

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 snowI lay back and spit my chaw,
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.Blow 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.

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