*For a boy in Fiddler’s Green*

In 1990 singer/songwriter Gord Downie of the band The Tragically Hip wrote Fiddler’s Green in memory of his five year old nephew Charles who had died of a heart condition. He incorporated the legend of Fiddler’s Green into the song to help ease his sister’s fear of having to let her small son go on his way the afterlife alone without her.

In the old Irish legend, Fiddler’s Green was as a place where old sailors would go when they wearied of seafaring life. They would leave their ship with an oar over their shoulder and walk inland until they reached a village where people, unfamiliar with the sea, would ask them what it was that they carried over their shoulders. Sailors would be given a seat in the sun, a mug of grog that never ran out, a and could relax while the fiddlers played and maidens danced in the sunlight.

The origin of the legend is unknown but it could have started with the Greek epic poem The Odyssey. Homer wrote that the only way to placate Poseidon, god of the sea, was to take an oar and walk until he found a land where people would ask him what the oar was. Once that happened he was to make a sacrifice to Poseidon. The legend became prominent among pirates who believed that there was little chance that they would be allowed to enter the Christian heaven so they invented their own paradise, Fiddler’s Green, with pretty maidens, music and bottles of rum that hung from every tree.

Fiddler’s Green was also adopted by the US Cavalry in the 19th century and was a special place in the afterlife where all Field Artillerymen go. It’s said to be a beautiful valley filled with trees and cool streams where the laughter of those who served their country well would spend eternity gathered around campfires among the dance halls and taverns where every man’s credit is good.

The band members of The Tragically Hip, Gord Downie, Paul Langlois, Rob Baker, Gord Sinclair and Johnny Fay all grew up in the Kingston, Ontario area. They went to school together and knew each other’s families and since that time they have donated the proceeds, from every show they have played in their home town to charities, mostly those with pediatric initiatives.

Fiddler’s Green was released on their second album “Road Apples” the year after Gord Downie’s nephew passed away. The band never played the song live until 2006 because, according to Downie “A song that used to be painful to play is not as painful to play but maybe it helps some people. We hope it brings you a little peace and satisfaction.” The Tragically Hip proceeded to play an emotional version of Fiddler’s Green live at the concert and have played it every so often when performing around the world.

Scroll down to the next page to see the lyrics for the song *Fidler’s Green*

September seventeen

For a girl I know it's Mother's Day

Her son has gone alee

And that's where he will stay

Wind on the weathervane

Tearing blue eyes sailor-mean

As Falstaff sings a sorrowful refrain

For a boy in Fiddler's Green

His tiny knotted heart

Well, I guess it never worked too good

The timber tore apart

And the water gorged the wood

You can hear her whispered prayer

For men at masts that always lean

The same wind that moves her hair

Moves a boy through Fiddler's Green

Oh, nothing's changed anyway

Oh, nothing's changed anyway

Oh, anytime today

He doesn't know a soul

There's nowhere that he's really been

But he won't travel long alone

No, not in Fiddler's Green

Balloons all filled with rain

As children's eyes turn sleepy-mean

And Falstaff sings a sorrowful refrain

For a boy in Fiddler's Green

Songwriters: Gordon Downie / Gordon Sinclair / Johnny Fay / Paul Langlois / Robert Baker

Fiddler’s Green lyrics © Peermusic Publishing