

John Masefield (1878-1967)

8 “*Port of Many Ships*”

“It ’s a sunny pleasant anchorage, is Kingdom Come,
Where crews is always layin’ aft for double-tots o’ rum,
'N' there ’s dancin’ ’n’ fiddlin’ of ev’ry kind o’ sort,
It ’s a fine place for sailor-men is that there port.
 ’N’ I wish — 5
 I wish as I was there.

“The winds is never nothin’ more than jest light airs,
'N' no-one gets belayin’-pinned, ’n’ no-one never swears,
Yer free to loaf an’ laze around, yer pipe atween yer lips,
Lollin’ on the fo’c’s’le, sonny, lookin’ at the ships. 10
 ’N’ I wish —
 I wish as I was there.

“For ridin’ in the anchorage the ships of all the world
Have got one anchor down ’n’ all sails furled.
All the sunken hookers ’n’ the crews as took ’n’ died 15
They lays there merry, sonny, swingin’ to the tide.
 ’N’ I wish —
 I wish as I was there.

“Drowned old wooden hookers green wi’ drippin’ wrack,
Ships as never fetched to port, as never came back, 20
Swingin’ to the blushin’ tide, dippin’ to the swell,
'N' the crews all singin’, sonny, beatin’ on the bell.
 ’N’ I wish —
 I wish as I was there.”

1902

(From *The Collected Poems of John Masefield*. 1923; London: William Heinemann, 1925)