

A N N I E G A L L U P

*Did You Hear  
the  
Red-Winged Blackbird?*

SONGS FROM THE POETRY OF  
BOB JENSEN





## Bob Jensen

I have known Annie Gallup for about 20 years and have always been a huge fan of her work. She has many gifts; keen observance, the ability to write gorgeous melodies and thoughtful lyrics, and a voice filled with passion, wonder and love. We reconnected in late 2023 after some years, and while we were catching up, I told her about some of the projects I had been working on, including songwriting collaborations with other artists. When I asked her if she might like to set one of my poems to music for a collaborative album I've been working on for years, she immediately said, "yes." A short time later, the first track arrived in my email, and I couldn't believe what a beautiful melody she had come up with, and how she

seemed to keenly understand what I was trying to say in the poem. Then she composed the music for another poem and recorded it, and then a third, and each one was better than the last. I was thrilled.

Somewhere along the line, we agreed that she would do an EP of my material, but the tracks just kept coming, and before I knew it, she had an album's worth of tracks. I have had the great pleasure of working with some wonderful artists on various projects, but this one was different. Obviously I am close to the material and have a bias, but I have to say, I have been astonished at what she has done with my little poems, reimagining them in ways I never would have dreamed of. Her melodies are lush, her singing is breathtaking and each word is delivered with raw emotion, integrity and conviction. Knowing and loving her work as I do, I had high expectations when Annie began work on this project, but she has exceeded them all by a country mile.

Her interpretations of my poems allowed me to hear them with fresh ears, almost as though for the first time, and that has been a wonderful gift. It has also been tremendous fun. At times she reminds me of Kate & Anna McGarrigle, who had their own musical language. That she thought my work was worthy of such loving and insightful treatment is the greatest compliment I have ever been paid as a writer, and I am immensely grateful to her for this incredible collection.



## Annie Gallup

One of the things I loved about working on this collaboration was diving into Bob Jensen's body of work. I was familiar with Bob's poetry through his spoken word recordings with Tony McManus, and videos of his beautifully understated live performances; I knew him to be a fearlessly honest and committed writer, a curious observer of everything, with a gift for the arc of a story and for embedding a point of view into a narrative. When he suggested collaborating on a song, it was easy to say yes. And, then, impossible to stop with just one song. I immersed myself in Bob's written world with a sense of awe and great discovery. The poems I chose spoke to me deeply and have grown even more profound as I read, and then sang, and then listened to them over

and over in the process of creating this recording. Bob writes about a wide range of subjects and perspectives; what distinguishes his work and ties it all together is the keen intelligence and deep, dark loving kindness he shines on everything he writes. Bob's trusting me to interpret his poems into songs is an extraordinary gift.

# *For the Million Candles Burning*

The pasture gates left open  
Now those burdened beasts, all gone  
For should they not taste freedom once  
Before the burning dawn?

The church door too is open  
The empty pulpit is a cell  
And the last old woman standing  
Cannot ring the heavy bell

And from his poet's grave  
The prophet marvels at the shame  
For the million candles burning  
For the help that never came

Baptized there in blood  
On the cruel school floor  
Nineteen lambs lay slaughtered  
With the Law outside the door

And in the city named  
For the reigning Queen of Heaven  
Lot's wife dared glance back  
While she was still confessing

And as the searing flames rise  
To the mountains from the sea  
Another queen is dying  
In another jubilee

And from his poet's grave  
The prophet marvels at the shame  
For the million candles burning  
For the help that never came

And this is no entreaty  
From the last night of the world  
But just a simple why?  
Beneath the hateful flags unfurled

For the faithful look to heaven  
For thine easy yoke, Rabbani  
And a psalm rises like incense  
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?

And from his poet's grave  
The prophet marvels at the shame  
For the million candles burning  
For the help that never came

And Rachel cries to heaven  
As her little ones proclaim  
Will you suffer us to come?  
Oh Lord, must you kill the flame?

When I first heard Leonard Cohen sing, "For the million Candles Burning for the help that never came" in his song, "You Want it Darker," I thought, man, there's a whole song in there, a book maybe. Climate change, wars, COVID, the resurgence of fascism, and where was God as the world prayed? Did he stop the world wars? Did he stop the Holocaust? Well then what is the purpose of prayer? The line, "Must you kill the flame" was also borrowed from "You Want it Darker."

I believe that all art is derivative. Without Palestrina there is no Bach. Without the Bible there is no Leonard Cohen. I think the biggest influences on my writing have been Cohen, the Bible and Chagall. What I learned from Chagall is that you can never have too many bouquets, and that the greatest gift an artist can possess is a childlike sense of wonder. Leonard said that "love is the only engine of survival," Chagall that "Art must be an expression of love or it is nothing."

# Poor Man's Paris

The rushes hover over  
Sleepy shadows on the clover  
Where a blanket  
And a summer love unfold

Their voices float like lilies  
Across the breathless pond  
A thrill that all the open arms  
In heaven may not hold

Two girls caressed of summer  
No second hand their master  
And on the breeze  
The incense dream of hash

They spark like wool in darkness  
When coaxed there from the flesh  
On summer's eve of innocence  
before the autumn's dawn of ash

And I'm living like a pauper  
And I'm soaking up the heat  
And I love this poor man's Paris  
And the bustle in her streets  
Did you hear the red-winged blackbird?  
Do you hear the cooing dove?  
Je t'aime, je t'aime  
Je me souviens  
I too, was once in love

At dawn I dream of lovers  
Who turn and walk towards me  
At night I dream of lovers  
Who turn and walk away

I dream of one with pale blue eyes  
And braids as sweet as lilac  
And in her hand  
My gifted wild bouquet

O' reverie of softness  
With the currency of stone  
O' thrill that even angels  
May not savour as their own

Memories green as lilies  
Floating on the pond's sweet breath  
They spark like wool in darkness  
When stolen from the flesh

And I'm living like a pauper  
And I'm soaking up the heat  
As I roam this poor man's Paris  
On this poor man's tired feet  
And all around me lovers  
The sacred up above  
Je t'aime, je t'aime  
Je me souviens  
I once was blessed with love

And I'm reaching like a neuron  
Isn't that what neurons do?  
I'm reaching from the me  
And I'm reaching for the you

I'm reaching like the artist  
For that little wild bouquet  
Before October's cooling nights  
Take wild bouquets away

My eyes, fragile as lilies  
Floating just above the crush  
They spark like wool in darkness  
When wrested from the flesh

They reach into the city stream  
They reach as children do  
They reach in supplication  
For two eyes of pale blue

And I'm living like a pauper  
And I'm soaking up the sun  
And I love this poor man's Paris  
Where a poet's dreams may run  
And I heard the red-winged blackbird  
Did you hear the cooing dove?  
Je t'aime, je t'aime  
Je me souviens  
A bouquet for your love?

I moved to Montreal, a city I have always loved, in June of 2023 and it's only grown more beautiful over the years. I wrote this poem just as it happened. The summer was swelteringly hot, and one day I was at Parc Jarry writing next to the pond when I noticed two young girls experiencing the thrill of a summer love. I wish they could hear what Annie did with my little poem.

Sometimes when I read poetry, I have no idea what the poet is talking about. When I write I want people to know exactly what I'm saying and why I am saying it, and very few of my poems are what I might describe as cryptic. To me poetry should be an arrow straight to the heart. It should have an emotional impact the way beautiful music does. When you read a line like Shakespeare's, "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May," your heart cannot help but soar. This is why I love Renoir but not Pollack, Bach but not Phillip Glass.

# *Surf at Cow River*

I see them rolling in  
From that vast and mighty plain  
Those blue fields of the north  
Where leviathans have lain

And when they make the shallows  
They break towards the shore  
Those foaming white, swift stallions  
Upon the tidal bore

They tumble there like August clouds  
Upon a windy sky  
To the unforgiving beachhead  
Like cavalry to die

Their hooves upon the pebbles  
Beneath the crashing waves  
Their bodies strewn upon the beach  
That shallow, frothy grave

A couple of years ago I was at Cow River on the North shore of Prince Edward Island with my dog, watching the waves come crashing in, and to my eye, they looked like little stallions racing towards the shore. I could even hear their hooves as the waves shifted the small stones and pebbles.

I tend to think in pictures and my mind is always trying to make sense of what my eyes are feeding it. Every time I looked at the weeping willow next to the pond in Parc Jarry in Montreal where I often go to write, what I would see was a Degas-like ballerina. What I saw at Cow River really was little stallions racing for the shore. When I experience the world like this, it is a benediction, and the excitement of it makes me want to share it. The reason I write is simply to share what makes my heart swell, whether it be cherished memories of childhood or the darkness of far right politics. The heart may swell with love and joy, but also with sorrow, regret and even anger.

# Run For Me

Run for me  
Across the northern prairie  
Where no rail was ever laid

Run for me  
Deep into the canyon  
Where no fence was ever made

Run for me  
Where the moon rides on your shoulders  
With a roan by your side

Run for me  
Devour the horizon  
Beneath your graceful stride

The moon is shaved so slightly  
Like an ancient Roman coin  
That still retains its value  
Where the land and sky adjoin

It is the evening's dark rose  
And heaven is her throne  
A smokey nomad sister  
For the lone strawberry roan

So run for me  
For part of me runs with you  
On that vast and arid sea

Run for me  
Your dance upon the prairie waves  
Will keep the sailor free

Run for me  
For the prisoner takes comfort  
In the progress of the moon

Run for me  
Your flight will mend the broken wing  
And make the wallflower swoon

The lullaby of lowing  
From the morning meadow's kine  
It is a kind of dirge  
Where those pickets draw the line

But in the endless pastures  
That the fox and hare call home  
The heart of man is free  
As long as you shall roam

So run for me  
Deny that iron bit  
That would bring the kestrel down

Run for me  
For it is a heavy metal  
That would keep her on the ground

And run for us  
Till you come into the east  
For your running to the west

Run for me  
So I feel your hooves upon the ground  
And in my aching chest

Run for me

When I was just a kid I first read William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence*. So many of them were so brilliant, but "The wild deer, wandring here & there. Keeps the Human Soul from Care" stood out to me. I must have thought of those lines a thousand times over the years, how just knowing that wild things run free helps to keep my own soul untethered. This was my take on that notion.

What I learned from Blake is that poetically speaking, he shows great wisdom when he says, "To see a World in a Grain of Sand. And a Heaven in a Wild Flower. Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand. And Eternity in an hour." I have read the rambling poetry of Homer and the Bible, and as beautiful as those works are, Blake can say something in two or three lines that will stick with you for life, that you will return to time and again. That is artistic genius. That is the arrow to the heart I mentioned previously.

# *A Heavy Millstone*

We gathered, we the faithful  
When summoned by that bell  
The small the weak the innocent  
Drawn to its knell

Three hours hid the sun  
When that vulgar show began  
The rapist with the eucharist  
Upon his filthy hands

Hands that tore the fleece  
From the smallest faithful lamb  
And hands that left the soul defiled  
And primed it to be damned

And when his rape had finished  
And mass had been begun  
He placed the holy host  
Upon the slaughtered lamb's young tongue

One hundred faithful in their pews  
Knew well the father's sin  
But offered up those trusting doves  
Their precious helpless kin

Men who to a burning house  
To save the child within  
Would rush without a thought  
Allowed that sacrificial sin

And women, selfless shepherds  
Who were turned back at the inn  
Sat silent and obedient  
While the faithful flock was thinned

And in that great cathedral  
Built to glorify his god  
The bishop killed the lamb  
When he spared the priest his rod

And for every priest and layman  
Who hid the vulgar truth  
May there be a heavy millstone  
To justify lost youth

I grew in the small town of Dalhousie, New Brunswick, in eastern Canada, a beautiful area and a wonderful community. I did not find out until many years after I had left home that Catholic priests had been molesting countless boys, many of them my close friends, one of them, my brother. In speaking to victims, I came to understand that what happened to them was so devastating that they could not find the wherewithal to speak up about it. And the greater shame was that so many in the community knew what was happening and said nothing, did nothing, allowing it to continue.

As I spoke to one victim about his assault, he crumbled to the floor, crying, and the most chilling thing about it was that he cried not like a man, but like a child. All I could think was that he was still there, in the rectory, and the priest was coming. A part of him would always be there.

This poem was my attempt to give the survivors back the voice that had been stolen from them.

# *The Poet's Advice to his Younger Self*

Go forth into that morning  
And ride towards the sun  
And climb your a hundred apple trees  
Before the day is done

And never count the seconds  
Or the paths your heart will trace  
And savour each sweet moment  
That the sun shines on your face

And when the tide is out  
Breathe deeply, you are free  
Assume the siren soul  
Of the wild and restless sea

And never waste a morning  
Spent idle in your heart  
For the turning of the planet  
Seems much slower at the start

But the days of endless summer  
And the everlasting nights  
Are but a cruel illusion  
Obscured by childhood's rites

And when your heart awakens  
And love comes to the fore  
Never leave those feelings  
Stand outside the timid door

For the apple you leave hanging  
While you make your bashful plans  
Will drop before the sun  
Into another boy's keen hands

Beyond the lost afternoon  
When night drops like a stone  
But There's one word written in your heart  
And that word, is "alone"

And if you'd see a sunrise  
That brings you peace of mind  
Above all things avoid the sting  
Of acts that are unkind

For unkindness is a verdict  
For each petty schoolyard crime  
And regret is but an echo  
That does not fade with time

So ride into that morning  
Go careless, swift, and free  
And assume the siren soul  
Of the wild and restless sea

And never leave an apple  
Hanging on the bough  
Love as if the only moment left  
Is here and now

And for each fallen sparrow  
Who bears a broken wing  
Let kindness be the only song  
The world will hear you sing

So seize the day and love the way  
You'd have love come to you  
May your kindness be as boundless  
As the ocean's deepest blue

Who at some point in his life has not thought, boy, if I had known then what I know now, or wished he could go back and give his younger self some advice. I know I sure have.

When I think about those halcyon days as a child, climbing apple trees, cooking mussels on the beach in an old tin can, floating makeshift rafts on temporary ponds left by the melting snow in April, I can scarcely believe that I experienced such wondrous things. I remember August days along the Restigouche River in northern New Brunswick that seemed to never end. It was as though our very exuberance held the sun from falling into the west. But childhood does not come with a manual, and we don't get a mulligan for the things we might have done differently. It may sound odd to say it, but I love that little boy, that feral kid I was, swimming under the waterfalls and scavenging the beaches, and I miss him.





# *Immortality*

The portion of eternity  
In which Caesar will be remembered  
Is a fleck of dust floating on the breeze

The portion of eternity  
In which he will be forgotten  
Is a thousand thousand galaxies

Times ten thousand  
Times a million  
His laurel leaves

Will be consumed by the Earth  
Which will be consumed  
By the sun

Which in the fullness of time  
Will be consumed by everlasting darkness  
Beyond even the gaze of God

There is no greater joke in heaven  
Than the immortality  
Of Caesar's laurel crown

So many times I have heard about people being immortalized for their art, their conquests, their politics, and it always strikes me as naive. What is a hundred years, a thousand years, compared to the endless pit of eternity? Even the giant galaxy we inhabit will in the fullness of time be erased from all memory. Not a trace of it will be left to ponder.

I don't fear death, but often think about what feels to me like the absurdity of our mortality, that one day, as Keats put it, I will "cease to be." As Thomas Carlyle said, "One life; a little gleam of Time between two Eternities; no second chance to us for evermore!" I was discussing this on a beach in Aruba with the Scottish songwriter Archie Fisher one time, and he said, "But what a gleam it is!" Truer words were never spoken.

# Who But Daniel

I saw him in a dream  
so many years ago  
Laughter beyond measure  
from that small aortic flow

Even now I cannot help  
But smile as I recall  
The way I knew his heart  
On that rainy night that fall

My voice was in his laughter  
And his joy was in my soul  
His love was in my breast  
Like the bonfire's warming coals

And when I shook the sun  
And bade him wake the lazy day  
Still I felt his laughter  
And it kept the rain at bay

All day long I wondered  
Who the laughing child could be  
For I could not place his eyes  
But his soul was known to me

And though he never spoke  
His message was quite plain  
That his heart was full of living  
That his joy was unrestrained

And who could solve a dream like this  
But Daniel in the den?  
And who knows what a soul might choose  
To show the love within?

But that night the rain kept falling  
And his laughter left my ears  
And it was the darkest evening  
Watered with the cruelest tears

For the hopeful place that we had set  
For one as yet to come  
Would be taken from our table  
Before the morning sun

Our tears were like November's  
Darkened days of frozen rain  
And the searing air we breathed  
Splinters pulled against the grain

And when the skies had cleared  
And the tears had drained away  
I thought back to the dream  
I'd had upon that day

A laughing little boy  
Without a single word to say  
Unbridled in his joy  
Like the leaping trout's ballet

Perhaps he made a shallow dive  
Into the living stream  
But still he saw the eddies  
Where the sleeping rainbows dream

Perhaps he saw the sorrow  
That was coming on the dawn  
And perhaps he let me know  
That the journey was still on

For who would share a dream like this  
But my Daniel in the den?  
And who knows what a soul might choose  
To show the love within?

More than 30 years ago I had the most remarkable dream, and all this time later, I still take comfort from it. Sometimes as writers, we speak about difficult subjects, visceral subjects, but as I said to Annie as we were working on this project, if we can't write about the things that most profoundly impact our hearts, why bother writing at all?

When I was touring Australia in 2020 I would perform this poem at each reading, and several times I noticed that people were crying by the end of it. To make that kind of connection with an audience is what I strive for.

# One For the Clover

One for the morning  
And one for the night  
And one for the darkness  
And one for daylight

One for the price  
So heavily paid  
And one for the fortune  
A better man made

One for the dream  
Whose race has been run  
And one for the soul  
Who fell into the sun

One for the furrow  
So earnestly hoed  
And one for the fork  
On the loneliest road

One for the lover  
And one for the friend  
And one for the enemy  
Try to pretend

Here's one for the money  
And one for the debt  
And one for the wager  
You'll always regret

One for the beggar  
And one for the thief  
And one for the clover  
With one extra leaf

Have one for the sailor  
And one for the sea  
And one for the fellow  
You thought you could be

One more for the folly  
Of all of your schemes  
And pray that tomorrow  
Is yesterday's dream

I have no idea where this one came from. I suppose I was feeling wistful and I just put my pencil to work. Sometimes when I write, I really don't know what I will be saying, but I may be experiencing joy, sorrow, regret, any range of emotions, and I just start writing. I am often surprised at what I find on the page when I've finished.

There are also rare times when the muse is not so much whispering in my ear, as shouting in it, and I frantically write as fast as I can because my pencil can barely keep up with the words spilling out of my excited mind. During these magical episodes, I don't even pause to consider what I have just written for fear that I might stop the flow, which is like a river in spring after an ice jam gets busted up. Again, when this happens, I really don't know where the words, the ideas, are coming from. I just go with the flow, and the funny thing is, I think some of the poems I have written in this manner, with little or no editing later on, have been some of my best work. When I am in the middle of it, it feels, to paraphrase Tennyson, like "Ours is not to reason why; ours is but to do and die." All that matters is getting it onto the paper. These conscious stream of thought poems happen maybe a couple of times a year, and are always a great gift.

# *All Men Crave the Poison*

All men crave the poison  
Of Caesar's laurel crown  
All men when they find a well  
Can not help but look down

All men crave equality  
As all men will opine  
Until they taste the sweetest fruit  
Upon ambition's vine

Overthrow the tyrant  
Upon the steepest hill  
Replace him with a man of virtue  
Virtuous until

He's glimpsed the dew upon the rose  
Of Caesar's laurel crown  
Then placing it upon his head  
He cannot but look down

In an evolutionary sense, I think we are hardwired to be fascist, and even good people with good intentions can easily be seduced by power once they have had a taste of it. How many revolutionaries fought the good fight to overthrow tyranny, only to become the thing they most despised?

When I study what happened to the citizens of Germany in WWII, what happened in Cambodia under Pol Pot, Chile under Pinochet, it is very troubling to attempt to come to grips with what very average people are capable of, given the right circumstances. I remember how we were taught as children that man is made in the image of God. If that's the case, then God help us.

# *The Pale-Eyed Minstrel Girl*

She was born thirsty  
For the early morning sky  
Inhaled the sun like orange juice  
And drank the bright dawn dry

She woke the sleeping swallows  
With her laughter and her tears  
While the world slept around her  
In her younger, wilder years

Her pale blue eyes were question marks  
Her heart was on her sleeve  
And a dirge was on her lips  
When the full moon was bereaved

Hidden in her breast  
In a place she dare not name  
A shattered heart kept time  
For the love that never came

And who in spring's bright morning  
While the sun is in her way  
Thinks to count the hours  
While the lilacs bloom in May?

And who when they are parting  
In summer's tender rain  
Ever has the notion  
They might never meet again?

I knew her in the night  
When the drunken moon would call  
And in the squinting morning  
When her sorry tears would fall

And all the locals knew her too  
Her thumb out on the road  
Reflecting homeward headlights  
Like the ghost of Tom Joad

Now April is a-coming  
Ice is breaking on the shore  
But that pale-eyed minstrel girl  
Doesn't come around here anymore

Last time that I saw her  
She was running for a train  
Only time she had the sense  
To come in from the rain

And who in spring's bright morning  
While the sun is in her way  
Thinks to count the hours  
While the lilacs bloom in May?

And who when they are parting  
In summer's tender rain  
Ever has the notion  
They might never meet again?

Sometimes I miss that minstrel girl  
Who drank the bright dawn dry  
I guess I never thought she'd leave  
When I was young and high

I miss her easy laughter  
And I miss her easy tears  
I miss her easy loving  
In her younger, wilder years

I thought I caught a glimpse of her  
It took me by surprise  
I could see the years  
Written on those pale blue eyes

For there she stood before me  
Like a woman on parole  
She was looking in the mirror  
And searching for her soul

And who in spring's bright morning  
While the sun is in her way  
Thinks to count the hours  
While the lilacs bloom in May?

And who when they are parting  
In summer's tender rain  
Ever has the notion  
They might never meet again?

It is a blessing on the young that they cannot possibly comprehend how quickly life will fly by. This poem is a vessel for memories, both sweet and sad from that time in our lives when we are most alive, when our hearts are most on fire, and we sail into each day like Vikings on long boats heading into the North Atlantic, because there might be a bit of land out there somewhere. The boats are open, the provisions sparse and navigating is complicated in the dark, and on the 25 foot waves, but we set sail all the same. I think we ought to get medals for surviving adolescence.



# *Into the Peaceful Night*

When dawn is gone to come no more  
I will not choose to fight  
No, I will sail in solitude  
Into that peaceful night

And though I leave unfinished  
These chapters on this run  
Yet still I danced beneath the moon  
And loved the morning sun

Death, old friend, You'll have me  
When're your fancy please  
But I will never crawl for you  
Or rage on bended knees

For I would not block the autumn  
Nor hold the falling tide  
Even if I could I wouldn't  
Upon this brilliant ride

Though your specter cast a shadow  
For it is a loaded gun  
Every day it reminds me  
To embrace the rising sun

To cherish each blue morning  
And every songbird's tale  
The baby's fading laughter  
Like high tide's distant sail

So Death, old friend, In time you'll win  
But you and I won't fight  
For I will sail in solitude  
Into that peaceful night

This is a rebuttal to Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle." What is the point of going out kicking and screaming? It lacks dignity and seems an awful way to leave the party. I would much rather make peace with death and accept the inevitable, and hope my final moments are serene ones.

I find this kind of bravado tedious, and the same goes for Hemmingway and his running with the bulls. A truly courageous heart does not feel inclined to be worn on the sleeve nor to fabricate experiences to showcase valor. My father was a quiet man, you could say in a way, a meek man, soft-spoken and self-effacing, but when the Nazis were the scourge of Europe, he enlisted in the RCAF to do his part. He rarely spoke about it, certainly never boasted about it. My father did not need to run with the bulls to test his mettle, but he answered the call to someone else's battle without hesitation, and when his time came, he went peacefully and with dignity, not raging. I would only hope that when my time comes, I might die as well as my father did.

All songs ©2024: words by Bob Jensen (SOCAN), music by Annie Gallup (ASCAP)

- 1 For the Million Candles Burning (3:30)
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Design by Annie Gallup

Annie Gallup - vocals and backing vocals, acoustic guitar, tenor guitar,  
lap steel, dobro, 6-string banjo, ukulele, piano, keyboards, key bass (4, 12)  
sampled galloping horse percussion, sampled crashing surf  
Peter Gallway - fretless bass (2), electric bass (8),  
key bass (6, 9, 11)

[www.anniegallup.com](http://www.anniegallup.com)  
[www.firsttimesinceaugust.com](http://www.firsttimesinceaugust.com)

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