

Quiet Victories

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This isn't meant to be a tragic song: It's a *victory march*.

C G7 C F C
 Sit down with me and talk a while;
 C F G7
 And please believe me when I say
 C F C
 I don't need much to make me smile,
 C G7 C
 Just tell me how you spent your day.
 F C F
 I don't need tales of heros bold
 C F G7
 Gentle lady, tell to me,
 C F C
 Some tale of yours you've never told;
 C G7C
 About some quiet victory.

C GF C F
 Forget heroic fantasy
 C F G7
 That's not the tale I need to hear,
 C F C
 Tell me of quiet victory
 C G7 C
 Of love and life against your fear.

Don't tell me of the Amazon
 The battle-lust hot in her breast;
 Just tell me what the mirror showed:
 A warrior's scar across your chest.
 Would he still love you after that?
 Would you die beneath the knife?
 The cancer gave you Devil's odds;
 You rolled the dice and won your life.

And still you see your friends and kin
 Make their throw, to lose or gain
 Against the old familiar foes
 Grief and fear and death and pain.

Don't tell me of the shieldmaid bold,
 Her laughter in the face of death
 I'll take the smile you gave your son
 To cheer him as he fought for breath.
 No matter that your heart was filled
 With fear you gamely had to hide;
 No matter what it cost to spend
 The next two days there at his side.

You tell me that it wasn't hard,
 and it was love that saw you through.
 Yes, I believe you when you say
 It's what a mother has to do.

I've heard you sing a Goddess' praise
 On Athens' ramparts standing fast;
 What did your grey-eyed lady sing
 When she proclaimed her love at last?
 What does it cost you two to share
 A love that half the world despise?
 What did it take to tell your Mom
 And face the anger in her eyes?

It's not a myth you're living now
 The hate you'll face is all too real;
 You'll make it through the coming years
 With hearts of glass and nerves of steel.

That tale of dwarves, and rings of gold,
 Dragons flying through the air
 Is that the movie that your girl
 Was watching in intensive care?
 And when at last she's home again,
 You dread the word you'll have to say:
 She asks, can she walk home from school?
 You swallow hard, and say "OK".

Tires squeal all afternoon;
 Sirens make your blood run cold.
 She'll be a woman all too soon;
 You let her grow up strong and bold.

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Sometimes I write verses for particular people; these don't always get performed.

(Written 2008-06-11 for N.)

Agamemnon stands prepared
To sacrifice his only joy,
That Artemis might free the wind
And let him sail at last for Troy.
Upon the altar lies a dream
And now it's you who holds the knife;
Your body's weakness holds it down:
Bid it farewell, and free your life.

No honor, no gain, no useless man's coda. Can stop there for a short version.
Against a foe you can't destroy.
Accept the dream you're living now,
Share it with the family, home and brave
Mothers, daughters, sisters, wives,
And to the quiet victories

(Written 2008-06-17 for E.M.)
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
We seldom notice in their lives.
Mirror, mirror, tell me true.
It must be lying after all:
The face you see is never you.
Terror as you drain the cup,
Anger as you smash the glass.
But still you fear to tell your friends
About the change that's come to pass

You pass a mirror in the hall
The face you've chosen meets your eyes
Till now you've seen it but in dreams—
The mirrors never told you lies.

(Written 2008-08-16 for C.P.)

Prince Charming sweeps you off your feet
And boldly carries you away;
Your rescuer has come at last—
But that's not what the bruises say.
You try to be the perfect wife,
But fail no matter what you do.
You hope that he won't see you cry.
There must be something wrong with you.

Sometimes the bravest thing you can do is smile at a sick kid and tell them they're going to be all right, say "I love you" out loud in public, or even look at yourself in the mirror. Sometimes the hardest loss to bear is the loss of a dream.

The first three stories in this song came in during a single week on my livejournal friends list. No matter who I wrote the verses for, or what image or conversation they're based on, they're all approximations to some extent. If you see yourself clearly in half a verse, don't be surprised if someone else gets a turn in the other half. If you *don't* see yourself here, I'm truly sorry—I ran out of space before I ran out of inspiration. I still want to hear your story, in verse form or not.

And if you want to tell me that you weren't being courageous, that it wasn't hard, that you didn't have to think twice about what you did—well, that's kind of the point, isn't it? Stand up and take a bow anyway.

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A friend comes by while he's away
You pack a bag and quickly leave
Those must be tears of joy you say,
There's nothing left behind to grieve.

(Written 2009-08-18 for Callie, Naomi)

The air is dark with demon wings;
The box's lid is open wide.
Pandora looks for treasure there,
But only Hope is left inside.
Grief and terror, plague and pain
Lay hidden 'neath a golden lid;
Who would have thought that such as these
Would be the spawn of what she did?
Braver than we realized
To celebrate the victories
We seldom speak of in our lives.
And in the darkness of despair,
It seems that even Hope has flown.
With friends around, you join to sing
The songs that twilight brings (Sally back home.
men and women together; 3x

(Written 2008-07-16 for Bev)

It's not the woods you're walking in;
That was a foolish thing to do:
There's worse than big bad wolves tonight
Who prey on little girls like you.
He says he'll kill you, makes you kneel;
There's just one chance that you can snatch:
Squeeze, twist, and pull with all your might;
Nobody told you they detach.

And in the station, safe at last,
The laughter slowly calms your fears.
They'll tell their daughters what you did,
A legend growing through the years.

A few notes on the verses

With all due respect to the brave ladies on my LiveJournal friends list, most notably Anna the Piper who made the post that started me down this branch of the river, my Mom earned her Amazon's scars half a century ago. The odds weren't nearly as good then as they are now, but she beat them. The Amazons, in Greek legend, were reputed to amputate the right breasts of their children in order to strengthen the right arm and shoulder.

The "shieldmaid" verse was directly inspired by an IM conversation, but any mother is likely to see herself clearly in it. It's the only verse where *I* see myself, too. Any parent might.

I realized later that when I wrote "hearts of glass" I was thinking more of transparency than fragility—talk to each other. It helps. Even if you go to Canada or California and get legally married, it's still a battlefield out there.

My daughter spent a month in the hospital after being hit by a truck walking home from school. One of her favorite videos was my bootleg tape of Wagner's Siegfried; another was my bootleg of the animated version of *The Hobbit*.

Bev's verse came out of one Wednesday night at the Starport where we had five women swapping attempted-rape stories, and me behind my laptop trying to look inconspicuous. Oddly enough, they never found (the rest of) him. I close with it because I wanted to end on a lighter and happier note. If you don't see the humor in it, well, sorry guys—I didn't write this song for you.

Keep in touch

I want to hear your stories. Really. I'm in the process of setting up a web page; meanwhile you can find, and make, comments on this blog post on LiveJournal². Keep looking back here at Steve.Savitzky.net/Songs/quiet³ for new verses.

If you want to send me a verse or two, please do. I'll sing it if you're in the audience (and if I'm not pressed for time). The only real rules are that it has to be a true story, and addressed directly to the woman whose story it tells. It's good if the first line or two refers to a related myth, fairytale, legend, or some other story.

And if you want to record it, just drop me a note and a copy of the CD, and send my royalties to some appropriate charity. This song seems to be out in the world making friends for itself, and like any parent I'm pleased and proud to have it so. Keep in touch, OK?

I guess I'll need this verse, too...

And it's Oh, No! a thousand times no
Although it's my blood you'll be spillin'
I shouldn't write songs more than 10 minutes long;
I'm afraid I'm as bad as Bob Dylan.

²<<http://mdlbear.livejournal.com/838330.html>>

³<<http://steve.savitzky.net/Songs/quiet/>>
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