

Monkey & Bear

Joanna Newsom

Down in the green hay
Where monkey and bear usually lay
They woke from a stable-boy's cry
He said: "someone come quick —
The horses got loose, got grass-sick —
They'll founder! Fain, they'll die."

What is now known by the sorrel and the roan?
By the chestnut, and the bay, and the gelding grey?
It is: stay by the gate you are given
Remain in your place, for your season
O, had the overfed dead but listened
To that high-fence, horse-sense, wisdom...

But
"Did you hear that, Bear?" said
Monkey, "we'll get out of here, fair and square
They've left the gate open wide!

"So, my bride

"Here is my hand. Where is your paw?
Try and understand my plan, Ursula
My heart is a furnace
Full of love that is just, and earnest
Now
We know that we must unlearn this
Allegiance to a life of service
And no longer answer to that heartless
Hay-monger, nor be his accomplice —
(that charlatan, with artless hustling!)
But Ursula, we've got to eat something
And earn our keep, while still within
The borders of the land that man has girded
(all double-bolted and tightfisted!)
Until we reach the open country
A-steeped in milk and honey
Will you keep your fancy clothes on, for me?
Can you bear a little longer to wear that leash?

“My love, I swear by the air I breathe:
Sooner or later, you’ll bare your teeth

“But for now, just dance, darling
C’mon, will you dance, my darling?
Darling, there’s a place for us;
Can we go, before I turn to dust?
Darling there’s a place for us

“Darling. C'mon will you dance
My darling?
The hills are groaning with excess
Like a table ceaselessly being set
O my darling, we will get there yet”

They trooped past the guards
Past the coops, and the fields, and the
Farmyards, all night, till finally

The space they gained
Grew much farther than
The stone that Bear threw
To mark where they’d stop for tea

But
“Walk a little faster
Don’t look backwards —

“your feast is to the East, which lies a little past the pasture

“When the blackbirds hear tea whistling they rise and clap
Their applause caws the kettle black
And we can’t have none of that!
Move along, Bear; there, there; that’s that.”

(Though cast in plaster
Our Ursala’s heart beat faster
Than monkey’s ever will.)

But still
They have got to pay the bills
Hadn’t they?
That is what the monkey would say
So, with the courage of a clown, or a cur
Or a kite, jerking tight at its tether
In her dun-brown gown of fur
And her jerkin of
Swansdown and leather
Bear would sway on her hind legs;

The organ would grind dregs of song
For the pleasure
Of the children who'd shriek
Throwing coins at her feet
Then recoiling in terror

Sing, "dance, darling
C'mon, will you dance, my darling?
Darling, there's a place for us;
Can we go, before I turn to dust?
Oh, my darling there's a place for us

"Darling
C'mon, will you dance, my darling?
Keep your eyes fixed on the highest hill
Where you'll ever-after eat your fill
O my darling...dear...mine...if you dance
Dance, darling: and I'll love you still."

Deep in the night
Shone a weak and miserly light
Where the monkey shouldered his lamp
Someone had told him the
Bear'd been wandering a fair piece away
From where they were camped
Someone had told him
The bear had been sneaking away
To the seaside caverns, to bathe;
And the thought troubled the monkey
For he was afraid of spelunking
Down in those caves
And also afraid what the
Village people would say
If they saw the bear in that state —
Lolling and splashing obscenely
Well, it seemed irrational, really
Washing that face;
Washing that matted and flea-bit pelt
In some sea-spit-shine —
Old kelp dripping with brine
But monkey just laughed, and he muttered
"When she comes back, Ursula will be bursting with pride —
Till I jump up!
Saying, 'You've been rolling in muck!
Saying, 'You smell of garbage and grime!'"

But far out, far out
By now, by now —
Far out, by now, Bear ploughed

Because she would not drown:

First the outside-legs of the bear
Up and fell down, in the water, like knobby garters
Then the outside-arms of the bear
Fell off, as easy as if sloughed
From boiled tomatoes
Low' red in a genteel curtsy
Bear shed the mantle of her
Diluvian shoulders;
And, with a sigh
She allowed the burden of belly to drop
Like an apron full of boulders

If you could hold up her
Threadbare coat to the light
Where it's worn translucent in places
You'd see spots where
Almost every night of the year
Bear had been mending
Suspending that baseness
Now her coat drags through the water
Bagging, with a life's-worth of hunger
Limitless minnows;
In the magnetic embrace
Balletic and glacial
Of bear's insatiable shadow —

Left there! Left there!
When bear left bear;
Left there, left there
When bear stepped clear of bear

(Sooner or later you'll bury your teeth)

Lyrics provided by <https://www.songarea.com/>