The Middle Ages

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Looking back is not the same as looking forward
You can't see what it is you're heading toward
All that's visible is what's left behind
The dreams distilled and the dreams discarded
What made you leap or left you empty hearted
In the moment and in the fullness of timeNow you see what it is that you would have changed if only you'd known
Where you'd be and to be here is very strange waking up alone
In the middle agesAll along you paid close attention
To the answers when a voice asked the question
How'd you get here, where do you belong
17 makes us brave and so full of nerve
35 makes us pause but we're undeterred
Never say die and so we push onAnd some come to a place of reckoning try to fix what they find
I arrived with the questions still beckoning in the back of my mind
To the middle agesNow you bitch about your job what's wrong with folks today
The price of gas and milk and the guy who begs for change
He's camped out at the light you hide behind your shades
And will the green to flash to speed your getaway
You're racing to keep up or just to be on time
That's what you tell yourself when the emptiness inside
Threatens to break out clouding up your eyes you just have to pull overWe used to dread lives rendered ordinary
We always said we'd own a grander story
But the only kind worth telling somehow
Is the one about a jolt that makes you listen
That jagged lightning bolt of recognition
That love and kindness are all that matter nowAnd way back in the back of your mind you heard something getting through
Like some beautiful passage without words welcoming you to the middle ages

Songwriters
Mary Chapin CarpenterPublished by
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