

FROM WHERE YOU'RE SITTING

Are you watching my life?
Are you taking it in?
Is it tough keeping track
of my ups and my downs
And the places I've been
From where you're sitting
it all must be so clear
Where I should go from here.

Are you wondering why
I refuse to give up
And give in to the pressure
of keeping a smile on
When life gets too rough
From where you're sitting
it must be easy to see
Except that you're not me

I'm the one who's working on a dream
And it won't go away
And I'm the one who knows what it can cost
It's a price I'm willing to pay

So stop shaking your heads
and saying a prayer
Yes, I know the odds aren't looking so hot,
but guess what I don't care
From where you're sitting
It may look like I'll fail
And though I can't say
I've got the world by the tail
I'm not quitting this crazy marathon
I know just where I'm going
I'm going on.

Lyrics by Eileen Valentino
Music by Lanny Meyers
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The Story Behind the Song...

Back in the day when I had a band and we traveled around playing 'gigs' I occasionally accepted bookings in Elko Nevada, a little town halfway between Salt Lake City and Reno, NV. Elko's in the middle of nowhere -- or as my mom used to say, "Out where God lost his shoes." One horrific time still lives in my memory: the agent had lied to us about what we were

being paid, the back-up singers were fighting, and two of my band members - tired of it all - gave two-week notice. To top it off, I lost my voice.

One night, after croaking my way through three shows, I was back in my room feeling about as low as low can be. Suddenly an image appeared before me: my family and friends – all the people who love me – standing in a row looking down on me. And they were saying,

“EILEE-EEN. You’re 36 years old and you’re in a band in Elko, Nevada! What are you doing with your life?!?!?”

I had no answer to that question. But writing a poem – and then a song - helped me find it. First the poem:

GIVING UP

*It’s easy to give up
People do it every day
It takes no effort,
Almost happens by itself.
And all around, it seems
Circumstances conspire against you,
Making it so tempting to
Relax all defenses,
Throw in the towel
In short – give up.
The battle is uphill
Momentary doubts
Make you lose your footing
And slide backwards.
But if you keep your purpose
Firmly in your heart
Nothing can stop you
And you find
Upon reaching the top
That the air
Is exhilarating
Up there.*

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By the time I got to the last line of this poem, I felt better and ready to go to sleep and get up the next morning to face everything. I sent a copy of it to my sister, Tarie and didn’t think much more about it.

A year later, I was visiting Tarie and she invited me to go to an awards ceremony at a big hotel where she

and her sales team for a skin care company were being honored. At the end of the evening, the top award went to a woman who had broken all sales records and who had been invited to speak about how she had done it. She didn't look like the typical sales star: she was an overweight, rather plain young woman who spoke so softly we had to strain to hear her. She delivered some tips she said had helped her top the sales charts and then ended by saying this: "Here is the real secret of my success. I get up every day and read something I've posted on my refrigerator." And she proceeded to read *Giving Up*, the poem I'd written.

I was astonished to think that something I'd written had made its way to a stranger and helped her the way it had helped me.

Fast forward to New York City 5 years later. I hadn't forgotten this poem and had been trying – and failing – to make a song out of it. I still remember where I was when the song finally started happening: I was riding the cross-town bus on 79th Street, heading west and looking out the window. We had just gone through the Park and I thought to myself, "Scrap the poem. Eileen. Put yourself back into that motel room with everything that was happening, and start over." I pictured myself on that bed... how I was feeling... pictured all the people in my life standing there, judging me... and the line, "Are you watching my life" came to me. And a song was born.