

Josh Ritter

"Thin Blue Flame"

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I became a thin blue flame
Polished on a mountain range
And over hills and fields I flew
Wrapped up in a royal blue

I flew over Royal City last night
A bullfighter on the horns of a new moons light
Caesar's ghost I saw the war-time tides
The prince of Denmark's father still and quiet
And the whole world was looking to get drowned
Trees were a fist shaking themselves at the clouds
I looked over curtains and it was then that I knew
Only a full house gonna make it through

I became a thin blue wire
That held the world above the fire
And so it was I saw behind
Heaven's just a thin blue line

If God's up there he's in a cold dark room
The heavenly host are just the cold dark moons
He bent down and made the world in seven days
And ever since he's been walking away
Mixing with nitrogen in lonely holes
Where neither seraphim or raindrops go
I see an old man wandering the halls alone
But only a full house gonna make a home

I became a thin blue stream
The smoke between asleep and dreams
And in that clear blue undertow
I saw Royal City far below

Borders soft with refugees
Streets swimming with amputees
It's a Bible or a bullet they put over your heart
It's getting harder and harder to tell them apart
Days are nights and the nights are long
Beating hearts blossom into walking bombs

And those still looking in the clear blue sky for a sign
Get missiles from so high they might as well be divine

Now the dogs are howling at your door
Singing bout vengeance like it's the joy of the Lord
Bringing justice to the enemies not the other way round
They're guilty when killed and they're killed where
they're found
If what's loosed on earth will be loosed up on high
It's a Hell of a Heaven we must go to when we die
Where even Laurel begs Hardy for vengeance please
The fat man is crying on his hands and his knees
Back in the peacetime he caught roses on the stage
Now he twists indecision takes bourbon for rage

Lead pellets peppering aluminum
Halcyon, laudanum and Opium
Sings kiss thee hardy this poisoned cup
His winding sheet is busy winding up
In darkness he looks for the light that has died
We need faith for the same reasons that it's so hard to
find
And this whole thing is headed for a terrible wreck
And like a tragedy it's what we expect

At night I make plans for a city laid down
Like the hips of a girl on the spring covered ground
Spirals and capitals like the twist of a script
Streets named for heroes that could almost exist
The fruit trees of Eden and the gardens that seem
To float like the smoke from a lithium dream
Cedar trees growing in the cool of the squares
The young women walking in the portals of prayer

And the future glass buildings and the past an address
And the weddings in pollen and the wine bottomless
And all wrongs forgotten and all vengeance made right
The suffering verbs put to sleep in the night
The future descending like a bright chandelier
And the world just beginning and the guests in good
cheer
In Royal City I fell into a trance
Oh it's hell to believe there ain't a hell of a chance

I woke beneath a clear blue sky
The sun a shout the breeze a sigh
My old hometown and the streets I knew
Were wrapped up in a royal blue

I heard my friends laughing out across the fields
The girls in the gloaming and the birds on the wheel
The raw smell of horses and the warm smell of hay
Cicadas electric in the heat of the day

A run of Three Sisters and the flush of the land
And the lake was a diamond in the valley's hand
The straight of the highway and the scattered out
hearts
They were coming together they pulling apart
And angels everywhere were in my midst
In the ones that I loved in the ones that I kissed
I wondered what it was I'd been looking for up above
Heaven is so big there ain't no need to look up
So I stopped looking for royal cities in the air
Only a full house gonna have a prayer
Only a full house

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