams live on

Now a shadow on a hill, the angel of the east  
The empire of the clouds may rest in peace  
And in a country churchyard, laid head to the mast  
Eight and forty souls, who came to die in France...