

By **Stephanie King**

On first listen, Laura Veirs' [Wide-Eyed, Legless](#) sounds like a pleasant rip-off of Suzanne Vega's [Left of Center](#). But while it shares that song's core melody, it is the striking purity of Veirs' voice and the song's glossy production – the musical equivalent of soothing, medicinal Manuka honey – that recalls Vega most vividly. Because while *Left of Center* is bright and clean in a confrontational way, *Wide-Eyed, Legless* is muted and spectral, but equally beguiling.



The song's barely-there intro of muffled chimes that sound variously like dial tones, UFO signals or hospital equipment gracefully sparks into a keening guitar. This delicate, wailing presence is then offset by a tripping, finger-plucking riff that dreams up a warm but unsettling atmosphere made all the more uncanny by Veirs' crisp vocals.

The song's creeping rhythm recalls journeys and footsteps, but while the main refrain obsessively chants "*no more looking back, looking back, looking back, faded epitaph*", the song is cyclical and claustrophobic, dropping the listener right back where they started. When *Wide-Eyed, Legless*

does open up to strummed guitars and shifts into the major key, the low, brooding strings still lurk in the background. So as Veirs asks a series of archaic, pseudo-romantic questions – "*Will you ever more tie up my hair with velvet bows? Will you ever more pull out the splinters from my toes?*"

– it's little surprise when she flatly denies these possibilities with the abrupt "*I don't think so*"

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But this isn't just another singer-songwriter bemoaning personal heartbreaks. The song's character comes from a fairytale world ("*Will you ever more*" sounds as if it was lifted from the Grimms or Perrault) but sings with a voice so polished as to appear callously detached. This reaches its perfect climax with the lush, seductive repetition of 'lash' in the terrific line "*lying on a star-crossed lover's map, take the beating lash, lash for lash*"

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Coming in at just two minutes, 40 seconds, *Wide-Eyed Legless* is a fleeting, sickly song for the broken-hearted and abandoned. The song could be much longer, a great epic folktale, but inevitably it would always return to the same insidious refrain, trapped within itself.

Song of the Week: Wide-Eyed, Legless - Laura Veirs

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Wide-Eyed, Legless *appears on Laura Veirs' seventh album, [July Flame](#) , released on 12th January 2010.*

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