

SONGS OF THE HOUSE

Volume Three — His Voice

Nos. 7-9 of 15 · Two readings, one lyric · For adults 18 and over

THE CLICK

His · No. 7 of 15

[Intro]

Nobody made me walk across that room.
That's the part they'd never understand.
Two steps. My own feet.
And a very small sound
that changed the rest of my life.

[Verse 1]

I've signed a hundred contracts
in rooms with better light,
with lawyers on the left of me
and everything in white.
And I've never in my life been surer
of a single word I've said
than standing in our bedroom
with a pen and a wall and a bed.
You didn't ask me twice.
You didn't sell it once.
You just laid the whole thing out for me
and let me take my months.

[Pre-Chorus 1]

And I read every page of it.
You made sure of that.
You wanted a man who knew the cost
and walked in where he sat.

[Chorus]

And then there was a click.
Just a small one. Nothing loud.
The quietest thing I ever heard
and the proudest I've been proud.
You could have held me down for it.
You never had to try.
I stepped forward on my own two feet
and I looked you in the eye.
One click. One woman.
One life. Goodbye.

[Verse 2]

My father gave my mother

a ring and half a name,
and thirty years of silence
and they called that thing the same.
And I watched him going quiet
in an armchair, year on year,
and I thought — whatever that is,
I'm not doing it. Not here.
So I found a woman with a spine
and I put myself in her hand,
and everybody thinks I'm the lucky one.
They're right. They just don't understand.

[Pre-Chorus 2]

Because I didn't lose a thing that night.
I put a thing away.
There's a difference between empty
and saving it for the day.

[Chorus]

And then there was a click.
Just a small one. Nothing loud.
The quietest thing I ever heard
and the proudest I've been proud.
You could have held me down for it.
You never had to try.
I stepped forward on my own two feet
and I looked you in the eye.
One click. One woman.
One life. Goodbye.

[Verse 3]

And every ten years since
you take it off and let me stand
with nothing in the world upon me
and the whole road in my hand.
And you wait there. And you watch me.
And you never say a word.
And the door's wide open every time
and every time I turn.
Two steps. My own feet.
Still the same short walk.
I've done it now more times than I can count
and I've never had to talk.

[Pre-Chorus 3]

Because a vow you only make the once
is a vow you might have meant.
A vow you make again at fifty
is a vow that's evident.

[Chorus]

And then there's always the click.
Just a small one. Nothing loud.
The quietest thing I ever hear
and the proudest I've been proud.
You could have held me down for it.
You never had to try.
I step forward on my own two feet
and I look you in the eye.
One click. One woman.
One life. Goodbye.

[Verse 4]

The lads at work all think I'm henpecked
in a friendly sort of way —
he checks with her, he heads off early,
he doesn't come out Saturday.
And I let them have it, honestly.
It's cheaper than the truth.
Because the truth is I'm the freest man
in that whole bloody room.
They're all still negotiating.
They're all still keeping score.
I settled all of mine at thirty-one
and I've not been tired since. Not once.

[Pre-Chorus 4]

Turns out there's nothing heavier
than choosing all day long.
She took the weight of that off me
and I've been strong. God, I've been strong.

[Chorus]

And then there was a click.
Just a small one. Nothing loud.
The quietest thing I ever heard
and the proudest I've been proud.
You could have held me down for it.
You never had to try.
I stepped forward on my own two feet
and I looked you in the eye.
One click. One woman.
One life. Goodbye.

[Verse 5]

And when I go — and someone will —
there'll be a small thing in a drawer,
and whoever finds it won't know what it was
and they won't look anymore.
And that's alright. Let it be nothing.
Let it go in with the rest.
The thing it stood for isn't in it —

it's in a woman, and it's in my chest.
Fifty years of small sounds.
Fifty years of proud.
One walk across one bedroom
and a life that came out loud.

[Pre-Chorus 5]

So put it on me one more time.
My hands are at my sides.
Two steps. My own feet, love.
Same as every time besides.

[Chorus (final)]

And there it is — the click.
Just a small one. Nothing loud.
The quietest thing I ever heard
and the proudest I've been proud.
You could have held me down for it.
You never had to try.
I stepped forward on my own two feet
and I looked you in the eye.
One click. One woman.
One life. That's why.

[Outro]

Nobody made me walk across that room.
Not once. Not ever.
Remember that when they ask you.
Remember that when I'm gone.
He walked.
Every single time, he walked.

THE BEST MAN IN THE ROOM

His · No. 8 of 15

[Intro]

Cufflinks. Collar. Watch on the left.
She looks me over at the door
the way a captain looks at weather.
One nod.
And out we go.

[Verse 1]

I shake the hands, I hold the chair,
I know the name of every wife,
I ask about the surgery
and I remember all their lives.
I'm the one who tells the story
that gets the whole end of the table,
and I pick the wine, and I pay the bill,
and I'm charming, and I'm able.
And across from me she's laughing
at something someone said,
and her eyes come to me once a minute
and I feel it in my head.

[Pre-Chorus 1]

They think she's lucky. Let them.
They think I built this on my own.
There's a whole cathedral in this waistcoat
and she laid every stone.

[Chorus]

I'm the best man in the room tonight —
ask anyone, they'll say.
Steady hands and easy talk
and never in the way.
And nobody at this table knows
and nobody ever will
that the finest man they've ever met
is standing very still.
Best man in the room.
Second man at home.

[Verse 2]

There's a lad here twenty years my junior
with a louder laugh than mine,
and he's telling them he runs his house
and everything is fine.
And his wife is looking at the door
the whole way through the night,

and I've seen that look before, my friend.
That's not a house. That's a fight.
Nobody wins those. Nobody.
You just take turns being right.
And I raise my glass and say well said
and I feel her watching. Light.

[Pre-Chorus 2]

Because I don't have to run a thing
to be the man they see.
The running's done. It's done at home.
This part's easy. This part's free.

[Chorus]

I'm the best man in the room tonight —
ask anyone, they'll say.
Steady hands and easy talk
and never in the way.
And nobody at this table knows
and nobody ever will
that the finest man they've ever met
is standing very still.
Best man in the room.
Second man at home.

[Verse 3]

She'll tell me in the car about it.
That's the part I like the most.
The whole night played back honestly
by the only honest host.
You were sharp with Michael. You were tired at ten.
You did well with the wife.
You laughed too fast at nothing
somewhere around the knife.
And nobody in my whole life
has ever told me true.
Forty years of colleagues, and one woman.
Guess which one I listen to.

[Pre-Chorus 3]

It's not a leash. It's a mirror.
And I've never had one clear.
You cannot fix a thing you cannot see —
and I see everything from here.

[Chorus]

I'm the best man in the room tonight —
ask anyone, they'll say.
Steady hands and easy talk
and never in the way.
And nobody at this table knows

and nobody ever will
that the finest man they've ever met
is standing very still.
Best man in the room.
Second man at home.

[Verse 4]

There's a small thing I've been wearing
since a quarter past the day
and every hour it reminds me
in the mildest kind of way.
And I stand up straighter for it
and my voice comes out more sure,
and the strangest thing about it is
it makes me kinder. More.
You'd think it'd make me smaller.
It's done nothing of the sort.
I've never been so much a man
as the day I got caught.

[Pre-Chorus 4]

Because a man with nothing pointed anywhere
just leaks out through the year.
Point him at one woman,
and you'll see what's really here.

[Chorus]

I'm the best man in the room tonight —
ask anyone, they'll say.
Steady hands and easy talk
and never in the way.
And nobody at this table knows
and nobody ever will
that the finest man they've ever met
is standing very still.
Best man in the room.
Second man at home.

[Verse 5]

And when we've said our goodnights
and the door has shut us in,
the coat comes off, the tie comes off,
and something else begins.
There's a chair. There's a book. There's her hand out.
There's a question and a pen.
And the best man in that whole hotel
kneels down and starts again.
And I have never in my life
been happier to fall,
because the man they met at dinner
was hers before the hall.

[Pre-Chorus 5]

So call me henpecked, call me quiet,
call me whatever fits.
Come and look at what she's built here.
Then go home and look at yours.

[Chorus (final)]

I was the best man in that room tonight —
ask anyone, they'd say.
Steady hands and easy talk
and never in the way.
And nobody at that table knew
and nobody ever will
that the finest man they'd ever met
was standing very still.
Best man in the room.
Second man at home.
And glad of it. God, glad of it.

[Outro]

Cufflinks off. Collar open.
Watch on the table.
One nod from her —
and I'm not the best man in the room anymore.
I'm just hers.
Which is better.

I NEVER ASK

His · No. 9 of 15

[Intro]

I could ask.
She'd probably say yes.
That's the whole trouble with asking —
you find out what it's worth.
So I don't.

[Verse 1]

There's a want in me that never lands
and never quite sits down,
and it follows me to work with me
and walks me back through town.
It's in the way I hold the door,
it's in the way I stand,
it's in the eight text messages
I don't send. Understand:
I'm not a man who's suffering.
I'm a man who's pointed. Whole.
There's a difference between empty
and full up with nowhere to go.

[Pre-Chorus 1]

Most men spend it Tuesday morning
on a nothing and a screen.
Mine's been saving up since Christmas
and it's aimed at one woman. Clean.

[Chorus]

And I never ask. I never ask.
That's the whole of my religion, love.
I could have anything I wanted
if I only said enough.
So I don't say. And I don't reach.
And I don't make it hers to bear.
I just carry it around all week
like a coin I never spend — but I keep it there.
I never ask. I never ask.
And she always seems to know.

[Verse 2]

She'll cross a room in front of me
at half eleven, taking her time,
and she knows exactly what she's doing
and she does it every time.
And I stand there like a soldier
at the wrong end of a war,

and I say goodnight quite normally
and I don't touch the door.
And in the morning over coffee
she'll say, you did well last night.
And I'll say nothing, and go redder
than a man my age has right.

[Pre-Chorus 2]

Because being seen is the whole prize.
Not the getting. Not the yes.
Being watched not asking for it
is the thing I love the best.

[Chorus]

And I never ask. I never ask.
That's the whole of my religion, love.
I could have anything I wanted
if I only said enough.
So I don't say. And I don't reach.
And I don't make it hers to bear.
I just carry it around all week
like a coin I never spend — but I keep it there.
I never ask. I never ask.
And she always seems to know.

[Verse 3]

My brother's on his second marriage
and he's bored inside a year.
He says the trouble's always novelty.
He says it disappears.
And I don't say a word to him
because what would I even start with —
that I've wanted the same woman
for a quarter century, hard, from the beginning?
That the trick was never novelty?
That the trick was going without?
He'd laugh. Or he'd go quiet.
Or he'd finally work it out.

[Pre-Chorus 3]

A thing you can have whenever
is a thing you stop wanting soon.
A thing you have on her permission
is a thing you want at noon.
And midnight. And the afternoon.

[Chorus]

And I never ask. I never ask.
That's the whole of my religion, love.
I could have anything I wanted
if I only said enough.

So I don't say. And I don't reach.
And I don't make it hers to bear.
I just carry it around all week
like a coin I never spend — but I keep it there.
I never ask. I never ask.
And she always seems to know.

[Verse 4]

And there are nights she says come here
and there are nights she doesn't.
And the strangest thing I've learned in life
is that I love them both — I honestly do, and it wasn't
something I could have believed at first.
The no is not a punishment.
The no is her, deciding.
And the deciding is the whole event.
So when she stops me at the edge of it
with one hand and one word,
there's a part of me that's aching
and a part that's never been so sure.

[Pre-Chorus 4]

Because if she only ever gave,
she'd only ever be kind.
It's the keeping and the choosing
that tells me who's behind.

[Chorus]

And I never ask. I never ask.
That's the whole of my religion, love.
I could have anything I wanted
if I only said enough.
So I don't say. And I don't reach.
And I don't make it hers to bear.
I just carry it around all week
like a coin I never spend — but I keep it there.
I never ask. I never ask.
And she always seems to know.

[Verse 5]

We'll be old before we know it
and this'll be a gentler thing,
and there'll come a year it's mostly hands
and mostly remembering.
And I'll want her just as badly
in a chair, in a smaller room,
because it was never really about the body.
It was always about whose. And whom.
So I'll keep on not asking
till the very final day,
and she'll keep on knowing anyway.

That's the arrangement. That's the way.

[Pre-Chorus 5]

And if she ever says tonight, love —
you don't have to wait at all —
I'll say: I know. I'd rather.
Let me want you down the hall.

[Chorus (final)]

Because I never ask. I never ask.
That's the whole of my religion, love.
I could have had it any evening
if I'd only said enough.
So I don't say. And I don't reach.
And I never made it hers to bear.
I just carried it around a lifetime
like a coin I never spent — and it's still there.
I never ask. I never ask.
And she always, always knows.

[Outro]

Goodnight, love.
No — nothing. I'm fine.

...

Yes.
Yes, since about four o'clock.
How did you know?