



*Kaia Kater  
Grenades*



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

A scenic view of a dirt road in Grenades. The road is unpaved and leads towards a beach and a bay. In the background, there are lush green mountains. The foreground is filled with tropical vegetation, including palm trees and other green plants. A wooden fence is visible on the left side of the road. The sky is overcast.

*Kaia Kater  
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# *Kaia Kater Grenades*

SFW CD 40234

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- (Arrangement and additional lyrics by Kaia Kater/SOCAN)
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All tracks by Kaia Kater/SOCAN unless otherwise indicated.  
Tracks 4, 8, and 13 — narrative interludes by Deno Hurst

## INTRODUCTION

*Grenades* is the lore of lives recounted. It is my grandmother Myra's glory, it is my father Deno's struggle, it is my march from the past into the present. Concentric circles of song spin around, lurching the listener backward into the cargo bed of a pick-up truck in the mountainous rainforests of Grenada on the 13th of March 1979. They pull you by the ear and plant you in the middle of helicopter gunfire during two months of terror in 1983. The easterly wind sweeps you and settles you gently in the back row of a Boeing 737 at the exact moment when a young man decides to walk off a plane into the frozen Canadian winter. You sit cross-legged on the floor and listen to the words he speaks to me, his daughter, a quarter of a century later.

This album has two homes and two seasons. The first is a winter spent in my small, sunny room in a mid-century apartment in Toronto, Canada; the second, a spring spent in an upper-level house in the hilly neighborhoods of St George's, Grenada. I wrote these refrains through the fog of a search for identity and belonging. The songs, carved in the liminal space between North and South, tread the rope between them.

My father's story of immigration was omnipresent in my childhood, in his teachings and counsel. He was quiet but firm in insisting that I had a warm and vibrant home and a plethora of family far from Canada's wintry grasp. Yet like many people, I have felt alone and out of place for most of my life, stumbling forward blind and rootless. I wrote *Grenades* to trace the life line from my palm and find my way home.

"Meridian Ground" proffers images of Grenada painted into personal history: my herculean uncle Dwight who, as a boy, used to swim out under mammoth cruise ships and tread water beside their metal anchors. It also mentions my great-great-aunt Tiny, who was found deceased in her bed one morning in 1996 with a smile so broad it was as if she had welcomed death as an old friend in the night. The song runs through the hilltop green with my little cousins, whose screams of delight bubble over when the wind picks up their kites and floats them into

the clouds. The song eulogizes my grandfather Baka, a wharfman and steel pan player. Lastly, it grounds me in the power of collective memory.

Three narrative interludes act as movements in *Grenades*, telling an abbreviated story of my father Deno's experience of Maurice Bishop's 1979 socialist revolution in Grenada, followed by Ronald Reagan's 1983 invasion of the island. The last interlude concludes with my father's tale of his Sisyphean migration to Canada, alone, at the age of fourteen. The interludes were taken from a longer interview I conducted with him in the basement of his home in Canada over the last, dark, snowy days of 2017. Much of what he told me, we had not spoken in depth about before.

*"La Misère"* was a nameless melody in the Emory Cook collection of the Smithsonian, to which I added lyrics. Cook collected songs from The Bocas region of Grenada, which is a town very near my father's birthplace. The song has a half-singing, half-shouting schoolyard call and response. I chose to include the song in order to reflect the richness of this tropical country, my country—to unearth some of its bones for you to look at.

This album is a migration of my mind on a course that extends miles beyond what the heart can see. It is a self-portrait of an artist exploring her past, present, and future. There are visions of pain, of war, and of resentment and anger. But there are also visions of life, of youth, and of plucking oneself out of the muck to look up at the sky.

In the words of author Zadie Smith: "You cannot escape your history any more than you can evade your own shadow." These songs are guides in the confusion of the new world, of family, of the paradoxical loneliness and joy of adult life. It is a collection I am most proud of, released in partnership with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings—a group concerned with the rich and complex expressions of humanity.

Here's to swimming in your own shadow. Listen, groove, and get down.

## 1. NEW COLOSSUS

Kaia Kater, acoustic guitar, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, lap steel; Andrew Ryan, upright bass; Brad Kilpatrick, drums; Lydia Persaud, Meg Contini, Jill Harris, backing vocals

New Colossus teaches us the sacred math  
Stalks the limits of my living room and cuts me clean  
in half  
O time time, the minute hand spins you round the  
plane  
Spins the big machine as it descends again

Every tortured day a praying mantis green  
Every hiss from you a glimpse into the creep  
My limbs would split the wind to fractions of its  
shape  
Split the big machine and leave you there to wait

Chorus  
Speculator in the New Age town  
Spoils the milk and boils the poppy down  
Speculator do you crave a sign  
When New Colossus comes for you  
When New Colossus comes for you

Out the window trees bend down to kiss my thigh  
I multiply and now the earth divides  
You spurn me like a dog but now I double back  
Dragging big machines and steady for attack

When I strike you, I'll hit goddamn everyone  
Like a queen with every hound and every son  
Like girls who hike their skirts up high for greedy  
eyes  
I'm the big machine that runs your acreage dry

Give it to me good  
Backwards for me good  
I'll make a way from no way good

Speculator in the New Age town  
Spoils the milk and boils the poppy down  
Speculator do you long to see

When New Colossus comes for you, when New  
Colossus comes for me  
When New Colossus comes for you, when New  
Colossus comes for me  
When New Colossus comes for you, when New  
Colossus comes for me  
When New Colossus comes for you, when New  
Colossus comes for me

## 2. HEAVENLY TRACK

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel; Andrew Ryan, upright bass; Erin Costelo, organ; Lydia Persaud, Meg Contini, Jill Harris, backing vocals

You got saved at the hair parlor  
Washed in suds and lye  
Broke bread at the halfway house  
Laid out to the side

I know ya, I know ya, ain't I seen you before?  
I've felt you on the ceiling and I've felt you on the floor

Chorus  
Ooh on the heavenly track  
Ooh on the heavenly track  
Ooh on the heavenly track  
To the sun, the sun, the sun

This land is bare as  
the palm of your hand  
Its fingers at the collars  
And the coattails of the damned

You know me, You know me, ain't you seen me before?

I'm the comfort of the stranger  
In the writings on the stall, on the stall

Chorus

You shake the trees and feel the bodies tumble down  
You paint your clothes and hang them on the line  
They beat the city red with bloody siren sounds  
And you're on the ground, you're on the ground

Chorus

### 3. CANYONLAND

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel; Brad Kilpatrick, drums; Andrew Ryan, upright bass; Lydia Persaud, backing vocals

In a freeway trailer the horses flash golden manes  
you puff the vapor and blow it off the window pane  
My heavy braids fall like ropes pulling softly at you  
urging you to look in my direction

The dark-haired dusk flaunts her coral lips at sunset  
you are fussing with the tape deck  
I am teetering, pacing at the edge of you  
mining for a breach in your inflection

Chorus

In the Canyonland of rock  
where the twitching jackal hides  
and the woman takes her time  
takes her time  
In the Canyonland of stone  
you can size me up and run  
Come on, cleave me from your rib  
I'll be gone

There was a time when all I knew was all I wanted  
When every crop was set ablaze  
Like the bird I have turned and pulled you into me  
whistling all the themes to your resentment

Steady baby, steady on the hazard lights  
The lizard crosses on the road  
My broken oath is hanging from the dashboard face  
and you are waiting to reload

Chorus

I see you breaking  
Baby what for?  
Baby what for?  
Maybe for me

I see you breaking  
Baby what for?  
Baby what for?  
Maybe for me

Chorus

### 4. (POWER! POWER! POWER!)

Deno Hurst, narrative interlude



## 5. LA MISÈRE

Kaia Kater, lead vocals; Lydia Persaud, Meg Contini,  
Jill Harris, backing vocals

Comment joue le violon (la misère)  
Avec la voix émue (la misère)  
I know I know you (la misère)  
And I know you know me (la misère)

Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère  
Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère

Avec le pied cassé (la misère)  
Avec la main levée (la misère)  
I know I know you (la misère)  
And I know you know me (la misère)

Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère  
Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère

Comment joue le violon (la misère)  
Avec la voix émue (la misère)  
I know I know you (la misère)  
And I know you know me (la misère)

Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère  
Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère  
Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère  
Je dis pauvre moi ca y'est!  
Oh comme elle est grave la misère

## 6. MERIDIAN GROUND

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel; Brad Kilpatrick, drums; Anna Ruddick, electric bass; Lydia Persaud, Meg Contini, Jill Harris, backing vocals

Away to the east of the isle where the  
median swells and they gut the fish  
The wharfmen sing, and beat the water  
Beat the water so

We watch them shift from the timeworn  
dance to the heated clash  
Our sisters pray to raise us for better men

Chorus

On meridian ground  
The half-breeds and the kids in bloom  
Drain the water from the room  
Fill it up again  
On meridian ground  
The half-breeds and the kids in bloom

My auntie died in a one-room house on the top road  
With the candles cold, and a smile upon her face  
We run inside and place our kites by her bedframe  
She surges higher, the hills and the gullies fall  
We swim out under the ships and flirt with pain like  
a mistress

Like the hemlock blade that bathes in the boiling tea  
What a fool, what a fool can I be

Chorus

Midway through the hour  
We send our blighted tongues to rest  
Twin babies sick and dispossessed

Chorus

On meridian ground  
The half-breeds and the kids in bloom  
Drain the water from the room  
Fill it up again  
On meridian ground  
The half-breeds and the kids in bloom  
Drain the water from the room  
Again, again, again





## 7. STARRY DAY

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel; Anna Ruddick, electric bass; Brad Kilpatrick, drums; Erin Costelo, organ, percussion; Lydia Persaud, backing vocals

And now the final curtain  
Turn your eyes up to the light  
She with venom tongue, moves oceans  
Pulls you out into the fight

And here you lie with belly open  
With the lions round the flame  
Who, with tender jaw unbroken  
Drag you out into the plains

Chorus  
On that Starry Day  
On that Starry Day

Iron melted into ivy  
Take your body to the land  
Pile the small upon the mighty  
Bring the moon down where you stand

Backwards now you dance to freedom  
Lift your gutted lungs and sing  
Break you now into the season  
Lift your gutted lungs and sing

Chorus

You kiss ground and hear it rumble  
You find beauty in the nerve  
See the proud bow to the humble  
And sink their feet into the earth

Backwards now with blade and beacon  
Lift your gutted lungs and sing  
Break you now into the season  
Lift your gutted lungs and sing

Chorus (2x)

## 8. (DEATH OF A DREAM)

Deno Hurst, narrative interlude

## 9. GRENADES

Kaia Kater, lead vocals; Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel; Anna Ruddick, electric bass; Erin Costelo, organ, percussion; Brad Kilpatrick, drums; Lydia Persaud, Meg Contini, Jill harris, backing vocals

Surf the wave now, taste the metal on your tongue  
March the dogs of war into the sun  
Heave and cry out! Lo! The planes, they duck and punch  
Melt the candy clouds and parchment lungs

Chorus

Two seasons invade  
Tremor and sway  
With hands on grenades  
Drive the light from the shade  
Like an orange blockade—  
we always seem to get played  
See the men on parade, see the men on parade

She splits the atom in the night, feel her as she churns  
Sing to her trumpet trees and watch them burn  
Heave and cry out! Call the priestess to the sound  
Pluck the tyrant from the brim and watch him drown

Chorus

Rain heavy like carpet bombs, sweetgrass and lemonade  
Fold the memory into your arms and whisper it away

Chorus

You can shout at the mountain but they've already crowned him  
With his crowds of ten thousand, yeah they've already crowned him  
You can shout and surround him but they've already crowned him  
With his crowds of ten thousand, yeah they've already crowned him  
You can shout at the mountain but they've already crowned him  
With his crowds of ten thousand

## 10. HYDRANTS

Kaia Kater, vocals

Between the hydrant and the house fire  
Above the gardens and cement  
We cede the fight, we call a draw  
And lean ourselves against the fence

Loving is easy, loving is easy  
In a car to the coast  
But tremors come quickly  
To level the streets  
And us, with the end of the world at our feet

We lie in a twin bed, like two small sardines  
And I whisper all of my feverish thoughts  
Then you double over and kiss me with ease  
And we float on like cosmonauts

Loving is easy, loving is easy  
On your way to the earth  
Comets come softly  
To fracture the vale  
And us, with the end of the world at our tail

Six months together and three months apart  
Our cell phones, like two cups, a string and two  
hearts  
Our voices are shaking, and we muddle the words  
I listen outside for the birds

Loving is easy, loving is easy  
On the porches in June  
But winter comes quickly  
To cover the green  
And us, with the end of the world at our feet

In the fortresses of solitude  
I call to you from depths unmined  
You hold me and we get in line  
To drink another day like wine  
You hold me and we get in line  
To drink another day like wine

## 11. EVERLY

Kaia Kater, guitar, lead vocals, backing vocals;  
Christine Bougie, electric guitar, lap steel;  
Andrew Ryan, upright bass; Lydia Persaud, Erin  
Costelo, backing vocals

Everly don't you mock what you feed on  
Take the wings of the morning and fly  
Everly I'm a tiny bough broken  
and drowning up in the sky

Lately I seem to roll on these boulevards  
Sinking into the night  
Rolling on through the iron and ivy  
'Til time out of mind

Chorus

Everly bear me neon fruit  
Let it shine and shine and shine  
The kingdom is flooding and I am too  
Keep me close on the vine  
Keep me close on the vine

I did dream we were pharaoh and bride  
With the bounty laid at our feet  
Everly dream the mango in summer  
And the nightingale down in the deep

Salt mines bleed into fault lines and sting  
Straighten up, uncurl your spine  
Everly mine as I am to you  
'Til time out of mind

When he comes, when he comes for me  
I'll be ripe as the lemon upon the tree  
When he comes when he comes for me  
I'll be free, free

Chorus



## 12. THE RIGHT ONE

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Andrew Ryan, upright bass, vocals

Come to me like you come to the sea  
With bated breath on bended knee  
On that bayou I'll rise above you  
And see the world as you do

Chorus

Let the right one in, Let the right one in  
Take a step back home and breathe in

Take me out with gilded crown  
Tell them all I'm sainted now  
Look me up, look me down  
Run your mouth about me now

Chorus

You're sweet to me, You're sweet and empty  
Oh the quickening feet of mercy  
Come and tell of the violent swell  
And the little ones who raise hell

Chorus

In the bright and sunny east  
I will be released  
I will be released  
I will be released  
I will be released  
I will be released  
I will be released  
Released

## 13. (OFF THE PLANE)

Deno Hurst, narrative interlude

## 14. POETS BE BURIED

Kaia Kater, banjo, lead vocals; Christine Bougie,  
electric guitar, baritone electric guitar;  
Andrew Ryan, upright bass; Andrew Jackson,  
trombone; David Parker, French horn

Chorus

Poets be buried in tender marching feet  
Buried as seeds and watered in the street  
Chained to the fates of strangers facing all defeat  
Poets be buried in tender marching feet

I had a daughter and I taught her all I knew  
Fight in the gutter and love the work you do  
How for to warn her of hatred hiding in the blue  
I had a daughter and I taught her all I knew

I asked my father if this is all there is  
A home that won't claim you, a country that rescinds  
You are your own saint, a center to hold, a life to live  
I asked my father if this is all there is

They built my city on funerary ground  
Raised a parade and marched it through the town  
What is the mind but the sickness of time, it goes  
round and round  
They built my city on funerary ground

These nights alone can grate on a wintry soul  
Sunless migrations that settle every wall  
But I am my own saint, a center to hold, a  
cannonball  
These nights alone can grate on a wintry soul

Chorus

## CREDITS

All songs written by **Kaia Kater** except “La Misère,” lyrics by **Kaia Kater**/traditional melody

Produced by **Erin Costelo**

A & R by **John Smith**

Recorded by **Aaron Goldstein, Baldwin Street Sound**

Mixed by **Thomas Stajcer, New Scotland Yard**

Mastered by **Maria Rice, Peerless Mastering**

Annotated by **Kaia Kater**

Photos and styling by **Raezavel Argulla**

Production manager: **Mary Monseur**

Production Assistant: **Chloe Joyner**

Editorial assistance by **Carla Borden**

Art direction, design, and layout by **Julia Kater**

Management: **Mavens Music**

Smithsonian Folkways is: Madison Bunch, royalty assistant; Cecille Chen, director of business affairs and royalties; Logan Clark, executive assistant; Toby Dodds, director of web and IT; Claudia Foronda, sales, customer relations, and inventory manager; Beshou Gedamu, marketing specialist; Will Griffin, licensing manager; Meredith Holmgren, program manager for education and cultural sustainability; Fred Knittel, marketing specialist; Helen Lindsay, customer service; Mary Monseur, production manager; Jeff Place, curator and senior archivist; Pete Reiniger, sound production supervisor; Huib Schippers, curator and director; Sayem Sharif, director of financial operations; Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist; John Smith, associate director; Sandy Wang, web designer and developer; Brian Zimmerman, fulfillment.

**Thank You: To everyone who helped these songs come alive;  
to my parents;  
to you who are listening and reading.**

Booklet cover photo: *View of Grand Anse beach, taken near Morne Rouge road by Tamara Kater in 1994*  
PP 10-11: *View of the village of Boca, Grenada, taken in 1994 by Tamara Kater*  
*from my grandmother's house in Willis*

**Smithsonian Folkways Recordings** is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In this way, we continue the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding among peoples through the production, documentation, preservation, and dissemination of sound.

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A creative force in her own right, Kaia Kater rises to bold new heights of imagination and creative expression on her third album *Grenades*. With abundant poise and poetry, Kater composes an odyssey about personal identity, memory, and discovery in the wake of her father's journey as a young political refugee. She draws upon her diverse musical influences in Quebec, the Caribbean, and Appalachia, and her bicultural experience as a second-generation Grenadian-Canadian, to envision a new path for herself and her songs.

42 minutes, 20-page booklet with lyrics.

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