

Considering Matthew Shepard Craig Hella Johnson

Libretto

Commissioned by Fran and Larry Collmann and Conspirare
Dedicated to Philip Overbaugh

PROLOGUE

All.

*Yoodle—ooh, yoodle-ooh-hoo, so sings a lone cowboy,
Who with the wild roses wants you to be free.*

Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass

Cattle, horses, sky and grass
These are the things that sway and pass
Before our eyes and through our dreams
Through shiny, sparkly, golden gleams
Within our psyche that find and know
The value of this special glow
That only gleams for those who bleed
Their soul and heart and utter need
Into the mighty, throbbing Earth
From which springs life and death and birth.

I'm alive! I'm alive, I'm alive, golden. I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive . . .

These cattle, horses, grass, and sky
Dance and dance and never die
They circle through the realms of air
And ground and empty spaces where
A human being can join the song
Can circle, too, and not go wrong
Amidst the natural, pulsing forces
Of sky and grass and cows and horses.

I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive . . .

This chant of life cannot be heard
It must be felt, there is no word
To sing that could express the true
Significance of how we wind
Through all these hoops of Earth and mind
Through horses, cattle, sky and grass
And all these things that sway and pass.

We Tell Each Other Stories

We tell each other stories so that we will remember
Try and find the meaning in the living of our days

Always telling stories, wanting to remember
Where and whom we came from
Who we are

Sometimes there's a story that's painful to remember
One that breaks the heart of us all
Still we tell the story
We're listening and confessing
What we have forgotten
In the story of us all

We tell each other stories so that we will remember
Trying to find the meaning . . .

*I am open to hear this story about a boy, an ordinary boy
Who never had expected his life would be this story,
(could be any boy)*

I am open to hear a story

*Open, listen.
All.*

The Fence (that night)

*Most noble evergreen with your roots in the sun:
you shine in the cloudless sky of a sphere no earthly eminence can grasp,
You blush like the dawn,
you burn like a flame of the sun. ^*

I held him all night long
He was heavy as a broken heart
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing

He was heavy as a broken heart
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood
I tightened my grip and held on

The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
We were out on the prairie alone
I tightened my grip and held on
I saw what was done to this child

We were out on the prairie alone
Their truck was the last thing he saw
I saw what was done to this child
I cradled him just like a mother

Most noble evergreen, most noble evergreen, your roots in the sun . . .

Their truck was the last thing he saw
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
I cradled him just like a mother
I held him all night long

Most noble evergreen . . .

Keep It Away From Me (The Wound of Love)

don't wanna look on this
never get near
flames too raw for me
grief too deep
keep it away from me

stay out of my heart

stay out of my hope

some son, somebody's pain
some child gone
child never mine
born to this trouble
don't wanna be born to this world
world where sometimes yes
world where mostly no

the wound of love^

smoke round my throat
rain down my soul
no heaven lies
keep them gone
keep them never
grief too deep, flames too raw
keep them away from me

stay out of my heart

stay out of my hope

don't try
any old story on me
no wing no song
no cry no comfort ye
no wound ever mine
close up the gates of night

the wound of love

keep this all away from me

the wound of love

you take away

the wounds of the world

keep it away from me

In Need of Breath

Matt:

My heart
Is an unset jewel
Upon the tender night

Yearning for its dear old friend
The Moon.

When the Nameless One debuts again
Ten thousand facets of my being unfurl wings
And reveal such a radiance inside

I enter a realm divine—
I too begin to sweetly cast light,
Like a lamp,
I cast light
Through the streets of this
World.

My heart is an unset jewel
Upon existence
Waiting for the Friend's touch.

Tonight

Tonight
My heart is an unset ruby
Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.
I am dying in these cold hours
For the resplendent glance of God.

My heart
Is an unset jewel
Upon the tender night

My heart is an unset ruby
Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.

All Of Us

What could be the song?
Where begin again?
Who could meet us there?
Where might we begin?
From the shadows climb,
Rise to sing again;
Where could be the joy?
How do we begin?

Never our despair,
Never the least of us,
Never turn away,
Never hide our face;
Ordinary boy,
Only all of us,
Free us from our fear,
Only all of us.

What could be the song?
Where begin again?
Who could meet us there?
Where might we begin?
From the shadows climb,
Rise to sing again;
Where could be the joy?
How do we begin?

Never our despair,
Never the least of us,
Never turn away,
Never hide your face;
Ordinary boy,
Only all of us,
Free us from our fear.

Only in the Love,
Love that lifts us up,
Clear from out the heart
From the mountain's side,
Come creation come,
Strong as any stream;
How can we let go? How can we forgive?
How can we be dream?

Out of heaven, rain,
Rain to wash us free;
Rivers flowing on,
Ever to the sea;
Bind up every wound,
Every cause to grieve;

Always to forgive,
Only to believe.

[Chorale:]

*Most noble Light, Creation's face,
How should we live but joined in you,
Remain within your saving grace
Through all we say and do
And know we are the Love that moves
The sun and all the stars?+
O Love that dwells, O Love that burns
In every human heart.*

(Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up!)

*This evergreen, this heart, this soul,
Now moves us to remake our world,
Reminds us how we are to be
Your people born to dream;
How old this joy, how strong this call,
To sing your radiant care
With every voice, in cloudless hope
Of our belonging here.*

Only in the Love . . .
Only all of us . . .

(Heaven: Wash me . . .)

All of us, only all of us.

What could be the song?
Where do we begin?
Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up.

All Of Us

All.

Considering Matthew Shepard

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