

## A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall

by Bob Dylan

### 1. Basic Facts

- Words and music by Bob Dylan
- From the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*
- Released: 27 May 1963
- Recorded: 6 December 1962
- Length: 6:55
- Label: Columbia Records

### 2. Song Facts

- It was one of 3 social protest songs Dylan recorded on the album.
- The song was based on an old folk ballad called "Lord Randall" in which a mother repeatedly questions her son (beginning with "Where have you been?")
- Famous covers: Bryan Ferry (1973, #10 in the UK charts), Joan Baez (on *Farewell, Angelina* 1965, #10 Billboard charts) & more recently Arcade Fire (2005 to open their song "Wake Up" in Birmingham)
- About constant fear of life ending in nuclear war (Cuban missile crisis)
- But it isn't just an anthem for and about Dylan's generation – it's still relevant today (economical crisis, terrorism, North Korea, personal struggles.)

### 3. Song Analysis

- In the style of „Lord Randall“
- Question-answer structure: You feel obliged to think about all the things the lyrical self – in the position of a strong, thoughtful, authoritative it – recites; you inevitably get sucked into it („my (..) son; my darling young one“)
- **a blue-eyed boy** (*British & Australian*) also **a fair-haired boy** (*American & Australian*) a man who is liked and admired by someone in authority.
- God - mankind relation
- meanings of numbers **12, 6, 7, 10**
- **Mountains – highways – forests – oceans - graveyard**: Mankind embraced by nature, connected via landscape (highways = international), nature versus technology/industry, route of life, 4 Elements
- **Misty mountains - crooked highways - sad forests – dead oceans**: path of life (the lyrical I underwent)
- **misty – crooked – sad – dead**: connotes negatively, uncertain/foggy/gloomy situation results in death, environmental and human disaster, way downhill (mountain to ocean)

#### Quellen:

Schmidt, Mathias: Bob Dylans *message songs* der Sechziger Jahre und die anglo-amerikanische Tradition des sozialkritischen Liedes. Frankfurt (Main): Peter Lang. 1982.

Betsy Bowden: *Performed Literature. Words and Music by Bob Dylan*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1982.

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?  
And where have you been my darling young one?  
I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains  
I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways  
I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests  
I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans  
I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's you gonna fall.

Oh, what did you see, my blue eyed son?  
And what did you see, my darling young one?  
I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it  
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it  
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin'  
I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin'  
I saw a white ladder all covered with water  
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken  
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?  
And what did you hear, my darling young one?  
I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin'  
I heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world  
I heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazin'  
I heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin'  
I heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin'  
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter  
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, what did you meet my blue-eyed son?  
Who did you meet, my darling young one?  
I met a young child beside a dead pony  
I met a white man who walked a black dog  
I met a young woman whose body was burning  
I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow  
I met one man who was wounded in love  
I met another man who was wounded in hatred  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

And what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?  
And what'll you do now my darling young one?  
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin'  
I'll walk to the depths of the deepest dark forest  
Where the people are a many and their hands are all empty  
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters  
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison  
Where the executioner's face is always well hidden  
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten  
Where black is the color, where none is the number  
And I'll tell it and speak it and think it and breathe it  
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it  
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'  
But I'll know my songs well before I start singin'  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.