

DEDICATION

Rescue 116

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**Of what is courage made?
Does it know it exists?**

**To rise from a bed three hours before dawn
Awakened by a phone-call like a shatter of
glass,**

**Pull on a hi-vis, lifejacket and oilskins,
Face into the scream of night.**

**Or the storm-tossed sunrise,
The rage of red breakers
Boiling the Atlantic like a cauldron of sleet.**

**The chopper hovers bravely,
As into blinds of salt
The mission of mercy lofts out.**

**Alleluias of wind and the clouds roiling up,
Over churning grey seas, tiny islands of rock
Like inkblots splashed by a careless
cartographer,**

**And the panicked blip of maydays
Trills across the radar,
As an ancient reassurance
Is drummed by the blades.**

**We will not leave you.
You are not alone.
Help is on its way.
Hold hope.**

**'Hero' is a word thrown around like the spray,
For those who score a goal, win a point,
Stand to fight.**

**But those who give their all,
In the canyons of night,
To save others,
Are the starlit heroes.**

**To save other people's sons,
Those they've never met,
Other children's fathers,
Neighbours' lost daughters.**

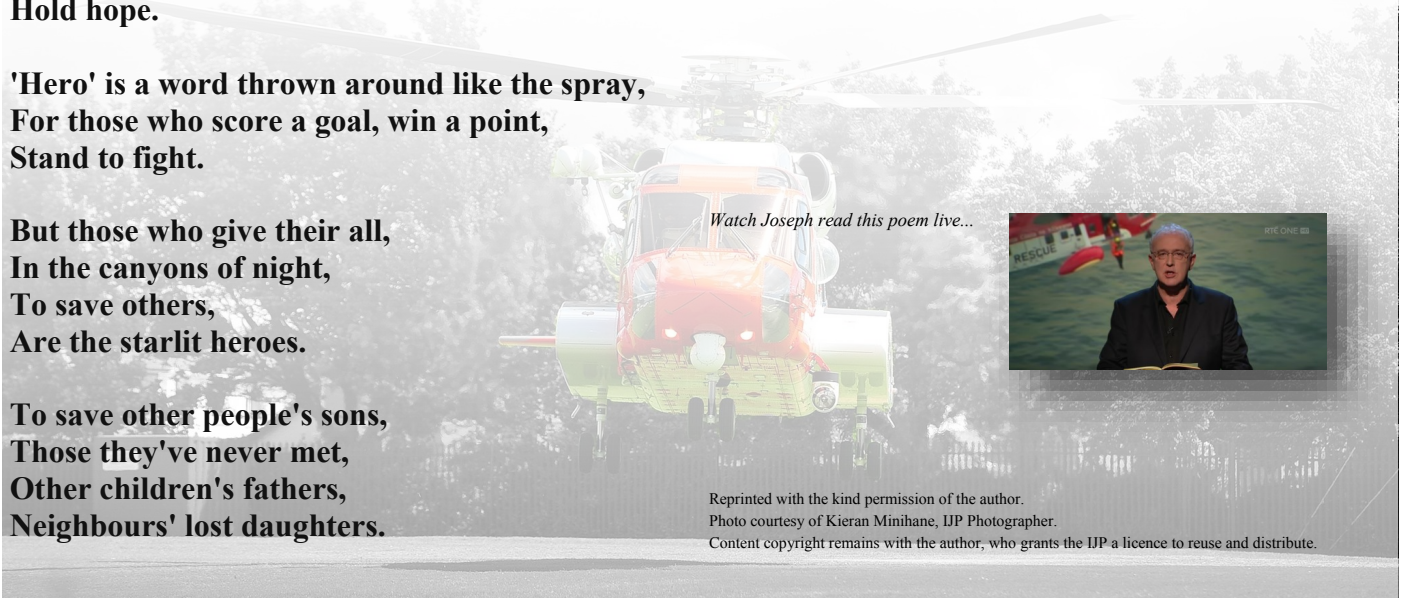
**Reminder, we are one,
Bonded by closenesses,
Unspoken but real,
Always bravely flowing,
As the running of underground waters.**

**That every time a mission of mercy is flown,
Our broken souls are mended.
Rescued. Brought home.**

**Of what is courage made?
Does it know it exists?
Selfless in the mists
Of others' misfortunes,
On it pulses like a heartbeat,
Modest and quiet,
Solid as the tick of a clock.**

**Love, hold them close,
Those who didn't come home,
Who gave all they owned,
For the sake of another.
Who expected no medal,
No proclamations.
No fuss.
And who gave without asking.
The best of us.**

Joseph O'Connor



Watch Joseph read this poem live...

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