

Anna Lee

In the darkest hour of my darkest night
She's the one who kept the light
But that's a secret I have never told her
Sometimes still she comes to me
Like woodsmoke coming through the trees
A wild bird behind my shoulder

I don't know where she sleeps at night
She is dark and wild and bright
She is a chickadee, she is a swallow
I dare not turn around to see
For fear she'll fly away from me
I walk straight ahead, pray she'll follow

Anna Lee, abide with me
Anna Lee, abide with me

She sat with me in a yellow room
She drew the dead leaves into bloom
With ice and powder she drew down my fever
Oh my God her hands on me
Sweet and strong as the maple tree
I was a refugee and she my healer

Anna Lee...

I wanna know what you're hungry for
I could make a place for you to land
I could feed you seeds and berries from my hand

I felt myself come loose today
I fear I may have lost my way
There's a boulder in my brain that's like to split me
If I stumble in these winter weeds
Fall beneath the weeping trees
Oh Anna Lee, please fly to me, stay with me

Anna Lee...

Worry My Friend

I took a walk in the redwood trees
Out in Californi-ay
I thought the trees might speak to me that warm and windless summer day
Saying we've been here five hundred years
By the wild Pacific sea

But I took one look at those big old trees and I worried they would fall on me

Worry my friend, worry my love
Worry my shepherd and shield
I've borrowed more trouble than I'll ever repay
Frost on the summer fields

I lay down with a beautiful man
Eyes so kind and blue
We lay down on a featherbed in the cool of a July afternoon
I felt his skin, I felt the sun
Felt my soul would mend
Oh I loved that lovely man and I worried it was gonna end

Worry my friend...

I woke up on a clear blue day
Feeling light and wise
The night had brought me peace at last
And brightened all my skies
I could see my worry had gone from me
Gone on the westbound track
My worry had finally set me free
Till I worried it was gonna come back

Worry my friend...

Braver than Me

You were always skinnier than me
A willow in a field of rye
If the sun wasn't shining in your hair
I could always find it in your eyes

You were always kinder than me
Always kind to the lovesick boys
They looked at you like they woulda danced all night
Trying to turn the AC Tap into the old Savoy

And now you're carrying that heavy stone, oh
I know some roads you're gonna have to go alone
But remember how we drove each other home, oh, hmm

You never wanted to cry to me
You never liked when the songs got sad
I never knew where all your shadows fell
Who you'd tell if the dreams went bad

And now you're carrying that heavy stone...

And you were always braver than me
Better at walking through the woods in the dark
Through all those trippin' trees you held my hand
Till we fell into the full moon field with a thump in our hearts

Here in your year of fear and fight, oh
So much you hold dear has taken flight, oh
Remember holding hands in that black black night
And remember how we fell into the light, oh, hmmm
I know you're gonna fall into the light, hmmm

You were always skinnier than me

Helen

Here in the north country, mercury is dropping down
Boil the kettle, pour it out, it shatters when it hits the ground
And my words huddle in my chest, can't make 'em leave my mouth
Helen let's go south

I seen you chopping wood, seen you sneaking brandy in your tea
Seen you sitting at the bar, nobody's hand on your knee
I've been feeling lonely, more lonely than I ever thought I'd be
Helen come with me

Let's leave this little town behind, make that highway roar
I'll take off your longjohns in the backseat, what do you think the backseat is for
Ditch our car beneath the stars, pitch a tent on the canyon floor
I've never done that before

Let that river run, let my cheek find your chin
Leave your shirt on the shore, shed our shame like a skin
Let my hands find your hips, let the milky way spin
Helen let me in

Here in the north country day turns to night turns to day
I seen you walking pretty and slow out on the frozen bay
Helen I think I love you, Helen can we run away
To the canyon floor, to the milky way
To the canyon floor, to the milky way
To the milky way, well someday
That's what I'm gonna say

Good Northern Ground

When the engine's losing fuel ten thousand feet above the Baltic
And the sun is falling fast toward the Copenhagen crowns
Winter water down below glitters harder than a garnet
And you pray your feet will find that good northern ground

And you wonder if your mother feels your fear across the ocean
In the Minnesota dark in a February town
So you try not to feel afraid, whisper I love you and I mean it
And you hope she's sleeping well on the good northern ground

It was 1863 when he set out on the ocean
Your mother's grandfather's father from a Swedish farmer's town
Riding hungry in the hold through the swells of the Atlantic
Till he finally stepped back onto good northern ground

And the girl in 19D looks a little bit like he did
Same ocean in her eyes, same question on her brow
Of whether home is just ahead or forever left behind her
Wondering if her feet will find that good northern ground

So when the engine's losing fuel ten thousand feet above the Baltic
Painted clouds up above, gravestone water all around
You take your lover's hand and you stare out at the setting sun
As you all go sliding down toward the good northern ground
Yeah you all go sliding down toward the good northern ground

Wildwood Girl

I thought about you today as I drove the highway
Straight down from North Bay toward the old canal
Like I was tracing your lifeline from that cabin in '29
To the rusty old stop sign where you said farewell

You came in the season of the honeybees, heavy fruit on the cherry trees
Your mother on her hands and knees on the bedroom floor
Midwife running up the muddy road all the way from Liberty Grove
Same road that I drove when my boy was born

Now in the bells out over the bay
All ringing out at the end of the day
I hear you, the wildwood girl
Hmmm, the wildwood girl

Growing up in the shadow of Death's Door, echo of the Great War
Clean cut and dirt poor and stronger than the boys
You could pick a hundred pails in one day and when the evening came
You had songs and cardamom cake, simple joys

Now in the bells out over the bay...

In the times when I am kind, in my eyes so blue and blind
My sweet tooth, my worried mind, my voice
The black buckets and the yellow yarn, late light on the broken barns
My good heart, my strong arms, my little boy

Now in the bells out over the bay...

Oh Minnesota

Oh Minnesota, I was born on your highways
I have crossed through your skyways
Watched the Mississippi roll
I am your prodigal daughter
Swam your ten thousand waters
Spent all your shiny quarters at a bar in Sevastopol

Oh Minnesota, you are my beginner's luck
You're hockey pucks and potlucks
Gray ducks and purple rain
You're the night on Lake Nokomis
When I kissed her in the snow
You're the streetlight glow I can see from the airplane

I keep an agate in my pocket
And a jacket in my car
Minnesota, call me back if I stray too far

Oh Minnesota, I've tracked salt into your halls
In the corners of your malls
You have held me while I cried
When I wore the wrong clothes
When the other kids didn't know me
When I left my shoes at home and had to wear my muddy boots inside

And I keep an agate in my pocket...

Oh Minnesota, I am your fickle lover
I wear holes in all your gloves
And I unravel all the yarn
But when the air turns bitter
When my voice starts to quiver
I drive right across that river, straight into your arms

And I keep an agate in my pocket...

Oh Minnesota, you are my oldest friend
When I start to bend
I think it's you that keeps me strong
Yeah, it's something in your sweaters
In your sensible shoes
That says it's me you choose, that you're the place where I belong
Yeah it says it's me you choose, that you're the place where I belong

The Fisherman's Daughter

from "The Fisherman's Daughters"

I am the fisherman's daughter, I know waves and wind
I know salt and barrels and tin
I know the ways of the water, I know blades and twine
I always was his rock of Gibraltar and he was mine

I know the fisherman's story, a boat across the sea
Cut a clearing, built a cabin, planted an apple tree
He learned to fish from dock and from dory, took a wife at thirty-three
She died at forty and left him two daughters, Nora and me

Nora, always the smart one
Took a job in Chicago, I stuck around
Now it's been two years that Papa's been gone
She went back to the city the very same day that we laid him in the ground

When I was the fisherman's daughter, I knew how my days would end
Light a candle in the window and guide him back home again
I knew how to pray he'd be safe on the water, I knew how to pace the floor
But now Nora, I don't know
If I should leave a light in the window for you anymore

In the Dark

It's that time of year when it's hard to say
What's being born again and what is dying
It's that time of year, brightest stars and the darkest days
Woman heavy on a bed of straw, the cattle crying

In the dark, who brings the light
In the dark, who brings the light

Last night a whiteout snow, my love stacking wood
Sparks in an iron stove, north Wisconsin
Everything we'll never know, gut full of fear and good
The blanket that my mother wove, the life we've chosen

In the dark...

I've got a baby boy, I don't even know his name
He is sleeping here inside me
Tiny little baby boy, set to come with the springtime rain
Set to stay for a little while beside me

In the dark...

It's that time of year when it's hard to say
What's being born again and what is dying

Breathing Room

from "The Fisherman's Daughters"

I need a little breathing room when I'm feeling crowded in the city
Need a little green and blue when I'm feeling tired and gray
Oh I need that sweet perfume when I'm feeling maddened by the city
A place of deep refuge from the loneliness of my days

A place for the tired and worn to come and rest by the water
A place for the spirit that's torn by the weariness of life
A place for the old to be reborn, to come and rest by the water
Beneath the hemlock and the hawthorn, free from stress and strife

So we'll make a little breathing room for those who are crowded in the city
Leave a little green and blue for those who are tired and gray
Just a little sweet perfume for those who are maddened by the city
A place of deep refuge, a place of deep refuge
A place of deep refuge from the loneliness of their days