

Joanna Newsom, Monkey and Bear

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
And remain in your place, for your season
And had the overfed dead but listened
To that high-fence, horse-sense, wisdom...
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, Ursala
My heart is a furnace
Full of love that's just, and earnest
Now; you 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; Ursala, 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 tight-fisted!)
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?
Oh my darling, there's a place for us
Oh darling
C'mon will you dance, my darling?
Oh, the hills are groaning with excess
Like a table ceaselessly being set
Oh 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
And 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
And 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'd 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?
Oh darling, there's a place for us
Can we go, before I turn to dust?
Oh my darling, there's a place for us
Oh darling
C'mon, will you dance, my darling?
You keep your eyes fixed on the highest hill
Where you'll ever-after eat your fill
Oh my darling, dear, mine
If you dance
Dance, darling, and I 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 had been wandering
A fair piece away from where they were camped
Someone had told him
The bear'd 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
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
'Cause 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'ered 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