

James McMurtry, Ruby And Carlos

Ruby said you're gettin' us in a world of hurt
And down below the Mason Dumb Ass line the food gets worse
I can't go back to Tennessee That NASCAR country's not for me
Go on if you think you must

Carlos packed his drums up in the dark of night
Ruby standing just outside the front porch light
Chain-smoking Camel straights
The sky off to the East got grey
And he rolled off in a cloud of dust

The grey colt nickered at the gate
She said "you're right it's gettin' late
You and me got work to do
We can't be burning daylight too"
She took down the long lead rope
And stayed off that slippery slope

The aspen trees were turning gold up top
The talk was buzzing round the beauty shop
"Wasn't he barely half her age?"
"Well that's just how they do nowadays
We should all a'been so lucky"

By spring she'd had the run of all the freeborn men
Ruby turned fifty in a sheep camp tent
Her body still could rock all night
But her heart was closed and locked up tight
Potato fields all muddy and brown
The gossip long since quieted down

After one more Coggins test
Pouring coffee for the county vet

Pictures on the ice box door
Of Carlos in the first Gulf War
Black eyed, brown and youthful face
Smiling back from a Saudi base

Then Carlos on the big bay mare
Heavier now and longer haired
Looking past the saddle shed
From way on back inside his head

The old vet said one day Rube
That colt will break an egg in you
Now and then one comes along
You just can't ride then he went on home

The storm door didn't catch
It blew back hard As she struck a match
But she cupped it just in time
Then she sent that ash tray flying(

CHORUS)
Holding back the flood
Just don't do no good
You can't unclench your teeth
To howl the way you should
So you curl your lips around
The taste of tears and a hollow sound
That no one owns but you
No one owns but you

Carlos took the road gig and he saw it through
He rode the tour bus while the singer flew
Managed out of Music Row
Carlos never saw the studio
Session guys had that all sewn up

He looks out the window as it starts to sleet
Layin on a friend's couch on Nevada Street
Lately he's been staying high
Sick all winter and they don't know why
They don't know why or they just won't say
They don't talk much down at the VA

Ruby's in his thoughts sometimes
What thoughts can get out past the wine
He feels her fingers on his brow
And right then he misses how
She looked in that grey morning light
She never shaved like they all do now
He sees it all behind his eyes
His hands go searching but they come up dry

Halfway in that waking dream
Carlos lets the land line ring

He'd never have guessed it was Ruby calling
A pin in her hip from the grey colt falling
Figure eights in a lazy lope
Stumbled on that slippery slope

(Chorus x1)