

IN THE HEARD OF A SONG
"NOBODY KNOWS" VS. "IRIS"

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A lot of heart and soul goes into writing a song. Song writers often write about heartache, breakups, romance, etc. They write about who they love, who they want, or even how much they love someone. When two songs are about keeping love a secret. Even though they appear to be quite different, "Iris" by the Goo Goo Dolls and "Nobody Knows" by Tony Rich are both about being in love with a friend.

"Nobody Knows" describes a guy being in love with someone, but he can't tell that person. He had a chance to get with the girl, but he didn't tell her how he really felt and she found someone else. Iris tells us how this guy is madly in love with this girl. He loves spending every moment with her. However, unlike "Nobody Knows," he finally tells her, but he doesn't want anyone else to know. Both songs are about keeping love a secret, but one tells his lover and the other one doesn't.

In "Nobody Knows," the guy is very depressed. The lines "The nights are lonely, the days are so sad and I just keep thinking about the love that we had" clearly state that he is depressed over losing her. He regrets not telling her, and now he doesn't know how to tell her. He can't describe to her the love he has for her. He misses being with her. He is pointing out that he is wallowing in self-pity and no one knows it but him. What he really needs is someone to talk to. Keeping these emotions in like that will eat away at him. He says "I'm dying/crying inside." This is a direct indication into how much it is affecting him. The "walls are closing in more everyday."

Contrary to "Nobody Knows," the guy in "Iris" is happy. He tells us he is happy when he says, "I am the closest to heaven that I'll ever be." He's spending time with the girl he loves, however, she doesn't know he's that into her: "I don't want the world to see me because I don't think that they'd understand." He doesn't want anyone to know about him loving her. It is perceivable that loving the girl may be a sin. There is no clear indication why he doesn't want anyone to know. He could be someone who is not suppose to become romantically involved, like a priest. He is scared about what people might think or even what may happen to him. Even though he is totally in love with this girl, he can't get too close because of fear of being ridiculed. He goes on to say "When everything's made to be broken, I just want you to know who I am." This line is difficult to translate, but what it is saying is that if something happens, he just wants her to know it is because he loves her. He wants only her to know.

Both guys in both songs are hiding something. In "Nobody Knows," the guy says he smiles even when he is sad and he puts on a show. In Iris, the guy tells us that he doesn't want anyone to know other than the girl. The guy in Iris wants to keep the girl his mistress in this illegitimate atmosphere. In comparison, both guys are hiding something, and not just love. In "Nobody Knows," he says, "Why didn't I say, the things I needed to say." The question that should come to mind is what things does he need to say? In "Iris" there is a similar statement.: "I don't want the world to see me..." What doesn't he want the world to see? These two songs tell a story, but not the whole story. Are these two heart breakers or the broken hearted? Poetry gets much more complicated once the hidden meanings are uncovered.

Even though both songs differ greatly, we find out that the two guys telling the story are both in love. They both want everything, but are not willing to risk the consequences. In "Nobody Knows," the guy was too scared to tell the girl, meanwhile the guy in "Iris" was too scared to tell anyone else. They know what they want, however, they know they cannot have it all; "They can't have their cake and eat

it too.” It’s amazing what love can do to a man. Both are so confused they do not know how to confront their fear, which is someone finding out they are in love with these girls. At the end of Nobody Knows, the guy finally tells the girl how he feels. One could only speculate on what will happen next. In Iris, the guy never tells anyone else. Only his lover knows he loves her. In the end, he keeps his ultimate secret, her.