In Another Life

Vienna Teng

In another life you and I worked West Virginia coal mines side by side
Collecting the black dust like sin
The day the main shaft caved in I caught your eyeAs the lantern light guttered out
And the after damp swallowed us slowly
I gripped your hand and caught a glance of the next time 'roundIn another life you and I were Red Guards in training side by sideWe marched on Tiananmen, turned our own parents in for hoarding rice
And in the Great Leap forward we crawled on our bellies and died
And a blood orange sky, gave a cry of next time 'roundIn another life I was married at thirteen
You were killed at twenty one on a minor battlefield
I was buried beside my second stillborn child
My last thought it seemed a fevered dreamNow we sink into a summer afternoon, Central Park in June
Marveling at the bounty our days contain
And we feel it like the shiver of a passing trainThat other life, deep underground you and I side by side
We are the next time 'round

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