

Molly Baskette
Shallow

Deep calls to deep
 at the thunder of your torrents;
all your waves and your billows
 have gone over me.
By day God exerts an above-and-beyond love,
 and at night this song is with me:
 a prayer to the God of my life.
Psalm 42:7-8 (NRSVUE, adapted)

“Tell me something girl: are you happy in this modern world?
Or do you need more? Is there something else you’re searching for?”

The Lady Gaga/Bradley Cooper song stirs something deep within the soul. Do you, too, need more?

Or maybe, TBH, you’re content with shallow. Lighthearted conversation instead of plumbing painful depths and differences. Staying a little drunk on the wine of the world, getting your RDA of steps in on the hedonic treadmill rather than sobering up and having a real reckoning with the true cost of—everything.

Shallow is easy. Shallow doesn’t disrupt the status quo; it doesn’t want more or better for all of us, and so is rarely disappointed. Shallow doesn’t test or question, doesn’t make an ass of itself, is fairly invulnerable. Shallow was never accused of being emo or difficult.

Shallow can’t drown in the depths, because it never wades out past its knees. It stays on the sunny side, even if that sun is a painted backdrop a millimeter thick.

God too lives on the sunny side, but God also dwells in the depths, the darkness, the murk. The depths are where good art comes from, the bass beat, the guttural cry at birth and death, the shadow that will kill you if you don’t unearth it, haul it to the surface, and demand from it a truth that will set you free.

To crave only sunlight and splashing in the shallows is to know only half of God, and yourself.

Prayer

What is deep in us calls to what is deep in the world, in others, in You, O God. Drag me down from time to time, and help me breathe underwater until I can break the surface again.