

Ruby and Carlos

James McMurtry

Ruby said you getting a sin of world of hurt
Down below the mason dumb ass lined 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 darken 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 In a grey coat nicard at the gate, she said,
"You're right it's getting late
You and me got work to do
We can't be burning day light too She took down the long laid rope
And stayed off that slippery slope
Now 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 how they do nowadays
We should have all been so lucky By spring she had the run of the free born men
Ruby turned 50 in a sheep camp tent
Her body still could rock all night
But her heart was closed and locked up tight But Teddy feels all muddy and brown
The gossip long such quieted down
After one more Cogans test
Pouring coffee for the county vet Pictures on the ice box door
Carlos in the first gulf war
Black eyed brown and youthful face
Smiling back from a Saudi base Then Carlos on the big bay mere
Heavier now and longer haired
Looking past the saddle shed
From way back on inside his head And the whole vet said one day Rub
that cold will break an egg in you
Now and then one comes along
You just can't write and he went on home And the storm bird didn't catch
And blew back hard as she struck a match
But she cupped it just in time
And she sent that ashtray flying You holding back the flood
It 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 the hallow sound
And 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 a music road,
Carlos never saw the studio
The session guys had that all sewn up He looked out the window
And it starts to sleet
Laying on a friends couch on Nevada street
Lately he's been staying high
Sick all winter and don't know why
They Don't know why or won't say
They don't talk much down on the V.A And Ruby's in his thoughts some times
What thoughts can get out past the wine
He feels his fingers on his brow
And right then he misses how
How she looked in that grey morning light She never shaved like they all do now
He sees it all behind his eyes
And his hands go searching but they come out dry Half way in that waken dream
Carlos let's the land line ring He'd never guess it was Ruby calling
A pen in her hip from the grey coat falling
Figure eights and a lazy loop
Stumbled on that lazy slope Holding back the flood
It 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 the hallow sound
And no one owns but you
No one owns but you

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