

Excerpt from *Boats*, written by Finegan Kruckemeyer. Not to be presented without official licensing. To enquire, please go to: finegankruckemeyer.com

Available for reading in Chinese, English and German, and as an opera (composed by Hannes Dufek)

NIC: The surface of a boat is covered with a lot of things. And a boat which is covered with a lot of things, belongs at sea. And a man with a beard and the face of a woman tattooed on his arm, a man who sits on a boat while it goes out to sea...

The boat is rolling back and forth on the waves.

Jof begins rocking.

NIC: It creaks.

With his belt, he makes creaking sounds.

NIC: And when a man such as this man, such as Jof the Younger, son of Jof the Elder, grandson of Jof the Ridiculously Old, when he works at sea, he hums.

Jof does.

NIC: He hums so magically that it sounds like two people humming.

Nicholas joins in.

NIC: Like three.

The sound is looped.

NIC: Like many... The tune is one that Jof the Younger made up – it is called ‘The Day That The Sea Brought My Sweetheart To Me’. Roll up your sleeve, Jof. [*He reveals a tattoo*] That’s his sweetheart, Eliza Turk. She waits for him at the end of an ocean.

Nicholas removes from his pocket a balloon and blows it up.

NIC: Jof hums to a woman – but it’s heard in the water too. The puffer fish hears it.

The balloon is shown floating along.

NIC: No, see... [*He lets it go*] ...it’s just a balloon. But...

Another balloon. The released air creates bird-whistles.

NIC: Any ideas?

More bird calls.

NIC: Ah...

Jof raises a bird and together, Nicholas and Jof make it fly around the space. The sense of a storm, of lightning.

NIC: Above the waves, soars the gull.

Jof was born on a boat, on his parents' boat. But not below, in the safety of a cabin bed – oh no. And not even on deck, his mother lying on a blanket in the warm October sun. He wasn't that lucky.

But rather, in the middle of a storm – with lightning stabbing the clouds, and the waves crashing over the sides of the Chattanooga, the small family fishing trawler way out in the angry South Seas. And at the time that Jof first kicked, his mother was standing... in the crow's nest, keeping watch.

The crow's nest is right at the top of the mast, and in a storm it rocks side to side, and in his mother's belly, Jof was rocked too, sloshed left, and sloshed right. Until finally he looked through the porthole that was her belly-button and called out:

JOF: *[Shouts above the tempest]* I'm ready to be born now!

NIC: And so Jof shouted to his mother Matilda, and mother Matilda shouted to her husband, and her husband climbed the rigging, and stood beside her in the crow's nest, and little Jof the Younger, he was born...

In a storm...

Safe and warm...

...In the arms of his parents.

Watched over by a gull who sailed on the harsh winds, weaving between the lightning bolts, flying above Jof and leading him to land. And the gull has been there, over Jof's head every day since.

A kettle begins to whistle.

NIC: When Jof looks up, he knows he is safe.

JOF: Tea's ready.

NIC: The tea's ready. My name is Nicholas. I sail with Jof.

They make tea.