

Birds fly

The promenade sounds grand, but nothing is very grand in this small town anymore. I walk here every day with my boy, watching huge cargo ships dock into Liverpool, bringing goods for people with money. It's not what they bring that excites me, it's where they go to when they leave.

My boy leans over the concrete barrier to watch the gulls. "Be careful son," I say. There are dangers everywhere. Even in this town where nothing happens.

Across the Mersey are glass towers, girls shopping for clothes, the Liver Birds quietly watching. It's a bus ride away but it might as well be an ocean.

Sometimes, when my boy can't sleep and he cries, rocking his little body, I wrap him up and we walk along the river for a 'midnight adventure'. The lights from the city across the water illuminate everything we don't have, and I tell him to listen for owls in the darkness. He says nothing, but I know he hears every word.

A ship leaves, and I wonder what it's like to leave with it. To wake up one morning in Carolina or Hong Kong. To walk on the rich side of the river.

My boy chases seagulls, their wings negotiating with the wind to buy their freedom. The gulls have choices we don't have.

Legend says that if the Liver Birds ever leave, the city will fall.

I know they want to fly, but they are needed here.