

Iron Island

By Saili Katebe

We are a rabble of dreamers
waving at the harbour, where
friends and family blur
into confetti.

They watch us disappear
from all the familiar spaces
leaving silence in our place.

From here on out
we will be absent
from community gatherings,
family reunions
and evening meals.

We are joining a community
aboard an iron island,
carrying promises we made
on borrowed courage.

We confront the water
knowing nothing about the sea
sailing the full length of the globe
to make a difference.

By virtue of hazard and hope
we unravel our comforts, float
past what was once possible
exploring the road less traveled.

Remember to carry a compass
when facing the unknown,
a strong current could break your
bearings. When the wind is up,
where you came from can feel
like a distant constellation.

Miles away from home,
a stampede is brewing
around us, a storm is coming
and the iron hull is nodding
in agreement.

There is no better teacher
of perseverance and patience
than water exercising its right
to be riot and the roaring voice
of power and potential.

Horizons disappearing
and reappearing, as we hold
our memories for comfort.

Masts gamble with the wind,
waves crease against the hull
as the ocean pull faces at the sky,
captain and crew listening
for symmetry in the chaos.

Our island of iron rumbles
against the elements, with
a resonance only a seasoned sailor
could follow.

All we can taste is salt,
all we can hear is
whipping in the wind
all we can do is wait
to find that balance.

Hands on sail, on rudder
on prayer book.
Where can we find comfort
in the storm?

As the ocean settles
and the clotted sky clears,
we drift into the ice fields,
floating in the company of giants,
where everything we are shimmers
in the wake of a hurricane.

Smooth seas never made
a skilled sailor.
We learn the universal languages
of hope and perseverance
by surviving the turbulence.

Our iron island cuts a course
across the globe, out
to where the albatross lives,
where the water holds its independence,
where the great cartographers of time
and legacy lean into the future.

We are a rolling archipelago
drifting across the sea
contemplating that
perennial question,

what should you sacrifice
today for a better tomorrow?