

CARRIE NEWCOMER

the beautiful not yet



The Beautiful Not Yet

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Executive Producer - Robert Meitus

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Lean In Toward the Light

Winter is the oldest season,
But quietly beneath the snow,
Seeds are stretching out and reaching,
Faithful as the morning glow.

Carry nothing but what you must.
Lean in toward the Light.
Let it go, shake off the dust.
Lean in toward the Light.
Today is now, tomorrow beckons.
Lean in toward the Light.
Keep practicing resurrection.

The shadows of this world will say,
There's no hope why try anyway?
But every kindness large or slight,
Shifts the balance toward the light.

Waters wind and open wide.
Lean in toward the Light.
Don't just walk when you can fly.
Lean in toward the Light.
When justice seems in short supply.
Lean in toward the Light.
Let beauty be your truest guide.

The shadows of this world will say,
There's no hope why try anyway?
But every kindness large or slight,
Shifts the balance toward the light.

The prayer I pray at eventide.
Lean in toward the Light.
All left undone be put aside.
Lean in toward the Light.

And when forgiveness is hard find.
Lean in toward the Light.
Help me to at least to be kind.
Lean in toward the Light.
Lean in toward the Light.

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A Shovel is a Prayer

"I believe that prayer is very personal and intimate. It happens in small, private moments, in songs and whispers, in humor, grace and the conversations that can only be had at the quiet end of the table."

A shovel is a prayer
To the farmer's foot,
When he steps down
And the soft earth gives way.
A baby is a prayer
When its finally asleep.
A whispered, "Amen"
At the end of the day.

And a friend is a prayer
When they bring over soup,
When they laugh at your jokes,
And they don't ask for proof.
It's a song that you sing,
When you are alone,
When you're weary or lonely
Or that far from home.

For all your searching
There's nothing to do.
What you've been looking for
Is looking for you.

I'm the prodigal daughter,
You're the dissonant son.
We've been washed in rainwater,
We're the fortunate ones.
On the other side of midnight
Just before the dawn,
You can feel it coming up
When the long night is done.

Its as heavy as grief
And its weightless as smoke.
Its the dream you forgot,
Its the letter you wrote,
Its the first birds of morning
That sound like a hymn,
Throw open the windows and
Let the light in.

I'm a wayfaring stranger,
You're Indiana Jones,
We are Gracie and George,
We're Watson and Holmes.
The air is filled with angels
There's no devil to outrun.
Just sigh and kiss the ground
When the long night is done.

Its a collar turned up,
A kiss on the forehead,
A string and two cans
Its the last thing you said.
It's a hunch that you follow,
A light in the dark,
An idiot check,
Its a balm for your heart.

For all you searching
There's nothing to do.
What you've been looking for
Is looking for you.

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Cedar Rapids 10 AM

A love song

A ceaseless wind blows without mercy,
I pull my jacket tighter.
These boots are old,
But they're still trustworthy,
To take me somewhere higher.

Will you come with me to the ridge top?
Lay all your burdens bare,
Right there,
There.

I miss you like a typewriter,
Long and far away.
I love you like an embered fire,
That's warmer than the blaze.

Will you come with me to the ridge top?
Lay all your burdens bare,
Right there,
There.

Take away all the white noise,
It getting hard to hear.
Souls stretched as thin as tissue paper,
Edged with cuts and tears.

Will you come with me to the ridge top?
Lay all your burdens bare,
Right there,
There.

So much for all the chips we've earned.
So much for all the things we've learned.
So far it is still you and me.

You've always been a cup of coffee,
You've always been the cream.

You've always believed that I was better,
Than I could ever dream.

Will you come with me to the ridge top?
Lay all your burdens bare,
Right there,
There.

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The Beautiful Not Yet

We live in an ever accelerating goal-oriented world. It is easy to become distracted and restless. We are not who we were, and yet we are not who we will become. I went for a walk in early spring when the snow was gone but leaves had not yet budded. The light was clear and clean, falling totally unencumbered through the trees. Yes, summer was coming, lush and unsubtle, but in that moment I found myself grateful and in love with the quickening. Life is always lived between then and soon, right here and now, in the beautiful not yet. - Carrie

Spring is humming,
Bits of something,
A melody the simple part,
A song that I once knew by heart.

Juniper, wild indigo,
Foxglove, lupine, Queen Ann's lace,
Will be coming any day,

The restlessness,
The quickening,
The almost but
Not yet.

Muddy boots, last year's leaves
Every spring that came before,
All they were and something more.

The restlessness,
The quickening,
The almost but
Not yet.

Do you see, do you see, do you see it
Take a breath,
Oh, the restlessness,
The beautiful not yet.

There's a stirring,
There's sweetness,
At the edge of in between.
I feel it nearly trembling.

The restlessness,
The quickening,
The almost but
Not yet.

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Three Feet or So

This song was written for a spoken word and song collaboration with Parker J. Palmer and Gary Walters called "What We Need Is Here: Hope, Hard Times and Human Possibility." I reference in this song a beautiful story by Greg Ellison that affirms the idea that we may not be able to change the whole world, but we can change what is three feet around us. We have enormous power to create positive change in the world in how we choose to live our daily lives.

When I'm weary lost or sad,
Overwhelmed or just fed up,
I say grace for what I have.
And most the time that is enough.

We are body, skin and bones,
We're all the loss we've every known,
What is gone is always near,
We're all the love that brought us here.

Chorus: And the things that have saved us
Are still here to save us.
Its not out there somewhere
Its right here, its right here.

If I start by being kind,
Love usually follows right behind.
It nods its head and softly hums
Saying "Honey that's the way it's done."

We don't have to search for love,
Wring our hands and wring our hearts,
All we have to do is know
The love will find us in the dark

Chorus: And the things that have saved us
Are still here to save us.
Its not out there somewhere
Its right here, its right here.

I can't change the whole world.
But I can change the world I know,
What's within three feet or so.

We are body, skin and bones,
We're all the love we've every known,
When I don't know what is right,
I hold it up into the Light.
I hold it up into the Light.
I hold it up into the Light.

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Sanctuary

This song was written after a conversation with my friend Parker J. Palmer. I asked him, "What can we do when we are personally or politically heartbroken?" He responded, "We take sanctuary. We gather with those we love, in places like Brown Chapel. We remember, we share stories or we sit in silence until we can go on."

Will you be my refuge,
My haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm,
When my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember,
And bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary,
'Til I can carry on
Carry on
Carry on.

This one knocked me to the ground,
This one dropped me to my knees,
I should have seen it coming,
But it surprised me.

Will you be my refuge,
My haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm,
When my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember,
And bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary,
'Til I can carry on
Carry on
Carry on.

In a state of true believers,
On streets called us and them,
Its gonna take some time,
'Til the world feels safe again.

Will you be my refuge,
My haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm,
When my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember,
And bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary,
'Til I can carry on
Carry on
Carry on.

You can rest here in Brown Chapel,
Or with a circle of friends,
Or quiet grove of trees,
Or between two bookends.

Will you be my refuge,
My haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm,
When my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember,
And bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary,
'Til I can carry on
Carry on
Carry on.

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Help In Hard Times

This is another song written for a song and spoken word collaboration with Parker J. Palmer. I'd like to thank Barbara Brown Taylor for her lovely book "Learning to Walk in the Dark." I was very touched by her concept of lunar spirituality. We do not live our lives in full sun or full dark. Our lives are lived more often like the phases of the moon, always incorporating both shadow and light. I've come to believe that there is not always a reason for the hard times we face, but I do believe in those difficult moments there is help and hope. Even when the moon is dark, there is still something whole and sacred in the world.

I am learning to walk with grace in the dark.
I am learning to trust and to lead with my heart.
When the old moon is gone into silence and sighs,
Its the one and only time a new moon can rise.

Sometimes there is no reason, the moon waxes and wanes,
It was the 100 year flood and you were in the way.
Some things we find in daylight and we're grateful to know
Some things we only learned where we did not want to go.

I can't tell you it will all turn out fine,
But I know is there's help in hard times.

Bruised and bewildered I am looking out the door,
Unsure of how to do what I've never done before.
But I am not alone, with my questions and my fears,
When the old moon is done, the new moon appears.

I'm inspired and troubled by the stories I have heard.
In the blue light of evening all boundaries get blurred.
And I believe in something better, and that love's the final word,
And that there's still something whole and sacred in this world.

I can't tell you it will all turn out fine,
But I know is there's help in hard times.

Sure it could, it could all be just fine
But I know there is help in hard times.

All I know is there's help in hard times.
All I know is there's help in hard times.

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The Season of Mercy

This song began as a poem written while traveling on a train from Berlin to Hannover Germany.

Traveling north
Tall straight pines,
Ghost white birch,
On the Hannover Line.

Red tile roofs,
A lone blue kite,
It's barely tethered,
In the silver light.

Its the time of memory
The season of mercy.
Following out the thread,
Humming the tune in my head
Just out of reach,
Always out of reach.

Entering radio silence.
In a train car of sound.
Two dark eyed children,
Look up and then down.

You buy a strong coffee,
I consider the miles,
Will I be remembered,
As the woman who smiled.

Its the time of memory
The season of mercy.
Following out the thread,
Humming the tune in my head
Just out of reach,
Always out of reach.

How much did I miss or forget to remember,

Here at the edge of November,
With all we've gained and lost.
Do I love my life enough to brave it,
Do I love my life enough to save it,
Where does this train stop.

A red tail hawk,
Makes a perfect arc.
A silent owl,
Glides in the dark.

The car fills with light,
That was all that it took.
It was already there
Before I thought to look.

Chorus: It the time of memory
The season of mercy.
Following out the thread,
Humming the tune in my head
Just out of reach,
Always out of reach.
Always out of reach.

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You Can Do This Hard Thing

Barbara Kingsolver speaks about a phrase she uses to encourage her children, "You can do hard things." I loved this idea behind this phrase. It absolutely acknowledges the difficulty of the task at hand, and yet, at the same time it completely affirms that the child has everything they need to move forward, and that there is support for them as they move forward. I began to think about all the times in my own life that someone has given me that kind of sound advice and encouragement. This is another song written for a spoken word and song collaboration with Parker J. Palmer.

There at the table
With my head in my hands.
A column of numbers
I just could not understand.
You said "Add these together,
Carry the two,
Now you."

Chorus: You can do this hard thing.
You can do this hard thing.
Its not easy I know,
But I believe that its so.
You can do this hard thing.

At a cold winter station
Breathing into our gloves.
This would change me forever
Leaving for God know's what.
You carried my bags,
You said "I'll wait
For you."

You can do this hard thing.
You can do this hard thing.
Its not easy I know,
But I believe that its so.
You can do this hard thing.

Late at night I called,
And you answered the phone.
The worst it had happened,
And I did not want to be alone.
You quietly listened,
You said "We'll see this thru."

You can do this hard thing.
You can do this hard thing.
Its not easy I know,
But I believe that its so.
You can do this hard thing.

Here we stand breathless
And pressed in hard times.
Hearts hung like laundry
On backyard clothes lines.
Impossible just takes
A little more time.

From the muddy ground
Comes a green volunteer.
In a place we thought barren
New life appears.
Morning will come whistling
Some comforting tune,
For you.

You can do this hard thing.
You can do this hard thing.
Its not easy I know,
But I believe that its so.
You can do this hard thing.

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Where the Light Comes Down

In the beautiful poem “Monet Refuses the Operation” by Lisel Mueller, the French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet, tells the eye doctor that he does not want the cataract surgery that would restore his eyes. He says it took an entire lifetime to learn to see the world as he does now. What the doctor considers an affliction is actually the outcome of long work and effort. It takes a long time to see the world as mostly made of Light and to sense ache and awe at every turn. It takes practice, forgetting and remembering to learn how to pay attention to small things. There is great reward as well as a cost to living such a life. But for the painter, it could not have been any other way.

It took dog days and years,
To catch a moment when it's here.
And that the hay bales just might,
Be mostly made of light,
And that leaves can fall like shining golden coins.

Chorus I can feel it in the hollow spaces
In the quiet places
Where the light comes down.
I can see it in strangers faces,
In the lines and traces,
on the winter ground,
Where the light comes down.

It took awhile before I saw,
That the world is mostly made of ache and awe.
And that some night hum with sound,
And sometimes silence is a noun,
And that dust and snow can swirl like falling scarves.

Chorus I can feel it in the hollow spaces
In the quiet places
Where the light comes down.
I can see it in strangers faces,
In the lines and traces,
on the winter ground,
Where the light comes down.

Ashes fall and waters rise.
Season change before our eyes.

It took awhile to finally know,
That a luna moth will quickly come and go,
And that distraction is a thief,
Of all that's shining and brief.
Gone in a brilliant startle of wings.

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Haunted

Our cultural relationship to mental health has improved greatly in the passed generation. And yet, there is still a long way to go toward acknowledgment and acceptance of mental health issues. There are hauntings that have followed us for years, the whispers of what happened continue to echo.

I've been hearing footsteps on the stairs,
Flip on the light and no one's there.
This is how we learn to navigate,
All ghosts and lingering wraiths.

The things you try to hide will not be hid,
They said it didn't happen, but it did.
All the things that scared you as a kid,
in basement, underneath the bed.

Haunted

If you look long into the dark,
Something will illuminate or spark.
If you wade where the silence is deep,
If you listen long enough it speaks.

Not every haunting is redeemed,
But not every ghost is what it seems.
When we name the dragons, dragons fall,
Armored flanks, flaming wings and all.

Haunted

Its calling through the keyholes,
Underneath the doors,
Slipping through the windows and floorboards.

Shameful stories, unmet needs
Old ideas and even older deeds,
Its safe to finally release,
The shadows of all these.

Its dangerous to live in a normal world,
When you're not an ordinary girl.
For years in dusty attics you could find,
Where the mad and voiceless where confined.

Haunted

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The Slender Thread

There is a thread that connects me to the people I love. It has always been that thread I follow to find my way home.

The car wheels hummed and the radio whined,
The rise and fall of telephone lines.
I was trying to remember the last thing you said,
Holding on to the slender thread.

I was awakened last night by the knife of a moon,
I've been spooling out a thread from my heart to you.
Don't give up on me whatever you do,
I'm holding on to the slender thread.

So look up and bless every guiding star,
We've worked so hard and come so far.
And home is still wherever you are,
Holding on to the slender thread.

I never knew it would come to this
That world I knew would no longer exist.
I can still feel it burn like a place you kissed
Holding on to the slender thread.

So look up and bless every guiding star,
We've worked so hard and come so far.
And home is still wherever you are,
Holding on to the slender thread.

Scams and scriptures posted by the roadside.
Whole stories hung out on loose on the clotheslines.
I've left a trail of crumbs and a paper map,
As the miles unravel, it's love that calls me back.

I used to lay out altars in hotel rooms,
On cigarette burnt tables and check out at noon.

A stone and a feather and a letter from you,
Holding on to the slender thread.

So look up and bless every guiding star,
We've worked so hard and come so far.
And home is still wherever you are,
Holding on to the slender thread.

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