

# CARRIE NEWCOMER

THE GEOGRAPHY OF LIGHT



**There is a Tree**

*"I dreamt that the spirit of God passed by close enough to fog the window. I've come to believe that mystery is as near as my front porch. There is a song at the center of all things."*

Last night I dreamt you very near  
Though the night was dark beyond the glass.  
I knew you'd left before I woke  
But you'd fogged the window when you passed.

The air was still and smelled like rain,  
Though I'd never known so dry a spell.  
And what I heard there in the dark,  
Are the secrets I will never tell?

**Chorus:** There is a tree beyond the world.  
In it's ancient roots a song is curled.  
I'm the fool whose life's been spent.  
Between what's said and what is meant.

I didn't mean what went so wrong.  
Some things I wish I didn't know.  
I've always lived inside my head.  
And often utterly alone

I will be a pillow for your head.  
You can make me promises you can't keep.  
And I'll believe each word you've said.  
And hum to you while you sleep.

**Chorus**

You took me by my shaking hand,  
Laughed at me and closed the door,  
Put your hands to my waist,  
And waltzed rue round the kitchen floor.

**Chorus**

So I will wander without fail  
In circles that grow ever wide  
The sky expands and then exhales  
With an ache that never subsides

**Chorus**

*By Carrie Newcomer © Carrie Newcomer Music, BMI Bug Publishing*

## **The Clean Edge of Change**

*This song began as a poem I wrote while traveling. I had been reading a book called "Let Your Life Speak" by Parker J. Palmer. Many of his ideas about change and the finding wholeness on the other side of a difficult time are present in the poem and the song. Sometimes the only way out is through.*

First there is the folding in,  
To gather light and dark to you.  
The journey down so far that it,  
Has nowhere else to go but through.  
I thought if I tried hard enough,  
With endless motion like a bribe,  
As if by this the will of God,  
Could be bent to my version of right.

**Chorus:** What happens next is nearly weightless,  
The opening where we stand breathless,  
On the clean edge of change.

She cannot live beneath my wings,  
No more with he see seventy.  
How many mornings did I wake,  
And wished that it would be you I'd see?

## **Chorus**

**Bridge:** And who am I, who makes this sound,  
Who rode the shadow all the way down?

In that clear space of knowing there's  
As many names for dark as for light,  
I am choosing mostly now to speak  
The names that get me through the night.  
But always, with humility,  
With a worn out but grateful heart.  
Having sang so recently,  
Full-throated In the dark.

## **Chorus:**

First there is the folding in,  
To gather light and dark to you,  
The journey down so far that it,  
Has nowhere else to go but through.

## **A Map of Shadows**

*I am fascinated by the liminal places. This song originated as an essay describing an experience of watching the night become morning.*

It's four in the morning, the last dregs of the evening.  
I sit and rock on the front porch swing, 'til the morning sky starts bleeding.  
It is cool and it's quiet, bats and owls lay down beside it.  
Mourning doves breathe a sigh, as the shadow passes by.

**Chorus:** Well well well - it's so hard to tell .  
There's a line between light and dark  
Between heaven and hell.  
Well well well - it's not easy to see.  
What's out there on my left or right  
Or what's right in front of me.

There is magic in the dawning, a black and white Esher drawing.  
Night pivots on its axis and turns into day.  
Devils close down shop and move along,  
With angels wink and slide familiar palms,  
Say, "Good night good luck 'til the day comes round  
And out on the other side."

**Chorus:**  
It's beyond my understanding, so much depends on where you're standing,  
Yet I hold it up into the light, take a better look.  
I've been plenty wrong before, choose tiger behind the door,  
But it always seems to make more sense in the pale morning air.

## **Chorus**

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## Geodes

*"My home in Southern Indiana is a rolling green land abundant in limestone and the mysterious rocks called geodes. Geodes are so copious in this part of the state that we pile them in our gardens and think of them as commonplace. I am fascinated with these unassuming brown and grey stones that contain inside them a sparkling center of quartz crystals. They are surprising beautiful and a wonderful metaphor. They remind me to look deeper, because often within what may appear quite ordinary is a core of beauty and mystery. Sometimes I will take visiting friends on muddy walks along the hills and hollows of my home pointing out the creek beds full of geodes. Often they confess that if I hadn't pointed out these unadorned stones their presence would have been missed entirely. But once familiar with the signature lumpy look of geodes these friends begin to see the stones everywhere. This is how paying attention works. At first I have to look quite deliberately to find the sparkling center of things, but eventually I begin to notice the patterns and come to expect the unexpected." -Carre*

You can't always tell one from another.

And it's best not to judge a book by its tattered cover.

I have found when I tried or looked deeper inside.

What appears unadorned might be wondrously formed.

You can't always tell but sometimes you just know.

'Round here we throw geodes in our gardens.

They're as common as the rain or corn silk in July.

Unpretentious browns and grays the stain of Indiana clay,

They're what's left of shallow seas glacial rock and mystery,

And inside their shines a crystal bright as promise,

All these things that we call familiar,

Are just miracles clothed in the commonplace.

You'll see it if you try in the next stranger's eyes,

God walks around in muddy boots, sometimes rags and that's the truth,

You can't always tell, but sometimes you just know.

Some say geodes are made from pockets of tears,

Trapped away in small places for years upon years.

Pressed down and transformed, 'til the true self was born,

And the whole world moved on like the last notes of a song,

A love letter sent without return address.

You can't always tell one from another.

And it's best not to judge a book by its tattered cover.

Now I don't open them to see folks 'round here just like me,

We have come to believe there's hidden good in common things.

You can't always tell but sometimes you just know.

You can't always tell but sometimes you just know.

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## **Two Toasts**

*This song was written from a poem by Parker J. Palmer. We had a wonderful time working on the song together and while creating an evening of poetry, essay and song. Because this song speaks to the mysterious and overlapping places between sound and silence, I seemed natural to include it on this collection*

Praise be that this thin mark, this sound  
Can form the Word that takes on flesh  
To enter where no flesh can go  
To fill each other's emptiness.

To Words and How They Live Between Us...  
To Us and How We Live Between the Worth...

And in between the sound of words  
I hear your silent, sounding soul  
Where One abides in solitude  
Who keeps us one when speech shall go

To Words and How They Live Between Us...  
To Us and How We Live Between the Words...

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## **Where You Been**

*I come to expect holiness in unexpected places and that it is best not to limit where and within whom we look for the Sacred. A true compassionate and radical love has always been counter culture. Hope has always been an audacious act of belief in the possibility for something better. As Jim Wallis and others have stated, "We are the prophets we've been waiting for."*

He was driving in to Chicago in a borrowed El Camino,  
On a hazeless day in springtime I think the Cinco De Mayo.  
Maybe it was St Paddy's Or the Gay Pride parade,  
But I've never seen nobody light up the street that way.

### **Chorus:**

Brother/ Sister where you been? Hold on if you can.  
Just do your best then  
say, "Amen."

Called in sick and spent the weekend, drinking St Paulies in Wisconsin.  
I'd been fishing with my buddies most of Sunday afternoon.  
And there beneath the halo of the Old Milwaukee sign,  
He said, There's big ones in the shallows I see them all the time.

### **Chorus**

I stopped into the Seven-Eleven, I was buying an Aquafina.  
He was wearing knock-off sneakers I was nursing a hangover.  
He said, "You're worth a lot more baby than you've ever dared to dream of."  
Like he knew all the secret sketchy places I'd been looking for love

### **Chorus**

A tall skinny guy with dread locks said they're giving' out free bagels & lox.  
So I took the kids and all my plastic bags and walked the seven blocks.  
There were joggers and commuters, skate board kids and Goths.  
There were drunks and dogs and meter maids in that downtown vacant lot.

He said, "The universe is unfolding and the center still is holding,  
There's enough if we just share it, now ya'all don't forget to pass the basket.  
Blessed are all the good hearted, the poets and the dreamers,  
And all us crazy holy hungry ones who believe in something better."

### **Chorus**

I saw Jesus on talking shop, with Buddha at the Starbucks,  
I saw Gia and Ganesh, doing double Dutch in the park,  
And Mohammad was throwing popcorn to the pigeons and the sparrows.  
And all us crazy holy hungry ones still believe in something better,

### **Chorus:**

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### **Biscuits and Butter**

*Inspired by a short story in the book  
Wilderness Plots by Scott Russell  
Sanders. This song and story is about  
grief and how often women and  
children bear the price for unchecked  
ambition and acquisition.*

Daniel said traveling risky  
But the money awful good.  
When I get back we can finally  
Get ahead sure we could.  
He left the fifth of December  
Took our oldest boy Ben.  
I packed them biscuits and butter,  
And never saw them again.

**Chorus** How can I keep on walking,  
God Almighty tells me this.  
One foot in front of the other,  
One foot in front of the next.

I sent my second oldest baby  
Out to find his next of kin.  
They found the wagon in the  
springtime

Up on the Killbuck River edge.  
He was quieter than his brother,  
And his brother's his closest friend.  
I packed him biscuits and butter,  
And never saw him again.

### **Chorus**

They found the bones of our team of  
oxen,  
The shirt I'd sewn with my own hands.  
They found the basket I'd pack the  
biscuits,  
But not a trace of my men.  
I think I'll go down to the river.  
I think I'll take up throwing stones.  
I think I'll cry until I'm finished.  
And I learn to sleep alone.

### **Chorus**

I think I'll go down to the river.  
I think I'll take up throwing stones.  
I'll never make another biscuit.



## **A Mean Kind of Justice**

“An eye for an eye and we all go blind.” -Gandhi

There's a ring around the moon,  
There's a chill in the air.  
There's a mean kind of justice,  
Coming down coming down.  
Angels wring their hands and put ashes on their heads.  
There's a mean kind of justice coming down.

It don't ever stop a thing,  
An eye for eye, tic for tat.  
And I've never seen nobody truly satisfied like that.  
It just rolls around the head eating holes in your heart.  
There's a mean kind of justice coming down.

There is a goodness on this earth  
That will not die will not die.  
It bears all, and seen it all, and still it survives.  
I know that we have failed,  
But I I've seen that we can fly.  
There's goodness on this earth that will not die.

Oh no, forgiveness never sleeps.  
But the devil wants its due and says human life is cheap .  
When we give up any hope we could ever change the past ,  
Then at last. . .

There's a ring around the moon,  
There's a chill on the breeze.  
There's somebody with their hands clasped,  
Down on their knees.  
Angels hold their breath for what might set them free.  
There's a mean kind of justice coming down.

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## **Leaves Don't Drop, They Just Let Go**

*"I wrote this song with my friend Michael Mains. All of life is letting go."*

The truth I knew when I was eight.  
My dad swam the length of Spirit Lake.  
It must have been a million miles.  
This I knew was true.  
My mother sang while hangin' clothes.  
Her notes weren't perfect heaven knows.  
But heaven opened anyway.  
And this I knew was true.

**Chorus:** Leaves don't drop they just let go,  
And make a place for seeds to grow.  
Every season brings a change,  
A seed is what a tree contains,  
To die and live is life's refrain.

I left her with some groceries,  
Said, "Check the oil and call me please."  
She said " Hey, ma I'll be just fine."  
This I knew was true.

### **Chorus:**

I've traveled through my history,  
From certainty to mystery.  
God speaks in rhyme in paradox.  
This I know is true.

And finally when life is through,  
I'm what I am not what I do.  
It comes down to you and your next breath,  
And this I know is true.

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## **You'd Think By Now**

*There is a crack in everything,*

*That's how the light gets in.*

*~Leonard Cohen*

It isn't fair, it isn't right.

I've gone over and over the scenes in my head,

Laid here awake half of the night.

No it isn't good, and I can't let go.

I've been something or someone I hurt,

In some other life somewhere long ago.

**Chorus:** I don't know how I started down this tailspin.

Why one more time I just did not see it coming.

And you'd think by now,

I'd have figured out the pattern.

I shook my fists I've left too soon.

The soft wounded animal inside of me

Stood up on its hind legs and howled at the moon,

Anger rises in a violet storm,

And when I am wisest lay down beside it

And hum in it's ear until it gets quiet,

## **Chorus**

No it isn't fair, it isn't right,

I've wished on a million or billion bright stars,

Prayed like the devil with all of my might.

And somebody said, "What's really true.

Yeah all of this stuff is different I know.

But what is in common has always been you."

**Chorus** I'm starting to see and the heavens are starry.

And if I'm not too proud I'll learn to say I'm sorry.

You'd think by now I'd have figured out the pattern.

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## **One Woman and a Shovel**

*This is another song inspired by a story in the book Wilderness Plots by Scott Russell Sanders. This story happened in the 1800's in the Ohio Valley area, but it is relevant to our current ecological situation. In the story one passionate woman was able to rally her community to right a wrong done in the name of progress and greed. It's not too late, but the time is now.*

Martha walked right down to the dam,  
I hoe and a shovel in either hand.  
She was bound to dig for every woman and man,  
And child that lay sick with fever.

The government men said, "Be our favorite sons,  
Be a place of worth some where and someone.  
If you drown this valley the canal boats will come."  
So they drowned their lovely valley.

But the waters grew black and the sickness came.  
They hung their heads in grief and shame.  
Martha said, "We've only ourselves to blame."  
And took up a shovel and hoe, Good Lord  
She took up a shovel and hoe.

**Chorus:** When it's time to say enough and set things right,  
The whole world is waist deep in trouble,  
Never doubt or question the power of love,  
Or one woman with a shovel.

Along came Elizabeth Sarah and Rose, Eva, Clara and Ruth .  
They came with picks and shovels and hoes and armed with a righteous truth.  
Then came Calvin, Eli and Scott, Timothy, David and Paul.  
And together before sun came up they tore down the cursed wall,  
They tore down the cursed wall.

## **Chorus**

And the lake finally bled its bad blood south,  
And they'd saved that ravaged land.  
And not a single soul jury or judge would think to fine or jail them,  
Would think to fine or jail them.

Martha walked right down to the dam.  
Hoe and a shovel in either hand.  
She was bound to dig for every woman and man,  
And child who lay sick with fever.

## **Chorus**

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## **Lazarus**

*The character of Lazarus has always intrigued me. We are born out of the mystery and return into the mystery. While we walk this world, we live in the overlapping space between.*

Now that he's gone  
Now the world has moved on  
Since he called my name Nothings the same.  
As my sister cried  
He said, "Lazarus rise." To love and anoint  
Or just prove a point

Chorus I'm the one that he saved  
I'm the one that he raised  
From a dark quiet sleep from peace of the grave.  
I the one who owns much but that no one will touch  
Mothers see me and cry  
Dogs bare teeth as I walk by.

I don't see a veil between heaven and hell  
The truth is there's nothing but a warm light and singing.  
But here in-between a voice haunts my dreams.  
Martha does what she can but won't look at my hands.

## **Chorus**

I love the cool mornings I love a hot meal  
The pulse of the street night jasmine and clean sheets.  
I can't sleep of rest I feel lost and hard pressed.  
I wander these rooms still looking for you.

**Chorus** I ought to be grateful to drink from the grail  
But I don't belong on either side of this veil.  
I look down at my hands that are clasped in my lap.  
When he left this world I thought he'd take me back.

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**Throw me a Line**

*I was reading a book by James Hollis, a Jungian author. I was taken by his characterization of our journey into adulthood and beyond not as a "crisis" but rather as a "passage."*

Why do I worry so much, it can't add a day or year?  
It usually comes down to a matter of love or fear.  
I really don't know, and I can't tell you why.  
One sparrow falls to the ground, and another one flies.

**Chorus** Could you throw me a line  
Could you take me in?  
The worlds turning faster  
Than it ever has been.  
And what used to be sure  
Up and walked out the door.  
And the old ways I knew  
Just don't work anymore.

Some days I'm a bird some days I'm a song.  
Some days I'm a storm sometimes I'm just plain wrong.  
But there is a still quiet voice and it sounds a little like mine,  
Saying, "You're right where you should be It's just going to take time."

**Chorus**

**Bridge:** when's it all breaks down  
When they're nothing to lose  
When there's no more to say and there is nothing to prove

Oh yeah bring it on, all things living in you.  
You're not just what has happen, you can be something new.  
But what you leave to the shadows, what stays in the dark,  
Will grieve you and seize you and cripple your heart.

**Chorus**

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## Don't Push Send

This is a story a very sad tale  
Of intrigue and romance and electronic mail  
A dangerous form of information, and the perils of instant gratification  
How many times did I hit my Mac want to crawl inside and take the whole thing  
back  
But its no use say it again and again  
Don't push send

Carol wrote about her job's frustrations  
What drove her crazy with aggravation  
A list of every person's faults,  
Precise and pithy, wry insults  
She sent it off to her best friend  
But saw with horror as she pushed send  
She hit the keys and began to roar  
She'd she'd copied the entire office floor

**Chorus:** Don't push send  
Don't push send  
There are things that you just can amend  
I tell myself again and again  
Don't push send

Katherine wrote a note to her husband Ben  
Using their pet names and vowing devotion  
She said meet me at home in a little while  
I'll be there waiting, wearing nothing but a smile  
But then she goes her answer from his great granddad lee.  
Saying" I don't think that this was meant for me"  
It was nice, but I'll forward it to my great grandson,  
it's been years since anybody called me sugar buns."

## Chorus

The day was tough the week had really been somethin'  
Jane got a message that pushed her buttons  
She shot back as if her words were guns  
Capitalizing every single one  
She should have waited she should know  
E-mail doesn't mix with merlot  
She had to write back as you could guess  
Plead e-mail recklessness and PMS

## Chorus

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## Bridge

Just stop and think when I'm on the brink  
Walk away from your computer  
Cause you can bet I' will regret  
And feel like such a loser

## Chorus

After opposing counsel acted like jerks  
Joe got a letter from his law partner at work  
He meant to make a changes, cut and paste  
But sent it off in his efficient haste  
He tried to delete, he tried to stop the note  
But the letter had flown and that was all she wrote  
The message was polite with professional class  
But the subject line still said "what a ass"

## Chorus: