

*In my dream you were beautiful/ backlit/ noble/ in the lowlight of the window/ you were leaning on the edge/ the high rises and billboards/ for perfume and call girls/ the steam above the dark road/ the smoke around your head.*

Somewhere deep in the middle of a good story, a simple and powerful thing happens. You begin to feel seen. The characters have been slowly undressed, layer upon layer of hope and human flaw, their struggles revealed. They remind you of your family, of a briefly encountered stranger, of yourself.

*I knew you by description/ the tall tales/ the pictures/ your short hair and your lipstick/ the smell of coming rain/ and I wanted to remain there/ a voyeur/ a stranger/ below you in the night air/ just waiting to be changed.*

Anna Tivel reaches for that thread of understanding with her music, that moment of recognition, of shared experience. There are hundreds of thousands of miles on her touring odometer and each town is a tangled web of heartache and small reasons to believe. She gravitates toward the quiet stories of ordinary life. A homeless veteran sitting on a bench to watch the construction of a luxury hotel. A woman wondering about the life of the daughter she had to give up for adoption. Someone changing shape, someone falling in love, someone all alone.

“Tivel’s characters are both common and unforgettable,” Ann Powers of NPR writes, “ She possesses a genuine poet’s sense that words matter more than persona, or a showy performance. Her images linger, and become populated with the energy of the real.”

With three full-length albums out on Portland’s well-loved Fluff & Gravy Records and a fourth due out this April, Tivel continues to touch on a common human thread. Her latest release, ‘*Small Believer*’ was heralded by NPR as an “album that repeatedly achieves this exquisite balance of the quotidian and the sublime.” Her newest album ‘*The Question*’ was recorded mostly live at Hive studio in Eau Claire, WI, engineered by the esteemed Brian Joseph (Bon Iver, Sufjan Stevens) and produced by drummer and multi-instrumentalist Shane Leonard.

“This record feels so collaborative and alive,” Tivel says of the project. “We’d just sit in the room together playing a song until the emotion behind the story felt right, then Brian would hit record and we’d try to get it down in one or two takes.” Of the eleven song collection Tivel says, “I wanted to explore this feeling I keep having, that maybe the everyday searching for something more, the asking of impossible questions and painful clamoring for some kind of understanding, maybe all of that is more important than any concrete answer that may or may not exist. There are questions behind all of these songs, things we all struggle with over and over, questions of identity and hurt and kindness.”

*In my dream you were stone still/ shadowed/ half-built/ a masterpiece of pure will/ just waiting on the world/ to gaze upon your body/ a razor on a rough cheek/ a blaze of burning beauty/ the saved and the worth saving/ a hallelujah waiting/ to raise the heavy curtain/ a play with no good ending/ a prayer that never mentioned/ the glory of the question and the answer are the same.*

Short bio

*Anna Tivel is a Portland, OR-based songwriter who grounds her work in quiet stories of everyday struggle. She's a keen and detailed observer, and the characters in her songs come alive in small moments of beauty and despair.*

*With three full-length albums out on Portland's well-loved Fluff & Gravy Records and a fourth due out this spring, Tivel spends her time writing and touring the US and overseas. Her most recent album, 'Small Believer,' was produced by guitar mastermind Austin Nevins (Josh Ritter, Anais Mitchell) and released in September of 2017. NPR praised the album, saying it "repeatedly achieves this exquisite balance of the quotidian and the sublime with imagery that's deeply poetic." Her previous album, Heroes Waking Up was hailed by Folk Radio UK as "a superb and sublime album from a voice that deserves to be shouted from the highest rooftops."*