

Small Enough To Hold Everything

Lyrics, an Essay and Stories

Seth Lyon

Hi there! Thanks so much for checking out this eBook companion to *Small Enough To Hold Everything*. I think it will be interesting for those of you who are interested in songwriting, song lyrics, and the stories behind them. First, here are the folks who made this album:

~The Composer ~



Seth Lyon

All lyrics and instrumental parts composed by yours truly, except the acoustic bass part on *Ride*, composed by Timothy Stacey. Drums, percussion, acoustic and electric guitars, electric bass, melodica, keyboard, and all vocal parts. Also all engineering and mixing.

~The Strings~



Stephanie Winters

Cello on *Birdcall*, *Ensorcelled*, and *Ride*



Timothy Stacey

Acoustic Bass on *Ride*.

~The Brass ~



Ashton Sweet

Bb Trumpet and Euphonium on
Small Enough To Hold Everything,
Bb Trumpet on *Ride*



Kat Single-Dain

Euphonium on *Small Enough
To Hold Everything.*

Essay: On Composition, Songwriting, and the Voice That Got Scared Away

When I was 14 or so I first saw the movie *Amadeus*, which sparked my desire to become a composer. I was already a musician at the time. I had started with piano at a young age but didn't stick with it (the seeds were planted though), then clarinet, and I had moved on to drums and percussion by the time I was 13 or so, so I was involved with band and orchestra already. But composition is what really drew me in, far more than performing. I just loved the whole concept of translating music from my head to the page, carefully arranging it for this instrument and that, crafting something on the page that would ultimately take someone on a journey through some inner landscape.

That love of composition never left me. I majored in music composition and percussion in University and got my totally useless Bachelor's degree in that field, but that time was so much more about the experience, rather than the piece of paper they gave me at the end. What a joy it was to have musicians all around me that I could write things for, and they would play them! I wrote many pieces -- for Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, String Quartet, and various other Chamber Music ensembles. Also, various solo works for bassoon, flute, clarinet, and piano. It was total bliss.

So, I felt quite deflated when University ended and I realized that the only way I could keep on composing and having my music played by such ensembles, would be if I went into scoring for film and tv, which at that time meant moving to L.A. or New York. I hated big cities.

It was my buddy and songwriter, Brian, who told me, 'Dude, get a guitar and start writing songs,' and he actually gave me his old Tascam 4-track tape recorder. My other close friend, Mike, was also a guitar player and songwriter, so I had plenty of encouragement and inspiration. What I did not have was anything close to a good singing voice!

* * *

One Summer when I was 11, my mother insisted that I not be allowed to just hang out and play with my friends anymore, I was too old for that! I had to do something constructive, some kind of learning or experience. So, I took a page from my sister's book and enrolled in the local Children's Theater and, unfortunately, went on to have an experience that scared my singing voice away.

We had been given the task of picking a song to sing on stage in front of everyone, which I was fine with at the time, even a bit excited. I picked '*I Can Do That*' from '*A Chorus Line*' and worked on it diligently for weeks until I felt ready to go.

Then one day I was picked to go up on stage without warning, having left my sheet music for accompaniment at home. ACK! I had to sing the whole thing acapella in front of everyone and it did not go well. I was already so flustered from being told to get up onstage unexpectedly, and then to realize I was going to have to sing with no piano accompanying me..... ACK! ACK!! I stumbled through it to the horrifying amusement of a theater full of my peers, slumped quickly offstage, and never sang a peep again unless forced to in one of my music classes later on in University.

The singing voice requires learning, technique, and practice in order to use it well, just like any other instrument, though some lucky few seem to be born with that instrument ready to rock. I actually had an ok singing voice before the unfortunate ACK! incident mentioned above, but by the time my buddy suggested I start writing songs, my voice was not an instrument I had any confidence in or skill with whatsoever.

But I did it anyway.

I started by recording instrumentals.

But, I had always loved writing poetry and fiction, and so my love of words gradually began to be included, and I started writing lyrics, and even singing (if you could call it that at the time) into my little four-track. And I just kept on doing that.

It took me a very long time to develop my voice to the point that I could sing even vaguely in key, never mind being expressive. It seems there are so many great singers who can channel all their trauma and pain into amazing singing, but for me, the unfolding of my voice is something that happened in concurrence with the healing of my trauma.

Oh, yeah, I forgot to mention that by the time I graduated high school, I had complex PTSD. My childhood and young adult life hadn't exactly been a picnic.

So, for the last 27 years I've written songs, and recorded them, but never really put them out into the world. I did create and share lots of other kinds of music such as...

healing music:

<https://music.sethlyon.com/>

<https://soundcloud.com/seth-lyon/sets/healing-music>

psychedelic instrumentals and some trance/dance electronica type stuff:

(<https://soundcloud.com/seth-lyon/sets/the-great-eastern-banjo-cafe>)

But it's not until now that I've put an album of original songs out into the world in any kind of meaningful way. This album, *Small Enough to Hold Everything*.

I'm very proud of this one, and I feel that, though there is always room to learn and grow more, my singing voice has finally reached a good measure of its full potential in terms of authenticity and expression, not to mention being on pitch :)

This album, in terms of theme, is about the last 22 years of my life, which was quite the chapter! I became a father, had a lovely little family for a while there before we split up, moved around a lot, tried my best to keep being a dad, decided I would probably live in the woods all my life (which I did for 13 years), then met my current wife, moved to Canada, did many years of deep trauma work, healed myself, became a somatic trauma specialist myself, built a private practice, and now work with clients all over the world to help them heal their trauma. This album is very much about all that, as well as what I feel is happening in the world currently.

A final note before we get into the songs themselves and the stories behind them: I never stopped approaching music from the lens of composition.

What I mean is, rather than trying to stay within any particular genre, I'm far more interested in approaching each song with a treatment that I feel best fits that particular material. So as a result there are influences from all over the place on this album.

You may hear elements of singer/songwriter, folk, country, rock, alternative rock, psychedelic rock, prog rock, grunge, metal, funk, and old world celtic ballads depending on the tune. For me, a big part of the joy and excitement of crafting an album is bringing in all those varied influences, yet still making something that feels like a cohesive journey.

And speaking of albums and sonic journeys in general... In this day and age of the playlist and shuffle, I think a lot of people have become disconnected from the magic of sitting down and listening to an album. So I would love it, my lovely listener, if you would consider doing that, at least for your first listen.

****[Audiophile Music Geek Note](#) - I think this album is especially good on a nice pair of headphones! And really, if you can swing it, a nice pair of headphones are pretty great for life in general. [These are my headphones of choice](#), and [these are some really decent ones that are usually \\$90 or less](#). I don't have a partnership with these companies or anything, just trying to promote more Audiophile Music Geekiness in the world.****

However you listen, it's your journey! I hope you enjoy it.

The Songs
&
The Stories

Small Enough To Hold Everything

We can be quite small
Small enough to hold everything
You can be a straight line
I can be a ring

I can just be The Fool
Forget I know anything
Could you please be quiet now
and do nothing

You can be so happy
You can be so lonely
I can be my best friend
I can be my enemy

We could be like stones
and not go anywhere
Only to the place we're put
by the hand that put us there

Could we be a miracle
A wonder of these times
We move through the desert
and the desert sprouts vines

We can be none of these
We can be something more
We can be the impassable way
or we can be the door

This song was originally written sometime early in 2006, during the winter.

I was living and working for a few months at Breitenbush Hot Springs in Oregon, a place I lived about seven years cumulatively, during the fifteen years or so I spent existing almost entirely unplugged from the world and its responsibilities and systems. I wrote this in my little A-Frame cabin tucked away in the mossy trees and ferns of the rainforest.

The evolution of this song is so symbolic of how I have changed since that time. In the first version, it was all 'I'. *I* can be quite small, could *I* please be quiet now, *I* can be so happy, so lonely, etc... And for most of my adult life, *I* really was my primary concern, as is often the case with traumatized individuals.

I love this song so much more now that it's about *WE*, which makes more sense anyway, given what it's about.

This song was inspired originally by the book, [*The Holographic Universe*](#), by Michael Talbot. In a hologram, you can break off a tiny piece, and that part will still contain the data of the whole picture. This is a very rough summation - but essentially, the theory is that this is also how the Universe is constructed, like a hologram, which is how there is interconnectedness and oneness within the differentiation. So it's about that -- Small Enough To Hold Everything.

It's simultaneously about our Mother Earth, and how this tiny dot on which we are floating through space contains the sum total of our history as Earthly people. All our experiences, joys, sorrow, ways of being, etc... it's all contained in this little, precious gem of a world.

Birdcall

A man at the bottom of his well
Gotta dig him up from hell, gotta help him fly

If flying was the only way
we'll be jumping off the nearest building

A bird with feathers like the Fall
Gotta call with your bird call

If flying was the only way
we'll steal fire from the sun today

A man in his walls awake
Just listening to the wind speak

And the windows are all a-creaking
And the house is setting sail

And if my brother you are listening
I hope you're smiling now

And if my sister you are listening
I hope you're smiling now

During the fifteen years that I was living almost entirely in the woods, there were about two years somewhere in the middle there when I was living in Oshkosh, Wisconsin so I could be close to my son. This was from spring of 2005 - spring of 2007, and there are quite a few songs on this album from that period. The Oshkosh Chapter.

There's a lot of metaphor in the lyrics of this song, but essentially it's about healing from trauma, as many of my songs are. What's fascinating is that most of the tunes I wrote about living with trauma and healing it were written long before I actually knew anything about trauma at all. Given that now I'm a somatic trauma specialist, I guess this makes sense. I was feeling it, knowing it, and expressing it intuitively.

The first two lines are fairly straight forward. But then - *If flying was the only way, we'll be jumping off the nearest building.*

This may sound macabre, which is partly the point - a little gallows humor is not uncommon among trauma survivors. But it's not about suicide at all, it's about recognizing that healing can sometimes feel like it demands the impossible of us -- flying -- and meeting that seemingly impossible demand is often the only way forward, so faith and courage is needed. Sometimes we need to trust and take the leap.

Also, any deep process of healing from trauma will require a death of sorts -- a death of our old self-beliefs, self-image, even what we consider our personality. When we grow up with trauma, our identity is largely formed in reaction to that, so when we heal that trauma, we will often encounter a period of time when it feels like we don't know who we are, because all those old survival adaptations that we thought were simply 'us' start to crumble. The old self dies away.

Please don't jump off any buildings. Unless they're really, really small. Like a doghouse, that might be fine.

A bird with feathers like the fall. Gotta call with your bird call. The colors of the fall -- red, gold, orange, yellow -- the bird I'm referring to is the mythical Phoenix, a symbol of regeneration and rebirth. So that's what I'm calling for here.

Heeeere, little Phoenix... Please bless me with your transformative power.

Again, *if flying was the only way...* and then I'm tapping into mythology again, referencing Prometheus, who stole fire from the sun -- knowledge. It didn't work out too well for him in the end of course, at least until Heracles saved him from the endless liver-being-eaten-by-an-eagle cycle, but in this version I like to think we avoided that, just snatched a little power and wisdom and got away clean.

And the reason it's *we'll* steal fire from the sun, *we'll* jump off the building, is because this process of healing is something that so often needs support and connection with a safe ally. I guess I didn't *only* think about myself back then, as that's the way I originally wrote that one.

Then the rest.. It was very windy the night I wrote this, the windows really were a-creaking, and I had this lovely image of the house unfurling sails and setting off into the night -- forward progress.

And then I thought of my older brother, who got sick with cancer when I was 11 and died when I was 13 (a big part of all that trauma I was talking about), and I realized that I was calling out to him with this song. I was saying: see me, here I am, I'm still alive, I'm still moving forwards even though it feels impossible at times. And I hoped that wherever he was, he was happy, and doing well.

The last line, extending the same desire to my sister, I added when revisiting the song for this album. A recognition that the family that you have, given they are good folk at heart and not abusive to you, are important to stay connected to if possible, and to wish the best for.

Crows

Crows in the crowns of the trees
Black feather leaves

Shake and shake in the wind from the lake feeling what it takes to please
I find my mind just in time to find it's just a tease

There's crows in the crowns of the trees
Black feather leaves

Empty the coal from the county of pain in
Black Summer rain

Wax and wane in the light from the windowpane and feel the breeze
Feeling what it takes to please I find you in my dreams
No matter what I try things aren't what they seem

Crows in the crowns of the trees
Black feather leaves

We're gonna go up into the Tower to see
The midnight hour set free

We shake and shake 'cause we start to wake up sleeping memories
The hardest part of a heart the hardest place to reach
So what do you have to teach or are you just a tease
Finding all it takes to please I find you in my dreams
Sometimes it's hard to find a reason

Crows in the crowns of the trees
Black feather leaves

Oshkosh, 2005. I'm walking in Menominee Park on the shores of Lake Winnebago on a cold, blustery, late autumn evening.

The trees were mostly denuded, stretching their skeleton fingers into the sky, so I was so surprised to see a tree that still had big clumps of dark leaves clinging to its topmost branches.

It was getting quite dark, so it wasn't until I got closer that I realized that what I thought were leaves were actually crows, dozens of them! And at that exact moment of realization, they erupted into a great raucous chorus of caws and flew upwards from the branches -- dark leaves defying gravity, sailing upwards into the autumn dusk.

That image perfectly suited my frame of mind at the time, wherein I was having a very hard time telling what was real, what was projection, what was best for me, and what was not. What was really *my* mind, *my* thoughts, and what I was thinking, feeling, saying, just so I could please the other, or fool myself (both classic adaptations to childhood trauma).

I won't break down all the lyrics, but this one line is again, quite the bit of foreshadowing...

*We shake and shake 'cause we start to wake up sleeping memories
The hardest part of a heart the hardest place to reach*

As trauma survivors, we often build barricades around our heart, to the point that we become disconnected from our own feelings, our own deepest truths, our authentic self.

It can take a lot of excavation to unearth that vulnerable place of emotion and connection, and that work often involves encountering layers of sympathetic activation (old, stuck fight/flight responses) along the way. Sometimes, when these old survival charges are released, the body will literally shake and tremble, something I experienced many times, more than a decade after writing this song.

Ride

A shadow grows on the face of the mountainside so I head back home
I turn and head back home
Even though I'd like to be lost in the night
Tonight ain't the night for me to roam

Frost grows on the rim of a windowsill far away from here
Somewhere on the other side from here
And even though I like to be wrapped up in the cold
Tonight the night is warm and you are near

Time wears down the clocks counting up the years
And dust may grow between our ears
And even though I'd like to be an old man some day
Tonight the night is young and I will stay

Stay

A smile grows on your lips and lights up your eyes and I delight
In the way you move and the way you look tonight
And even though I'd like to hold you all night long
The moon is full and tonight's your night to ride

So ride

Here we have one of the very few love songs I've written.

After a couple years of living in Oshkosh, despite the joy and satisfaction I got from being in my son's life, I was very overweight, depressed, and miserable overall. I'm a west coast guy. Hell, I'll take the east coast too, over the midwest. Don't get me wrong, there are very good people there and all, but I fit in that culture about as well as a kazoo would fit in a death metal song. I suppose you could make it work, but it would be a stretch.

It was very hard to make the decision to leave my boy and move back to Breitenbush and the woods and culture I loved. Agonizing really. But eventually I decided that I wasn't much good to him if I was miserable.

So, it was with grief and bittersweet relief that I moved into my tent in the old Strawberry Meadow for the summer season of 2007.

Another thing that had pulled me back there was a woman. We had a brief romance during a few months in the winter of late 2006 - - a chunk in the middle of the Oshkosh chapter when I was filling in at Breitenbush while my boy and his mom were in Canada doing French Immersion. She had stayed in my heart since then, and we even cultivated a long distance romance when I returned to Oshkosh - writing letters back and forth (does anybody still do that?).

So, when I made up my mind and returned to the Bush (this time, I thought, for good), mingled among the guilt and grief for leaving my son were also warm expectations of romance, expectations that were fulfilled for a while. We were a pretty great fit for a while there, but we weren't meant to last as a couple, though I'm happy to say we are still friends to this day.

So, this song, while being a love song, also contains in it the intimations of our splitting up.

One night that summer, I was out for a walk in the woods and it was starting to get dark, so I headed back to my tent, and a little bit later she came over, which was lovely. I was hoping she would stay that night, but it was the full moon, and she and some friends had started up a monthly full moon midnight bike ride, so she headed out. After she left, I wrote this song.

The Wind Trilogy

These three songs did not start out as a trilogy or cohesive story, that happened as I was putting this album together. In order to explain how it all came about, I have to start by talking about the second song in the trilogy, *Ensorcelled*.

There are lots of ways that songs are born. Sometimes they start as a phrase, a bit of lyrics that pop into my head. Sometimes they start with a guitar riff or chord progression and the lyrics come later. Sometimes though, rarely, there is a song that simply appears, fully formed, without effort. *Ensorcelled* was one of those.

This was during that period I mentioned earlier, a few months in the winter of '06 that I was working at Breitenbush. That place is *very* inhabited by spirits. When you live there a long time, you get to know them -- the ones that inhabit the guardian pair of trees at the entrance to the village; the ones that hang around the old, ancient yew tree; the one that likes the area up above the old Russian pools. It is a land thick with the unseen.

One night, I was standing on my porch having a smoke and one of those spirits came into my body and gave me this song. That's the best way I can describe it. I was just standing there, and then I felt that sense of presence, and a massive chill ran up my spine, and I felt a sense of being inhabited, possessed, but not in a bad way. I'm not sure why I deserved the honor, but that spirit or consciousness gave me *Ensorcelled*, whole and complete.

I went inside, sat down, and the guitar part and lyrics were all just there, unchanged from how they are on this recording.

It's always been one of my favorite songs, and I'm not even sure I can really call it mine!

So, I knew I wanted it to be a centerpiece of this album. The song is about a man who gets trapped in the winter wind by a dark spirit queen, forever condemned to see and hear, but never again able to speak or touch, except as the blowing wind.

As I was considering other songs for the album, I realized that I actually had a couple other songs in which the wind plays a major role, and that by rewriting the lyrics to one of them, the song that would become *Fire & Frost*, I could make a cohesive story, a fairly tale that to me felt both timeless, and apropos for our times.

(I also realized later that two more songs on this album, Birdcall and Crows, also feature the wind! Maybe I should have called the album Small Enough To Hold Wind.)

Part 1 - Fire & Frost

Snow is falling now
Follow footsteps down
The day is fading in fire and frost
Fast among the fields of stone

Trees sleep frozen now
Mountain winds sweep down
The day has faded in fire and frost
Fast among the forest boughs

Fire and frost
Found and lost
A shadow's dance
A final chance to find The Flame
Through the windowpane I see a silhouette

His leather creaks his harness jingles
On a snowy ride the messenger came through
He carries word of the Mad King's sentence on me
'Seek only the fairest one'

So if this wind finds you
And sings of bounty true
Brace the gate and lock the door
No kingdom's worth the Mad King's rule

Fire and Frost
Found and lost
A shadow's dance
A final chance to find The Flame
Through the windowpane I see a silhouette

Once upon a time, in a long lost kingdom, far and away from here, there was a king whose rule was absolute. He taxed the people to the bone and made tyrannical decrees limiting rights and freedoms of all kinds. Any art, be it painting, sculpture, poetry, music, theater, or literature, that did not promote his vision of absolute obedience to authority was strictly forbidden, and his steel-booted troops kept regular patrols through the streets, vigilant for any sign of free thinking or dissident behavior.

Not that the people in his kingdom had much time or energy for such things anyway. They were kept busy producing the great weapons of war the king required for his ever expanding army, which spread across the continent like a malaise. A cloud of violence and despotism that was slowly shrouding the world.

On top of being a tyrannical brute he was quite mad. His real name has been lost to history, he is remembered now in that land only as the Mad King. Also forgotten is the name of the brave hunter and tracker, a servant, who defied his rule, and in doing so brought about his downfall, though at a terrible cost.

The Mad King was in league with the dark spirits of the unseen world, spirits who gave him power and health, a terrible vitality that lent him protection against all harms, be they by weapon or disease. In return, the spirits fed off of the pain of his exhausted, beaten, despairing people, sucking up the vibrations of their most painful emotions, the dark energy they called loosh.

The Mad King was invulnerable, but the price was that he was, himself, enslaved, a servant to the dark spirits; and so they existed in a corrupted and foul harmony -- the King being fed by the spirits who in turn fed off his people.

One day, the Dark Queen of those spirits, Nyx, set the Mad King a task.

Many years ago, she had felt the presence of a being of great light born into the world, The Flame of Heaven, a being who could, one day, destroy the rule of the Mad King, and disrupt the symbiotic cycle of suffering and dark energy that existed between his people and hers.

Despite her great power and reach, Nyx could not find the child, a girl, who had been born to a poor woodsman, for that child was protected by spirits of the Light who were equal in power to those of the Dark, and they shrouded her from the evil Queen's sight.

The girl's mother had died in the process of bringing her forth, and so The Flame grew up wild, willful, schooled by her father in the arts of woodcraft, trapping, hunting, fishing, and all the arts necessary to survive in the deep forest wilderness where they lived, far away from even the outermost patrols of the Mad King's army.

She grew to be a powerful, competent, skilled young woman of the woods, and at sixteen years old she was more beautiful than any other maiden in the land, though she knew it not, having no one to compare herself to. That year though, her beautiful face was often crumpled in grief and loss, for her father, her only companion, had died of sickness.

Still, she kept on with the only life she had ever known. Fishing the ponds and trapping for her food and clothing, felling a tree here and there for repairs to the house, and living a quiet existence, rarely venturing beyond the confines of the great forest. Though sometimes she did walk to its edge, to the roots of the mountain, and the great fields of stone at its base, to gaze out for a time into the distance of the unknown world.

And so, Nyx, sensing the girl's light and great beauty, but unable to find her, set the Mad King a task.

He must send his best tracker to find The Flame of Heaven, the fairest maiden in the land, red and gold of hair and fiery of spirit, and bring her to his court. For the only way she saw to avoid the destruction of all they had built together, was for the Mad King to marry the girl, and seduce her into the temptations of eternal life and power. Killing the girl would accomplish nothing but delay, for her spirit would simply be reborn. It was only by corrupting the girl's spirit, such that she herself became a powerful force of the Dark, that Nyx and the Mad King could keep their wheel of suffering turning.

And so we turn our gaze now to the tracker, who has been set that terrible task. Who stands now in a field of stone and scree at the bottom of a mountain which skirts the edge of the great forest where our heroine resides. It is the coldest month of Winter and snow is all around, broken only by a solitary track of footprints that lead out of the forest to where our tracker stands, and then back in again, disappearing under the dark boughs of fir and pine.

*Snow is falling now
Follow footsteps down
The day is fading in fire and frost
Fast among the fields of stone.*

*Trees sleep frozen now
Mountain winds sweep down
The day has faded in fire and frost
Fast among the forest boughs.*

As the sky turns red with the fire of the fading sun, and the cold winds sweep down from the mountain, the tracker continues into the forest, his keen eyes following the footprints until it becomes too dark to continue. He settles into the night, surrounded by the muffled sounds of a forest cloaked deeply in snow and cold, wrapped up tightly in his furs.

He is almost asleep when he sees, far off through the trees, a flicker of fire, reflected and refracted by snow and ice. He rouses himself and stalks quietly through the woods until he can make out the source of the light. There, deep in the forest is a clearing, and in the clearing a cottage, and in the cottage a window, all covered in frost.

A candle has been lit inside, and so he can see through the frosted window only a silhouette, the shadow of a beautiful young woman, naked, washing herself after her day of labor.

*Fire and frost
Found and lost
A shadow's dance
A final chance to find the flame
Through the windowpane I see a silhouette*

Seeing only the dance of her shadow on the glass, he is so struck by her beauty, and not just her beauty, her sacredness -- he can feel the goodness and strength in her -- our tracker is filled with doubt.

He has always been a good citizen. His father held a high place of power among the Mad King's administration, and he was brought up steeped in the propaganda of the kingdom, never questioning it. His skill as a tracker has led to the death and capture of many of the kingdom's enemies. There is blood on his hands, and yet never has he thought twice about his duty.

How could he now be brought to a standstill by a mere silhouette?

It enrages him, it baffles him, and yet he cannot deny the feelings he is experiencing. The problem is, he is basically a good person. He has been deeply programmed and fooled by his king and society, but he still is good at heart. He always thought he was doing good in carrying out his orders. He believed in the lie of the Mad King's rule.

Now though, he has been touched by The Flame of Heaven, which the girl embodies. Now he has been struck by the energy of pure goodness, compassion, and love, for the first time. Further, he now knows that this *must* be the girl he sought, and yet, he is not sure he can bring himself to take her.

Confused, his feelings a whirl, the tracker returns to his camp to think. Eventually, he sleeps, and dreams of the day, earlier that winter, that the Mad King's messenger had shown up at his hunting camp in the King's Forest.

*His leather creaks his harness jingles
On a snowy ride the messenger came through
He carries word of the Mad King's sentence on me
'Seek only the fairest one'*

He is awakened the next morning by the sound of axe striking wood. Quietly, he approaches the clearing again.

Fire and frost. The forest and clearing is white with snow, and the sun is breaking over the edge of the mountain. In the middle of the clearing, the girl is chopping wood. A mundane scene we might find anywhere in the world on that winter's day, yet his heart nearly stops with the beauty of it.

The maiden seems to be an extension of the sun itself, her red-gold hair loose around her shoulders, dancing with each swing of the axe. Her face, visible now for the first time to him, is a marvel, a lake of spring water after a year in the desert. The strength of her muscles ripples with each swing, and yet she is graceful, lithe, and unselfconscious. She is magnificent.

He cannot do it. Her light has exposed the darkness he has always lived in, darkness he took to be the light. A lie. A trap. How can one, who has been in the presence of the Goddess, go back to serving the tyrant?

Quietly, he slips back into the forest, never making himself known, though even now he is deeply in love with her, and will be forever more. He goes back the way he came, to the edge of the forest, to the fields of stone, and the wind coming down off the mountain, and there, he puts all his heart into a prayer of protection -- that The Flame of Heaven never be corrupted.

*So if this wind finds you
And sings of bounty true
Brace the gate and lock the door
No kingdom's worth the Mad King's rule*

And so it was that, after many months' travel, the tracker returned to the Mad King's court empty-handed.

Great was the King's wrath, and he demanded to know how his best tracker could fail, and here, the tacker was caught, for the powers invested in the King by the dark spirits gave him the ability to see through any lie told by another (though, ironically, he could not see through the lies he told himself).

Knowing this, the tracker had almost decided not to return at all, but, he had long been a faithful subject and that programming runs deep. Even though his heart had been turned by The Flame's presence, his will was still in the grip of the Mad King, and through him, the dark Queen.

He was a man divided, agonized, subject still to forces he railed against and simultaneously felt compelled by. He could easily recall the comfort and ease he had felt back before he questioned anything, and yet he could never again return to the pleasure of that ignorance.

The Mad King demanded an explanation, and the tracker, poor soul, had no choice but to tell the truth. He had found The Flame, and he would not betray her, and in telling that truth, he saw his end. Between them, Nyx and the Mad King had the power to force any secret out of him, given enough time. If he would save the girl, he would safeguard The Flame, he had only one way out.

Even as the King called for his guards to seize him, the tracker spun away, and dashed to the battlements, where he flung himself from their heights to his death on the stone streets, far below.

Nyx though, would not be denied some measure of revenge.

* * *

Part 2 - Ensorcelled

Laughter in the forest
Echoes like a chorus through the fields
A river that divides the shores
Between make-believe and Evermore

And feelings here they cannot compare
Move your fingers through the frosty air

Ripple in the water
The poor man's only daughter is so fair
Sparrows sing your sorrow
As you move your frosty fingers through her hair

So now you know that your solitude is real
As a wind blows over the forest and the field

A queen rules your prison,
Oh you're a fox that has been driven to his lair
Always in the corner
You see the way if only you could care
And laughter in the forest
Calls you like a chorus through the fields
A river that divides the shores
Between make-believe and Evermore

And feelings here they cannot compare
Move your fingers through the frosty air
A wind blows over the forest and the fields
And winter drives the fox into his lair

Even as he fell, the Dark Queen cursed him, that he dwell forever, disembodied, in the winter wind. The same winter wind, upon which he had cast his wish for the girl's protection, would now be his prison. He would be forever trapped in an in-between world, unable to cross the River Styx into the land of Evermore.

Forever able to see and move through the world, to see and move around the poor man's daughter, The Flame, blowing through her red gold hair, yet unable to ever feel that sense of touch again. Able to hear the laughter of children at play in the forest, but never to laugh or speak himself again, except through the creaking of the branches, and the sougning of the wind through the fields.

* * *

The girl, the poor man's daughter, The Flame, did end up destroying the kingdom of the Mad King, and bringing about the end of the corrupting influence of Nyx and her court of dark spirits, but it was not through any sort of great battle or conflict, nor through political conquest. The Flame never stepped foot in that kingdom, she simply lived her life, and over time, her positive influence grew.

Word began to spread of a powerful, wise woman, who lived deep in the forest and people would go to her to learn. Children especially were drawn to her, and she to them, for it was among the children whose hearts were still innocent that her influence was the most powerful.

She taught simple things. How to catch one's own food through snare or fishing line. How to grow vegetables in the warm months, and how to preserve them through the winter. How to cut a tree down, with thanks and reverence for its gift, such that you could make furniture, shoes, a house. How to dwell in silence with the natural world, and listen.

In short, she taught how to live in deep connection with The Earth, such that the traps and temptations of The World held little appeal or influence.

Of course word of this reached Nyx and the Mad King's court, and there were many more expeditions sent to find The Flame, and her followers. But here the Dark Queen's own work

foiled them, and eventually brought about their ruin, for whenever a troop of soldiers or calvary of knights drew close to the forest where The Flame dwelled, a great wind would rise up.

Even on the hottest day of summer, should an ill-intentioned soul try to cross the fields of stone, a great, biting, icy cold winter wind would blast them off their feet and make entrance to the forest impossible. The tracker protected The Flame with the very wind upon which he had wished for her protection, and then been trapped in, thus fulfilling his own wish.

Over the decades, as the power and self-sufficiency of the people of the Flame grew, as more and more people came to live in harmony with the Earth and her rhythms, there grew an energy of love, connection, compassion, creativity and truth that could not be stopped.

It got stronger and stronger, until even some of the Mad King's oldest courtiers began to feel its pull. Slowly, over time, the Mad King's kingdom emptied. The dark spirits lost their food source, as more and more people simply chose to live a different way. As this happened the Mad King's power slipped away, until finally, he was left alone, without recourse, a serpent gnawing at his own tail, devouring himself until finally he was utterly spent, and his life extinguished.

Nyx went on to other worlds, worlds where there were still those interested in playing her dark games of power, and this world moved on.

* * *

Part 3 - Cold October Wind

Stay don't fall away
Like leaves on a tree at the end of the day

In a cold October wind
Blowing down from the mountain

Breath and fall asleep
With your hands tucked up to your chin
Dream and fall away
Like leaves on a tree at the end of the day

In a cold October wind
Blowing down from the mountain

Me like an empty tree
The wind came through and ripped them away
My leaves like memories
Of all my days
I'm naked for a time
Till Springtime comes along and fills my branches
With the buds of dreams and past lost chances

In a cold October wind
(my leaves like memories)
Blowing down from the mountain
(of all my days)

Hundreds of thousands of years later, the world has greatly changed, though perhaps the basic forces at play in our human struggle have not. That ancient forest where once The Flame lived and taught is long gone, yet the land itself remains of course, now a rainforest in the heart of the Oregon mountains, thick with spirits.

A young man is living and working there, grieving and uncertain. Uncertain if he's done the right thing in leaving his son behind, yet unable to imagine returning to that land where the boy is, a land where he has been deeply unhappy. He grieves that loss, but even more fundamentally he grieves the loss of his own innocence, which was taken from him too early as a child, and that fundamental wound has set up so many conflicts and challenges that are playing out now, all around him...

That old winter wind, still inhabited by the now very old and wise spirit of the Tracker, blows down from the mountain, scattering leaves.

After The Battle

When I'm feeling down cause I caught a frown
Ain't got nothin' to do with you

I find my way across a muddy stream
I find the meaning, I find my way

Paint your face all across the sky so I can see you
Lay your arms down all around so I can feel you
I ain't got nothing to do

I walk around
Like a soldier
Who lost his way
After the battle
I walk around like a soldier
Who lost his way after the battle

After the battle I walk around like
Soldier who lost his way

Paint your face all across the sky so I can see you
Lay your arms down all around so I can feel you
I ain't got nothin' to do
I ain't got nothin' to do
Got nothin' to do
I ain't got nothin' to do

After The Battle is another song that just appeared one night, completely formed, though not nearly as fleshed out as it is on this recording. It was different from *Ensorcelled*, in that I didn't have the same sense of being possessed, it was more like my own muse just handed it to me.

It was during the Oshkosh chapter, right around the same time I wrote *Crows*. I was just chillin' out one night, noodling around on my guitar, and I started strumming the very basic two-chord progression that makes up the verses, D7 - A.

****Music Theory Geek Note - I really liked the sound of that simple progression because even though it's in a major key, it has a 'minor-ish' kind of sound, because the upper triad of the D7 chord, formed by the third, fifth, and seventh, is a f# minor chord. I reinforced that minor feel on this recording by playing f# as the root note of the D7 in the bass part most of the time (this is called first inversion - when the third of the chord is in the root). Then, when I change it up occasionally and highlight the D major triad with the bass it sounds like a chord change, but it's not, it's just changing from a chord in first inversion back to standard.****

Anywayyyyyy... I was just noodling around playing that chord change, and I randomly did a little rhythmic rubbing of my palm across the strings (shka-shka-shka) in between chords, and that was cool. Then the lyrics just appeared, as did the slight change in chord structure that makes up the chorus. It all just landed.

This is definitely the most angsty song on this album, which is reflected in the grunge/metal approach to the choruses, and it is very much about PTSD. The lyrics appeared straight from my subconscious and they are the words of someone who is just beginning to figure out how to navigate their messy internal world, and who is crying out for help from Spirit:

1. Recognizing that if I'm triggered, grumpy, moody, that's my deal, not anybody else's
2. This enabling me to navigate my tangled and murky emotions a bit better (the muddy stream is my emotional world)
3. Calling out for Spirit to be made manifest in my life, as I feel pretty much cut off from any sense of having positive internal resources
4. Walking around feeling shell shocked, empty, following a bad argument

'I ain't got nothin' to do' -- I like the internal dyad of this line as it sums up the reality of living with unresolved trauma for me. In the common vernacular this line means, 'I don't have anything to do' and that can be how it feels a lot of the time -- disconnected from any sense of purpose or meaning, bored, aimless.

However, taken literally, it actually means, 'I've got something I need to do', which is the underlying reality of living with unresolved trauma. There is a lot to do, internally. A lot of repair that needs to happen.

Like I said, these lyrics came off the tip, so this meaning was only something I realized years later. That's why, on the second to last line in this recording I actually sing, *'got nothin' to do'* then *'ain't got nothin' to do'* - revealing the dyad, and the internal conflict of that state. So much needed to be healed and changed, yet I so often felt pissed, hopeless, listless, without energy to create any of that healing.

We Go On

On the dark wings of morning
Moments before the dawn
In times like these when leaves are sparse and golden
You raise your head from the unmade bed
That Leonard left me years ago
And I don't know if I'm strong enough to hold him

We go on
Though the road is beyond what we know
And what the weary tongue can say

We go on
And the spirit still is strong
And a song can sing a better day

From the mouth of our mother
A whispered word has come
That knocks down walls and shakes the halls of power
We lift our eyes to the sunburnt skies that
Fall upon the ravished land
And seed the clouds with promises of showers

We go on
Though the road is beyond what we know
And what the weary tongue can say

We go on
And the spirit still is strong
And a song can sing a better day

In the coils of a serpent
A flaming heart is born
And a cry is torn from the lips of those awakened
And the road they have taken
Perilous and dark
Is shot through now with the fire of all forsaken

On the bright wings of evening
Just as the sun has set
When the skies spill blood and the flood pours forth in crimson
You lift your head from the unmade bed
A' wonderin' at the world
For all seems lost but that's the cost of livin'

We go on
Though the road is beyond what we know
And what the weary tongue can say

We go on
And the spirit still is strong
And a song can sing a better day

This is a pretty intense album, thematically, with lots of musical changes and layers too, so I felt it was important to end on a simple, clear, hopeful note that reflects where I'm at now, after many years of deep trauma healing. As such, *We Go On* is the only song on this album written recently.

I feel the choruses are self explanatory, though I'll add thanks to Australian Aboriginal elder, Grandmother Mulara, for teaching me about the tradition of singing up the land, singing up yourself, which was the inspiration for the last lines of the chorus.

The first verse sets the stage -- Autumn (of 2021) -- and talks about the weight of inheriting creative genius. Not that I'm calling myself a genius, that's not what I mean. The Leonard I am referencing is Leonard Cohen, and the unmade bed is from one of his great songs, Chelsea Hotel.

*I remember you well in the Chelsea Hotel
You were talking so brave and so sweet
Giving me head on the unmade bed
While the limousines wait in the street
Those were the reasons and that was New York
We were running for the money and the flesh
And that was called love for the workers in song
Probably still is for those of them left*

Such amazing lyrics. So desolate and at the same time sensual, with a sense of sweetness and nostalgia. What I mean by inheriting creative genius is that, at least for me, once I hear something like this, once I hear a Cohen, Dylan, Van Zandt, Nick Drake, or Neil Young, I cannot ever again write a song without holding myself to that standard. They've set the bar, and I feel it is my duty as an artist to try my damndest to live up to that. Which can be hard!

The second verse is about the rise of the Divine Feminine, which is the primary force I feel moving in the world right now, and the fundamental reason for the turbulent times we are in. The old systems of power and control are imploding in upon themselves, as they no longer have any energetic foundation to stand on.

It's Gaia's game now, and the word she is whispering is: *freedom*.

It's also about seeing the devastation done, not ignoring it, but also not ignoring our power to manifest, especially when we are connected to Her.

The first part of the third verse is talking about how even those who have gone down the darkest roads do have redemption and healing available to them, but it's going to involve facing all the suffering they have caused, facing the justice of those they have wounded (*the fire of all forsaken*). In other words, karma's a bitch.

The second part of the third verse paints a picture of a sunset that feels apocalyptic in nature, a symbol of the loss, the devastation, the blood spilled, but also an ending to that - that sun is setting. And after all, we would not be able to feel the loss, pain, suffering, nor the joy, goodness and vitality of life, were we not alive in the first place. It's all part of the package.

Through all of that my friends, we go on.

Thanks for being here 💖

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sara', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

January 23, 2023