

BELLY SONG

(for the Daytop Family)

*“You have made something
Out of the sea the blew
And rolled you on its salt bitter lips.
It nearly swallowed you.
But I hear
You are tough and harder to swallow than most . . . “*
--S. Mansfield

1

And I and I/ must admit
that the sea in you
has sung/ to the sea/ in me
and I and I/ must admit
that the sea in me
has fallen/ in love
with the sea in you
because you have made something
out of the sea
that nearly swallowed you

And this poem
this poem
this poem/ I give/ to you.
this poem is a song/ I sing/ to you
from the bottom
of the sea
in my belly

this poem
this poem/ is a song/ about FEELINGS
about the Bone of feeling
about the Stone of feeling
and the Feather of feeling

2

This poem/ is/
a death/ chant
and a grave/ stone
and a prayer for the dead:
for young Jackie Robinson.
a moving Blk/ warrior who walked



among us
with a wide/ stride---and heavy heels
moving moving moving
thru the blood and mud and shit of Vietnam
moving moving moving
thru the blood and mud and dope of America'
for Jackie/ who was/

a song
and a stone
and a Feather of feeling
now dead
and/ gone/ in this month of love

this poem
this poem/ is/ a sliver feather
and the sun-gold/ glinting/ green hills breathing
river flowing---for Sheryl and David---and
their first/ kiss by the river---for Mark and Sue
and a Sunday walk on her grand/ father's farm
for Sammy and Marion---love/rhythms
for Michael and Jean---love/ rhythms
love/ rhythms----love/ rhythms----and LIFE.

for Karen J. and James D. and Roland M. and David P.
who have not felt
the sun of their eighteenth summer. . . .

3

And this poem
this poem/ is/ for ME---for me
and the days/ that lay/ in the back/ of my mind
when the sea/ rose up/
to swallow me
and the streets I walked
were lonely streets
were stone/ cold streets

this poem
this poem/ is/
for me/ and the nights
when I
wrapped my feelings
in a sheet of ice



and stared
 at the stars
 thru the iron bars
 and cried
in the middle of my eyes. . . .

this poem
this poem
this poem/ is/ for me
 and my woman
 and the yesterdays
when she opened to me
 like a flower
but I fell on her
 like a stone
I fell on her like a stone. . . .

4

And now—in my 40th year
 I have come here
to this House of Feelings
to this Singing Sea
and I and I/ must admit
that the sea in me
 has fallen/ in love
with the sea in you
because the sea
that now sings/ in you
 is the same sea
that nearly swallowed you---
 and me too.

Seymour, Conn.
June, 1971

from *Belly Songs and other poems*
Broadside Press, 1973

© Used With Permission of the Estate of Etheridge Knight, Jr.

