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Composition

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1: Setting Sail

Alone on the beach at midnight
I found a boat,
and wondered what it might take
to make it float.

As if in the waves at my feet
I could open a door,
and cross the sea to where
I'd never been before.

The beat of my heart was a tide
which rose up the beach,
and the moon was the pulse of a lighthouse
just out of reach.

So I stepped in the boat with my blood
for the mast and sail,
my hand the rudder, my spine
the wooden keel.

The stars above my head
became an arrow
pointing me out from the beach
towards tomorrow.

And I knew I would sail that boat
towards the light.
To where I wasn't alone on the beach
at midnight.

2: My Father's Boat

Now and again I remember
the boats we made together my father and me.
I recall the smell of glue
and all the pieces laid out on the table.

Chorus: Dip your brush and begin
with aquamarine for the sea,
then paint the sky with night
and come for a sail with me.

We put them together slowly
like steps in a dance we found it hard to learn.
We read the instructions so often
I heard them in my head as I went to sleep.

And all I am asking now
is a bit of help with putting myself together.
I know it won't be easy,
but if we take things gently we'll be fine.

All the instructions are lost
and some of the pieces missing but even so,
I think I can still dance
over the dark waves with you as my partner.

3: What we did on our holiday

What we did on our holiday
was sit on a bench as the sun
melted ice cream down
our sticky fingers.

And what we did on our holiday
was fly a kite that grew
smaller the higher it went
till it hit a cloud.

And what we did on our holiday
was build an enormous castle
whose walls would never fall
till the tide came in.

And what we did on our holiday
was splash each other with water
that tasted like tears until
a towel came along.

We fell asleep to the sound
of waves in our heads,
we dreamt of an ice-cream castle,
that's what we did on our holiday.

4: Crossing the Equator

The day you cross the equator for the first time
you're summoned to the Court of Neptune –
a series of strange and comical tasks await
before you become a Shellback or 'Son of the Deep'.

And so whenever I get to the top of the stair
and forget what I'm there for, when I lose my keys,
or find I've put my clothes on inside-out
I tell myself: I'm only crossing the equator.

And when I lost my step and fell overboard
and saw my life go sailing off without me,
I knew in the end it was either sink or swim.

King Neptune remember me now your trusty servant,
throw me a lifeline soon O Merciful Majesty,
save me from sharks and crabs and the storms of life.

5: The Shipping Forecast

Chorus: Dogger, Fisher, German Bight,
steer me safely through the night.
Gale Force Nine and Storm Force Ten,
let me see dry land again.

As a child I always knew when a storm was coming.
I hid myself away,
and watched the cups and saucers flying round;
the plates come smashing down in smithereens.

Sometimes at night I felt the floor heave up.
I crouched into a ball,
and shuddered as we broke through stubborn ice;
I thought the house might sink but it never did.

And so whenever a storm approaches now,
I batten down the hatches,
except today it's me who steers the house
through rain and wind and ice towards the morning.

Stick with me now, we'll get through this together,
listen to the shipping forecast,
pick up the broken pieces and start afresh.
Remember, it's all plain sailing after a storm.

6: The Fortunate Isles

I've been to the Fortunate Isles,
and what I remember most,
is a curious thing which takes place once a year.

In clothes that do not fit,
clothes that are most unsuitable,
old people go to the playgrounds and take them over.

Like swallows they swing through the air,
and spin on giddy roundabouts,
or slip down sleek slides with a gleeful shriek.

But then a terrible thing,
a terrible thing happened:
the old went right on playing and would not stop.

And as they laughed and played,
their bodies grew small as children,
and no one could make them do what they were told.

Their children watched them play,
children who looked like adults,
and told them: *be careful and stop it and don't touch that!*

I've been to the Fortunate Isles
where the old are young forever
and laughter is bright as sunshine after rain.

7: Cup and Saucer

Whenever I'm a saucer
you're my cup.

Whenever you are down
I'll lift you up.

If I'm a blunted knife
you'll be my fork.

If you were an empty sky
I'd be the lark.

When I'm a dark tunnel
you're the light.

When you've been left behind
I'll see you right.

If ever I'm too cold
you keep me warm.

If ever you are stormy
I'll be calm.

[repeat]

8: Sailing By

Chorus: This is a prayer for space. This is a prayer for ease.
This is a prayer for grace. This is a prayer for peace.

In a time of calm we rest upon the waves
and take our ease,
one white cloud in a blue sky
is a seagull sailing by.

In a time of calm we mend our tattered sails,
fix a leaky tap,
sing a sleepy lullaby
to a seagull sailing by.

In a time of calm we watch the moonlight gleam
on a millpond sea,
hear the desolate cry
of a seagull sailing by.

In a time of calm we wait for the wind to blow
so hard and cold,
then over the waves we'll fly
like a seagull sailing by.

9: Boatsong

I am the mast: a tree among the waves,
I hold the sail where once I held my leaves.
O mast we promise now we'll stand like you –
tall and straight and true.

I am the wheel: you turn me and I follow
the course we take towards a new tomorrow.
O wheel we promise now we'll learn to move
towards a deeper love.

I am the rudder: steer me left or right
I'll guide you port or starboard through the night.
O rudder we promise now we'll learn to bend
towards our journey's end.

I am the sail: hoist me and I fill
with the blue sky's breath until I'm full.
O sail we promise now to ask the wind
to blow us somewhere kind.

I am the compass: look at me and know
the true direction you must always go.
O compass we promise now to find the way
towards a better day.

I am the anchor: heavy and hard to lift
and yet my smile will never let you drift.
O anchor we promise now to hold on tight
to all that's true and right.

This is the ship to hold us safe and dry
above the waves, beneath the open sky.
O ship our promise meets in you tonight
as we voyage towards the light.