

Richard Shindell: *Castaway*

by Michael Devlin



“Are You Happy Now?” the first track on Richard Shindell’s debut, *Sparrow’s Point*, is so much fun that the first few times I played it, I found it difficult to concentrate on “Castaway”, the song that follows it. I allowed “Castaway’s” ocean imagery to wash over me, unaware of what it would soon mean to me...

Parenthood! It seems like nothing prepares you for it. People would say, “When you finally see your baby—there’s no other feeling like it! You’ll just have to see for yourself.” I could envision myself with a baby in my arms, but I could not project an emotion to go along with this picture!

Nine months of preparation ended abruptly in labor. Things were happening so fast that there was little time to feel any emotion besides concern for my wife and baby. Then our son was born, he cried, and I cried. (Hey, Christine Lavin, does that make me “A Sensitive New-Age Guy”?) I held him, he stopped crying and

studied my face. It was then that the first lines of “Castaway” started to play in my head. “*I welcome you my little man, Stolen from your sleeping land.*”

My wife and I spent the next few hours holding our son, feeding him, mostly just looking at him and feeling happy.

When it was time to go home, I floated out of the hospital to my car with a big smile on my face. I had a mental image of myself floating like a helium balloon with my feet occasionally scraping the ground. At home, with nothing to do for the first time in months, I played “Castaway”. It was as if the song was written for this moment in my life. The ocean imagery suddenly made sense to me; it was the only thing extravagant enough to mirror what I was feeling. I played it again. Whereas at first, my experiences opened up my understanding of the song, the song now illuminated my feeling for my family. The overwhelming feelings of this day had words and music to go with them! ■

Castaway

*I welcome you my little man
Stolen from your sleepy land
Cut loose from her, my caloused hand
Branded you an exile*

*And the ocean parted when you wailed
And debris of your catastrophe
Set sail inside a silver cup
That she handed to me*

*No ocean deep, no mountain tall
No liberty, no prison vault
Can keep my baby refugee
From his own inland sea*

*Where he can play castaway
Where he can play castaway
Where he can play castaway
Now on a dolphin’s back I come to you
Bounding from across the blue
Swollen flood inside my veins
To try to explain*

*How someday far below the moon
You may live beside a green lagoon
And store up pearls for skipping stones
And you’ll never be alone*

*And ocean fall or ocean rise
I see her deep, deep in your eyes
I’m an ocean apart from you
But you’ll always be a part of me*

*‘Cause I can play castaway
Two can play castaway
Three can play castaway
And we all play castaway*