

You and Me, Bess

Joanna Newsom

We picked our way
down to the beach,
watching the waves
dragging out of our reach:
tangling tails, like a sodden sheet;
dangling entrails
from the gut of the sea. Hoarding our meals (alfalfa and rolls);
trying not to catch
the cold eyes of the gulls--
I hope Mother Nature has not
overheard!
(Though, she doles out hurt
like a puking bird.) We stayed for the winter.
No-one told us
about the laws of the land.
I hold my own.
But you, with your hunger--
you, on the other hand--
make yourself known. And when we were found,
I know we both grieved.
My heart made the sound of
snow falling from eaves.
You and me, Bess,
we were as thick as thieves.
So I swore, nonetheless, up and down,
it was only me.
They took me away,
and, after some time
studying my case,
must have made up their minds.
By the time you realized I was dying,
it must have been too late.
I believe you were not lying. It is the day.
I wake,
with my ears cocked up like a gun
(like every day, of course),
yanked by my wrists
to the sugar-front courtyard--
now tell me, what have I done?

It seems I have stolen a horse.
I step to the gallows. Who do you think you are--
arching your hooves like a crane,
in the shallow gutter
that lines the boulevards,
crowded with folks
who just stare as I hang?
It's all the same.
Kindness comes over me;
what was your name?
It makes no difference.
I'm glad that you came.
Forever, I'll listen to your glad neighing.

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