

# Kingfisher

Joanna Newsom

Whose is the hand that I will hold?  
Whose is the face I will see?  
Whose is the name that I will call,  
when I am called to meet thee? In this life, who did you love,  
beneath the drifting ashes,  
beneath the sheeting banks of air  
that barrenly bore our rations? When I could speak, it was too late.  
Didn't you hear me calling?  
Didn't you see my heart leap,  
like a pup in the constant barley? In this life, where did you crouch,  
when the sky had set to boiling?  
Burning within, seen from without,  
and your gut was a serpent, coiling.  
And, for the sake of that pit of snakes,  
for whom did you allay your shyness,  
and spend all your mercy,  
and madness, and grace,  
in a day, beneath the bending cypress? It was not on principal.  
Show, Pro-heart, that you have got gall.

A miracle:

I can bear a lot, but not that pall. I can bear a lot, but not that pall!

Kingfisher, sound the alarm.

Say, "Sweet little darlin, now,  
come to my arms;

tell me all about the love  
you left on the farm."

He was a kind, unhurried man  
with a heavy lip and a steady hand,  
but he loved me just like a little child;

like a little child loves a little lamb. Thrown to the ground,  
by something down there;

bitten by the bad air,  
while the clouds tick;

trying to read all the signs,

preparing for when the bombs hit;

hung from the underbelly of the earth,

while the stars skid away, below,

gormless and brakeless, gravel-loose,

falling silent as gavels in the snow I lay back and spit my chew,

wrapped in the long arm of the Law,

who has seen it all:

I can bear a lot, but not that pall. I can bear a lot, but not that pall!

Kingfisher, cast your fly:  
oh, Lord,  
it happens without even trying,  
when I sling a low look  
from my shuttering eye. Blows rain upon the one you loved,  
and, though you were only sparring,  
there's blood on the eye.  
Unlace the glove.  
Say, Honey I am not sorry. Stand here and name  
the one you loved,  
beneath the drifting ashes,  
and, in naming, rise above time,  
as it, flashing, passes. We came by the boatload,  
and were immobilized:  
worshipping volcanoes,  
charting the loping skies.  
The tides of the earth  
left us bound, and calcified,  
and made as obstinate as obsidian,  
unmoving, save our eyes:  
just mooning and blinking  
from faces marked with coal.  
(Ash cooling and shrinking  
cracks loud as thunder rolling.)  
I swear I know you. You know me.  
Where have we met before?  
Tell me true:  
to whose authority  
do you consign your soul? I had a dream you came to me,  
said  
You shall not do me harm anymore,  
and with your knife,  
you evicted my life  
from its little lighthouse  
on the seashore. And I saw that my blood  
had no bounds,  
spreading in a circle like an atom bomb,  
soaking and felling  
everything in its path,  
and welling in my heart like a birdbath. It is too short--  
the day we are born,  
we commence with our dying.  
Trying to serve,  
with the heart of a child;  
kingfisher, lie with the lion.

Song Discussions is protected by U.S. Patent 9401941. Other patents pending.

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