

waterways series

# Krapp's Last Tape — The Musical



*releasing new voices, revealing new perspectives*

# Krapp's Last Tape — The Musical

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## *Sooner Than You Think*

It is late summer on the train home,  
and opposite, an old man is prepared  
for every cold spell which could arrive.  
A cloth cap, an overcoat, a smart striped  
shirt buttoned up to the top and something  
extra in maroon, tucked under his trousers.

I find his boy scout senility touching.  
This may seem too harsh a word,  
although I do not intend it as a jibe,  
having already experienced  
what it means to unpack the shopping  
and put toilet rolls in the fridge.

I arrive back at my flat  
and, while fixing myself a drink,  
drop my only ice cube  
onto the kitchen floor.  
I rinse it under the cold tap.  
Carelessly it disappears.

## *Look-alike*

Used to dye my hair, then stopped  
when it became a whiter shade of grey  
and I realised I could be a Paul Newman look-alike.  
Not the Paul Newman of *Somebody Up There Likes Me*  
in the sweetness of his youth, Brick on a hot tin roof  
or even the right wing radio jock in *WUSA* .

For me it has to be the much older Newman,  
playing the gangster in *The Road To Perdition*,  
who scowls the Tom Hanks anti-hero in the eye:  
tells him, *You and I both have done things which  
mean that if there is a hell we shall be going there.*

I could manage that look, speak those words,  
wear contacts a brighter blue than my eyes,  
play the role, grow into it, maybe even get  
to have my very own brand of salad cream.  
But if you laugh at me I will follow and kill you.

## *Pythagoras Prepares His Troops*

If you're going into battle,  
you have to get the angles right.  
To be ready, there has to be  
a burn rising slowly,  
from the stomach to the throat,  
where it's corked back down  
so your chest silently throbs  
alongside your heartbeat.  
Your wrists and fingers  
are all calm, as alert  
and focused as your eyes.

You aim where you have to.  
Try and get your shot in first  
and, most important of all,  
remember:  
a target has no widow,  
a target has no mother,  
brother, sister or lover.  
And when the battle's over,  
you can sing old familiar songs  
to help you get back to sleep,  
wherever your head is resting.