

Smith & Dragoman



Under the
LOTE~
TREE

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Under the Lote-Tree

Under the Lote-Tree, a follow up to our debut CD *Open the Gates*, continues the saga of those heroes and heroines that surrounded the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in Persia between the years 1852 and 1892.

The title 'Under the Lote-Tree' is taken from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, where Lote-Tree generally refers to the Messengers of God. The implication is that the Messengers of God occupy a station to which ordinary human beings can neither attain nor surpass. It is also known that in ancient times, the Arabs planted such a tree to mark the end of a road.

While several songs in our music refer to the harm inflicted upon the early followers of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, it should be clearly noted that the Bahá'í Faith itself is a life-affirming faith with its aims fixed on the peace and unity of the peoples of the world. Its members are actively concerned with the well-being of the world, and are striving to bring about unity at all levels of society. For further information on the principles, teachings and activities of the Bahá'í Faith, please visit www.bahai.org.

Under the Lote-Tree is dedicated to the Bahá'ís in Iran who still suffer unspeakable injustices and persecution for their beliefs.

Smith & Dragoman

1. WAYFARER

(Dedicated to the wayfarer in all of us.)

Deep in the mist, in the depths of the valley below
The wayfarer stirs, he desperately longs to behold

A voice from within is calling him to arise from the dust
Will you soar in the realms above?

The pathway unsure, will he travel this journey alone
Driven by truth, the truth he's longing to know

A voice from within is calling him to arise from the dust
Will you soar in the realms above?
Heavenly morn, will the rays of the dawn return once more?
Reawake won't you find your way back home?

Chorus

A knower is he, who is dry in the sea
From the fire will emerge cool
Empty of self he will walk on the waves
In each face the beloved

Traversing the planes hidden secrets revealed
Truth at hand leaving loneliness behind

Drawn to the edge, and the ocean is drawing him near
The journey so long, will his wandering ever be clear?

A voice from within is calling him to arise from the dust
Will you soar in the realms above?
Heavenly morn, will the rays of the dawn return once more?
Reawake won't you find your way back home?

Chorus

2. LAND OF TÁ

The Land of Ta refers to the city of Tehran in Persia, where Bahá'u'lláh was born and received His Revelation. In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh has referred to the Land of Ta as “the source of the joy of all mankind.”
(*Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 109*)

In the land of Tá
Born of noble lineage
Descended from Katurah, Bahá'u'lláh

His journey once foretold
From land to sea to mountain
Holding in His hand true justice

Chorus

In the darkness shines the light for all to see
To remove the blinding veils changing destiny

One night in a dream
His father held a vision
Suspended in the sea with jet black hair

To each and every strand
The fishes holding tightly
No matter where He moved they followed

Chorus

His only wish, to heal the wounds and ease the pain to free the world
And He was known in the land of Nur with guiding hand as Father of the poor

Chorus

Divine Lote-Tree, my heart is searching only You
Ancient Beauty, take my hand in Your warm embrace
Stir my soul

In the land of Tá
Born of noble lineage
Descended from Katurah, Bahá'u'lláh

3. TWO YEARS OF SOLITUDE

It became evident during Bahá'u'lláh's two year absence from Baghdad that Mírzá Yahyá (His half-brother) was creating great turmoil and disunity among the followers of the Báb. The purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's retreat was to “avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto [His] companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.”
(*Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Iqán, p. 251*)

We've waited two lonely years, we've sown our tears
In the desert sands

You left us so suddenly, how I long to be there
in Kurdistan

Across the waters of tribulation, entering an unknown land
He walks alone in isolation, to the mountains of Kurdistan

From His bleeding heart their pours, oceans of agonizing pain
Facing showers of affliction, He turns His gaze to the pouring rain

Chorus

4. SOJOURN

Two years of solitude, in a cave He found His home
On the summit of Sar-Galu a resting place for His soul
Only birds did keep Him company, in His hidden home yet
His soul was wrapt in joy, was wrapt in blissful joy

He walks alone in isolation, communion with the souls above
Revelation streams from His pen, all creation shed tears of blood

Many days were spent in hunger, many nights a cruel cold
Chanting in the wilderness, songs to warm a dreary soul

Chorus

From Sar-Galu to Sulaymaniyih, a mystic source bade Him return
With a cashkul at His side and clothed as a darvish
They opened their minds to all they could learn

When two years had passed and His pen stood still
Well He knew it was time to reunite
So He crossed the river home, left tranquility behind
And He looked ahead to the end of His life

We've waited two lonely years, we've sown our tears
In the desert sands

You left us so suddenly, how I long to be there
in Kurdistan

In the wilderness of the mountains, Bahá'u'lláh lived
alone in communion with God. He had little interaction with others,
yet He earned a reputation as a great man of extraordinary wisdom
and eloquence. His fame spread to Baghdad where His family recognized
this personage as Bahá'u'lláh. A messenger was sent on His family's
behalf to beg for Bahá'u'lláh's return.

No one saw Him leave that night
With little food or drink and wishing no return

To leave behind this empty world
A journey to the quiet of the realms of light

Day after day His soul communed
Without the noise the clamour of betraying hearts
Traveling to Sar-Galú, the humble life
Only dervish in the eyes of the learned

Chorus

"Though weariness lay Me low and hunger consume Me
And the bare rock be My bed My fellows the beasts of the field
I will not complain...."*

Two years would pass without His grace
To take away the tension and remove the doubt
Then came the bidding to return
To face a life the suffering only messengers are made to bear

Chorus

**(Bahá'u'lláh, Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 133)*

۵. THE DARKEST PIT (SÍYÁH-CHÁL)

The “Siyáh-Chál”, or the Darkest Pit, was the foulest underground dungeon in Tehran where the worst criminals were confined. It was here, under the galling weight of chains, in the most loathsome conditions, that God made known to Bahá’u’lláh His great purpose and station.

Imprisoned for an action
A crime that He did not commit
Disdainful in His eyes

Attempted murder on
On his majesty
And no tribunal could place Him there

Barefoot and bareheaded
Chains dig deep into His skin
He is made to enter

[Hear the weeping, hear them cry
He waves goodbye to the lovers that stand by His side
Touch the angels, touch the sky,
Hear their gentle voices singing chanting in the night]

Descend into the darkness
Descend into the darkest pit
The Síyáh-Chál

***“...I beheld a maiden...suspended in the air before Me”
And the words that were said as she pointed to His head
Transformed the darkness into light

***“God is sufficient unto m; He verily
Is the All-Sufficing”

[Hear the weeping, hear them cry
He waves goodbye to the lovers that stand by His side
Touch the angels, touch the sky,
Hear their gentle voices singing chanting in the night]

**(Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By p. 101-102)*

*** (Shoghi Effendi (trans. ed.) The Dawn-Breakers, p. 632)*

۶. BADÍ'

Fully aware that it would result in his torture and death,
a courageous youth named Badí offered to bring an epistle
from Bahá’u’lláh to the king of Persia.

A troubled youth who would turn from his father’s word
He must find his own way
Unaware of the mark he would leave on this world
His journey unknown
With a word Nabíl kindled the fire of love in his heart
And he set off to find the love of the world

Chorus 1

O Badí! You were chosen to move the world
To carry the tablet of might
And fulfilling the trust you would hold
You offered your life

Holy was the mission entrusted to you
You enter His room
On that night He would show you the other side
The light and the beauty

Destiny a tablet of truth to challenge his rule
With trust and devotion, embracing your goal

Chorus 2

O Badí'! You were chosen to move the world
To carry the tablet of might
And fulfilling the trust you would hold
You offered your life

Your sacrifice and the honour upon your soul
Embracing the call from above
And with courage you welcome your end and show us your love

The Messenger weeps alone in His cell
The pen that will immortalize your name
Beloved Badí', the heavens will cry for you
A whisper in our hearts you will remain

Chorus

7. NAVVÁB 

This song is in honour of Bahá'u'lláh's wife, Ásíyih Khánum, surnamed Navváb and designated, "the Most Exalted Leaf". After Bahá'u'lláh received His Revelation, but before receiving news of this event, Navváb was able to detect that something had profoundly changed in her husband. She remained by Bahá'u'lláh's side throughout His forty years of exile and imprisonment, suffering many of the same hardships as Him.

Under the starlight
She beholds His face

But something looks different
A vision of grace

Gentle the winds now
They whisper His name
She knows in her true heart
Something has changed

His consort
Beloved Navváb
Eternal companion
Servant of God

She suffers the heartache
He was made to bear
With calm and devotion
So radiant and fair

Chorus

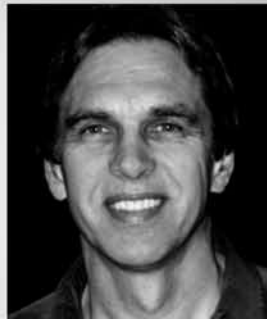
She walks in His path
Raises up the poor
A comfort to the weak ones
Her presence so pure

Defending His honour
Trusting her heart
With tears overflowing
It's time to depart

Vision of beauty and grace
The comfort in her eyes, His chosen bride
And consort in all worlds of God
In blue and white, her spirit would light the way
In those darkened days, exalting His name



Brett Smith
VOCALS, GUITAR



Mike Dragoman
VOCALS, KEYBOARDS, GUITAR



Aaron Ferreira
DRUMS, PERCUSSION



Chris Church
VIOLIN, VOCALS



Emily Dragoman
VOCALS



Glenn Olive
BASS



Asher Lenz
KEYBOARDS

8. THE PUREST BRANCH

One of the most tragic events in Bahá'u'lláh's life of hardship was the sudden accident and death of His son Mírzá Mihdi, known as the "Purest Branch". While in the Most Great Prison in Akká, Mírzá Mihdi was on the rooftop in prayer and meditation. He fell through a skylight onto a wooden crate on the floor below piercing his body. Before he died, Bahá'u'lláh asked him what he wished, to which he replied, "I wish the people of Bahá to be able to attain Your presence."* Soon after Mírzá Mihdi's death, Bahá'u'lláh and His family were removed from the prison and placed under house arrest, where pilgrims could finally visit Him.

**(H.M. Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh - The King of Glory, p. 311)*

Darkness fell, the night was still
He paced in prayer, with unswerving will
So enraptured heart pure and strong
His soul transcends to a world beyond

The Purest Branch fell to the ground
His body lay scarcely a sound
The Holy Leaves caressed the bough
And wiped the tears from his bloodstained brow

Chorus

And he was asked: what is your wish to stay and serve or pass through the veil?
His faint reply: accept my life for those who seek their heart's desire

The Blessed Beauty came through the door
To see His son, his body torn
He turned to go, He knew the end
Echoing words Mihdi has gone

Chorus

And his gentle soul winged his flight as a ransom for us all
With the angels rushing to his side, drawn to the light, his gift of sacrifice
For all the souls yearning for the sight, just a glimpse of their Beloved one

A mother's heart, unconsoled until the words her Beloved told
And so it was and always will, sorrow is the lot of His chosen few

9. THE AUSTRIAN

Captain Von Goumens, an Austrian officer posted in Iran, witnessed the tortures inflicted by the government on the followers of the Báb. He wrote to his countrymen to describe the scenes of horror and indescribable cruelty with which the Bábís were being put to death. "The Austrian" depicts the captain's feeling that those who will read his account will doubt the full truth of the picture and accuse him of exaggeration. The song captures the Austrian's sentiment that his "whole soul revolts against such infamy".

(quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 65)

Don't accuse me of exaggeration
For by the duties of my profession
I was witness to abominations
You can't comprehend

The fanatic is numb and his heart is clouded
Inhuman violence to the unprotected
My soul revolts against the infamy
He smiles and cracks his whip

But words cannot describe that scene my friend
The crimes that took place in those days
Oh the fear of losing control and the greed that blinds the heart
The faithful ones so brave until the end

Chorus

I can't believe the words that I read from his pen
So far away and so long ago
I can feel the intensity, the weeping of his soul, but I know
That when I raise my eyes, there's a brighter sky
And I remember the ones who lost their lives

His pen describes it in perfect detail
No cry escapes from the victim's exhale
Torment endured in the darkened silence
You can't comprehend

The Austrian stands there confounded and helpless
Turn to the homeland escaping the darkness
Locked in his bedroom he lies there shaking
And he must recount his tale

But words cannot describe that scene my friend
The crimes that took place in those days
Oh the fear of losing control and the greed that blinds the heart
The faithful ones so brave until the end

Chorus



"I saw...the Prophets and the Messengers gather and seat themselves around Me, moaning, weeping and loudly lamenting. 'We weep for Thee, O Most Great Mystery, O Tabernacle of Immortality!' They wept with such a weeping that I too wept with them. Thereupon the Concourse on high addressed Me saying: '...Erelong shalt Thou behold with Thine own eyes what no Prophet hath beheld.... Be patient, be patient.' ... They continued addressing Me the whole night until the approach of dawn."

(Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 147)

10. BAHÁ'YYIH 

Bahá'íyyih Khánúm, also entitled the Greatest Holy Leaf, was the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, and occupied a unique position in the early years of the Bahá'í Faith. With fortitude and devotion, she endured the trials and tribulations of a lifetime of exile and imprisonment. Despite her sufferings, she reflected the very qualities and attributes which distinguished her brother, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

She walks with a grace, the light it shines from her face
Her words the wisdom will flow from her lips

Her smile a sign of peace, she talks with delicate ease
She knows her confidence shows of her love

Chorus

A glance a stroke of divine to pull back the veil concealing her light
Her life a pillar of strength an ocean of calm in the eye of the storm
On the horizon of Bahá

Two years she would guide, the Guardian far from her side
Her call protecting the flame from within

Chorus

Treading this perilous path she moves with quiet resolve

So tender of heart that no sorrow can becloud
In her hands the fate of the world and her eyes on the light of Bahá
Shielding her soul with the cloak of certitude that the birds of the hearts
Be set free to rise above the storm



11. NABÍL

Most recall Nabíl-i-A`zam as the indefatigable historian of early Bábí and Bahá'í history. But Nabíl's own story as an ardent follower first of the Báb, then of Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the power of the fire of his love. Upon recognizing Bahá'u'lláh's station, and to demonstrate his measure of humility and devotion, Nabíl cut off his beard (a symbol of a man's dignity), and made it into a brush with which he swept the entrance to the house of Bahá'u'lláh.

A simple shepherd and gifted poet
His heart is calling, his passion flows from within, his search begins
Star-gazing, contemplating
He lies there waiting and prostrating
All for his love, his love

When the object of his search has ended
The love pours in, his heart's contented
Devotion to His cause
From land to land he delivers a message
His light shines out, all through the wreckage
Invoking what's within
The heart longs to be with Him

Chorus

Across the seas, across the land, to find his way home where it all began
In his heart

Across the sea, across the land, to find his way home where it all began
In his heart, in his heart

Don't let me lose You, cause I am alone
Imprisoned for my words, my heart's on fire
Return to You, You let me in, my love will never die
Two oceans that collide, I am Yours You are mine

Two oceans that collide, I am Yours You are mine

When his one desire is beckoned home
The pain so deep, he's all alone
A final word from his pen
He walks into the endless sea
His flame extinguished, the end of anguish
His heart it beats no more
And the love it fills his soul

Chorus

"Whither can a lover go but to the land of his Beloved?"
(Bahá'u'lláh, *Persian Hidden Words*, #4)

12. LAYLA

Inspired by the poem "Layli (or Layla) and Majnún" by the Persian classical poet Nezami. Majnún literally means "insane". This is the title of the celebrated lover of ancient Persia and Arabian lore, whose beloved was Layli, daughter of an Arabian prince. This poem symbolizes true human love bordering on the divine. "It is related that one day they came upon Majnún, sifting the dust, and his tears flowing down. They said, 'What doest thou?' He said, 'I seek for Layli.' They cried, 'Alas for thee! Layli is of pure spirit, and thou seekest her in the dust!' He said, 'I seek her everywhere; haply somewhere I shall find her.'" (The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys, p. 6)

In the darkness a vision stirs
I dream you are near
Dancing shadows on the wall
Your figure appears

You are the lamp my light
In the still of the night
The flame burning bright
Deep inside my soul

Chorus

Layla, I long for your touch, won't you come to me
Layla, I search in the night
For light that shines in your eyes
Where are you my love?
Oh my, oh my Layla

When I awake all alone
I feel you are there
And I know someday
I'll find you somewhere

You are the lamp my light
In the still of the night
The flame burning bright
Deep inside my soul

Chorus

My heart is bound in these chains
No escaping the rapture of tender love
I yearn for a glimpse
One look in your eyes
From the image of you I arise

Chorus

13. EXILE

"Exile" chronicles the successive banishments from land to land, as well as the arduous conditions that Bahá'u'lláh, His family and companions were subjected to. Since Bahá'u'lláh was born of noble lineage and He was well known, respected and loved, the authorities did not dare execute Him. Bahá'u'lláh and His family spent forty years in exile and imprisonment.

Your life is exile, sorrow and banishment
Homeless and weary, You walk through the snow
Four months the journey, from Tehran to Baghdad
They thought they could rid You, but what did they know

Ten years in Baghdad, Your message would take hold
Rise up the leaders, they're losing control
A word from the sultan, now You must leave here
To Constantinople, You do as you're told

Chorus

Locked behind walls, and veiled from the world
No exile would darken Your light
For forty years You were under decree
Why they never looked into Your eyes?

One thousand miles, the sun unforgiving
No rest for weariness, the pain You endure
Arrival in Turkey, but soon they will fear You
To Adrianople, Your intentions are pure

Chorus

Five years in that land, countless afflictions
Attempting to stop you, Your cause it will grow
One final exile, a prison of darkness
Journey to Akka, again You must go

14. KISS THE ROPE (TRIBUTE TO MONA)

A tribute to Mona Mahmudnizhad, a 16 year old girl who was captured and hanged in Iran in 1983 for her role as a Bahá'í children's class teacher. Mona requested to be executed last of the nine other women arrested with her so that she could pray for each one of them in turn. This song is dedicated to the Bahá'ís of Iran who are still facing persecution.

In the cradle of His faith
Where the rivers turn to red
The sunlight softens the dark
And the shadows in their lives drift apart
She stands before her fate
And the heavens open the gates

From the darkness they are called
Ten brave women to face the end
She smiles and prays for their faith
And she knows their inner souls are filled with grace
One final chance to deny (her faith)
She lifts her eyes, "no" is her reply

Chorus

Mona, angel, resolute and strong
Your smile drifts across the ages
And whispers your song
Mona the comfort they feel from your eyes
In the silence that echoes before Mona dies

She is led into the square
All the angels have gathered there
The rope hangs down from the sky
Her soul quickening prepares to fly
Her heart eternally wed
A kiss for the rope that leaves her for dead

Chorus



Music Credits

All music and lyrics by Brett Smith and Michael Dragoman.

Vocals by Brett Smith, Michael Dragoman and Emily Dragoman
Violin on *Sojourn*, *The Austrian*, *Nabil* and *Navváb* by Chris Church
Drums/ Percussion on *Exile*, *Land of Tá* and *Navváb* by Aaron Ferrera
Bass on *Exile*, *Land of Tá* and *Navváb* by Glenn Olive
Guitar on *Bahíyyih*, *Wayfarer* and *Navváb* by Nicolas Hernandez
Guitar on *Nabil*, *Layla*, *Badi'* and *Bahíyyih* by Rob Piltch
Additional piano on *Kiss the Rope* by Jack Lenz
Pennywhistle on *Sojourn* and *Kiss the Rope* by James Gordon
Arrangements on *Wayfarer*, *Nabil*, *Layla*, *Bahíyyih*, *Purest Branch*, *Exile*, *Kiss the Rope*,
and *Two Years of Solitude* by Asher Lenz, Brett Smith and Michael Dragoman
Arrangements on *Badi'* by Asher Lenz and Stephen Skratt
Arrangements on *Navváb* and *The Austrian* by Stephen Skratt, Brett Smith and Michael Dragoman
Arrangements on *Sojourn*, *Land of Tá* and *The Darkest Pit* by Brett Smith and Michael Dragoman
Assistance with lyrics on *Wayfarer* and *Bahíyyih* by Heather Annia Poole

Production Credits

Produced by Asher Lenz, Brett Smith and Michael Dragoman
Executive Producer Jack Lenz
All songs recorded at Smith and Dragoman Studios, Guelph, Ontario.
Additional recordings at Accomplice Studios, Toronto, Ontario.
All songs except *Bahíyyih*, *Layla*, *Kiss the Rope* and *Nabil* mixed by Michael Jack and
assisted by Jeff Pelletier at Phase One Studios, Scarborough, Ontario
Bahíyyih, *Layla*, *Kiss the Rope* and *Nabil* mixed by Kevin Doyle at
Kevin Doyle Music in London, Ontario
CD jacket and artwork by Lua O'Toole at LuCa Design, www.lucadesign.ca
Photos courtesy of © Baha'í International Community, <http://media.bahai.org>
Band photos by Kourosh Keshiri, Toronto, Ontario.

Special thanks go to:

Maureen, Asher, Eli and Tristan (Brett's family) for their constant support, love and sacrifice;
Meim and David Smith for their encouragement and guidance; Todd, Sandy, Darron and Deb
for their ongoing support; Asher Lenz for his direction and musical expertise; Jack Lenz
for his continued devotion to the Smith & Dragoman projects; Clair and Sue Dragoman for
their significant contributions to the Smith & Dragoman studio and Clair Dragoman for his
tireless dedication and technical support; John McLaughlin for his work in building the studio;
Jaren Belrose and Farid Ashabi for technical assistance; the LSA's of Winnipeg and Guelph,
John Tonin, Michael Noseworthy, Michael Jack, Kevin Doyle, Jeff Pelletier, Stephen Skratt
and all of our fans. And finally a special thanks goes out to the band members and their
devoted family who, through their many sacrifices, make it all happen.