



Fire in the Garden  
*selected lyrics*

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*Argotist Ebooks*

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Argotist Ebooks

# Fire in the Garden

## Introduction

When Jeffery Side asked me to submit a selection of song lyrics for an eBook I didn't know where to start. How, from hundreds of songs, does one select a few that would read well on the page?

Although I have always thought of myself as a poet first, one of the forms I work in frequently is contemporary song. The function of song, however, is always musical. What works well as music, including informal colloquialisms, often sound awkward when read as a poem without melody or accompaniment.

Finally, out of frustration, I searched through all the lyrics I had on computer. This narrowed the search considerably since I always write by hand first. Many song lyrics never needed to be typed for publication. They remain in notebooks and are published as CDs and digital albums online.

From that remainder I chose lyrics that seemed to read well enough as poetry. I also included a few lyrics that might not meet that standard, but are among the favorites for those most familiar with my music.

I encourage readers to take the time to follow the links at the end of the book to videos and audio recordings of some of the songs. This will allow them to hear the songs as they were originally intended. The videos directed by Chris Mansel in particular seem to work best because Chris gives us something fascinating to watch that illuminates rather than illustrates the song.

I want to thank Jeffrey for publishing this eBook. It is an honor to have another title in the extensive library of contemporary poetry and other writing published by the Argotist over the last several years.

## **Garden House**

(from the album *Mystery Songs*)

Nightingale  
solitude  
paper wings on the floor  
A chifferobe  
in an empty room,  
skeleton key by the door

The only one  
who would refuse  
heaven's sweet repose  
for a life to spend  
in a garden house  
in the clothes creation wore

Diaphanous blue  
in late afternoon  
lipstick on the glass  
Lilies woven into her dress,  
a season out of the past

Everything  
in your garden house  
brought for the stars to view  
sing on night angel  
nothing is concealed from you

## **The Long Decline**

(from the album *Mystery Songs*)

Horses drag a wagon up a dry creek bed  
The wheels are gone, the driver is dead  
His hands are still clutching the whip,  
    his eyes rolled back to see his soul's ascent  
Throw the gates open, let the stranger in

A black cloud looms over a spent iron ore mine  
The rocks above the yellow sky behind  
A coal fired train on a rusty bridge  
    crumbling off the mountainside  
After the dream comes the long decline

Slip out of heaven in the middle of the night  
    with a sack full of treasures the pretty girls like  
    & books that were written double-tongued in black fire  
burning in the nerves, singing in the wires

Making her face by kerosene light,  
    crimson rose and ghostly white  
Supper on the table, iced tea and a prayer,  
    his old wool suit hanging on his chair  
Down the long decline with dust in her hair

## **Roots in a Basket**

(from the album *Naked as Rain and the Animal Beneath*)

Roots in a basket  
thorns in her hair  
I'm watching her walk across the fields  
from my easy chair

Pale violets on a soft pink dress  
even the birds and beasts  
come around to watch her pass

What she weaves is revelation  
When she breathes she intoxicates  
She's a habit grown from the wilderness  
impossible to break

You can be long asleep  
in the roots of the trees  
twisting and turning  
in the black earth beneath

She's there to offer  
while your sisters weep  
liquor made from forbidden fruit  
only the dead can drink

I'm robbed from my grave  
laid in a broken room  
staring at the cracks in the roof  
watching the light pour through

Nine men dressed in black  
Eighteen white-gloved hands  
carry candles down the aisle  
and circle around the man

A white fleece spread on a red pine box  
Twelve cypress branches pointed east  
A hole in the ground where the seed goes down  
a table set for the feast

I study her face  
through the window pane  
She's staring back from the other side  
naked as rain



tapping her ring  
against the cup in her hand  
Her eyes holding nothing but  
the shapes of her dreams  
and where they ran

They suffered, wept, and climbed aboard the Sunday train  
I can still smell the honeysuckle blooming to this day

Roots in a basket  
thorns in her hair  
I'm watching her walk across the fields  
from my easy chair

## Gathering

(from the album *Naked as Rain and the Animal Beneath*)

I fell out of the silence  
broken by a scream  
Riders in the west Sudan  
drive their horses  
through an open hole in a world  
torn apart at the seams

Bad medicine and chemicals  
flow down Olduavi gorge  
through the bones of a strange new ape  
that swung down from the trees  
stood up and swept across the Serengeti plains

A 12 year old shoulders his gun  
and peddles stolen first world junk  
in the shanty towns of Nairobi and Rio  
An accountant charts the profits  
from a comfortable leather chair  
with a pristine view of the empire city below

And the birds of prey  
the hungry at the gates  
the shadows at the door are gathering

Appalachia collapses 200 feet below  
Who calculates the price  
of black lung, slag, potash, oil and coal?

Half a mile down looking for an easy fix  
drive a needle through the ocean floor  
to keep the grotesque engine of capital  
headed for the ditch

And the high priest of New Amsterdam  
makes a midnight call to the capital  
to rearrange the bodies in Babylon  
where the streets are ruled by cold blue steel  
and bells clang to the grinding gears  
that rewrite the tables on Mount Zion

And the birds of prey  
the hungry at the gates  
the shadows at the door are gathering

Late night shortwave white subversion  
No access government under construction  
Satellite secrets in the microscope distance  
Vox populi static equals no resistance  
Crucifix paradise in business cycles  
defending the faith with tanks and rifles  
Wash your face boy, clean your hands,  
all fingers and teeth are full of Texas jam  
It's the monkey trial in a military court  
trading the kingdom for a Trojan horse  
There's chaos on the western steppes  
where the tribal wars began  
and an old woman's creation tales  
became the story of a single god  
behind the gilded face of a jealous man

Caves full of mortar rounds  
rattled by the prayers  
of the theater of politics  
lit by faces in secret places  
that uncoil tracers in the desert air

The wound turns like a wheel  
where CEOs feed the Eucharist  
to true believers rising from the rank and file  
The drug may change, but the mark's the same  
from ziggurats to department stores  
you're guaranteed service with a smile

And the birds of prey  
the hungry at the gates  
the shadows at the door are gathering

## **Ash on the Roses**

(from the album *Naked as Rain and the Animal Beneath*)

I went out before sunrise and the air burned my nose  
I couldn't breathe, I'm gonna put on my wings  
and pack my traveling clothes  
fly above the ether and never touch down  
until I forget and get lonely again  
for the weight of the ground

I saw you in a movie with your make-up on  
When I saw you again you were naked as rain  
you were almost gone  
All these pictures that run around in your head  
won't be released for public review  
until after your dead

Ash on the roses, blood at the roots  
gray dust on the ruins, rain in your shoes  
Ash on the roses, the faces unreal  
till the roses bloom

Oh Cassandra, no one hears what you say  
They drug you out beneath the cruel stars  
and Mars had his day  
but the victims of war and devastation  
will slip easy again into their homemade skin  
in the great recreation

A cross on your forehead, milk on the stone  
You're crammed so close all these dead stares  
feel like your own  
So you claw your way up the mountain  
to hear the mountain speak  
but it won't mean a thing till you lay down with your love  
and hear the sound of her dreams

Ash on the roses, blood at the roots,  
a darkness so thick you can't see the country you're traveling through  
Ash on the roses shaken away  
when they tremble and bloom

The desert is empty and cluttered with stones  
of the tower of heaven left by the confused who went babbling on  
You don't get there by struggle, by faith or by plan  
you just keep moving till your bones find their rest  
in the cold desert sand

She could have been anyone, but she looked like Saint Anne  
that showed me the door and dropped a vial of blood in my hand  
And the room inside was as big as they sky  
I'm still there and I don't care if I never come back

Ash on the roses, light at the roots  
A conquering wind driving the moon  
Ash on the roses blown away  
as the roses bloom

## **An Animal Beneath Her Skin**

(from the album *Naked as Rain and the Animal Beneath*)

She wants an animal beneath her skin  
She wants room and board and a window on the eastern wind  
a quiet place to rest until her wings and claws are healed again  
to lean against her bedroom wall  
until she recalls the song of how it all began  
She wants an animal beneath her skin

She wants to break the city down  
brick by brick and scatter it across the desert sand  
feed the market to the crows and hounds  
and bind the moneychangers hands  
break the roots of the killing tree and cast  
the table of the elements to the free radicals again  
She wants an animal beneath her skin

He wants to leave the forest chemistry behind  
slip the rain of shattered stars in the failing light  
slip the ancient ancestry barking from their headless stones  
He wants to dance among their bones  
and all the years of mangled wire the dance of death alone unwinds  
He wants to leave the forest chemistry behind

He wants to leave the forest chemistry behind  
So he strips the day's machine and rebuilds it for a long dark ride  
where the interstate dissolves in dreams  
he can fold and slip up his sleeve  
and drop into an inside straight,  
collect the muses fate and get out clean  
He wants to leave the forest chemistry behind

She wants an animal beneath her skin  
She's worked graveyard until the sunlight hurt  
and every curtain seemed too thin  
Somewhere beneath the basement door  
without form and void and a trail of blood along the forest floor  
She's waiting for the beat-up world to start again  
She wants an animal beneath her skin

## **Dead Swimmers**

(from the album *Liminal Blue*)

The skies are so empty  
they drink dead swimmers  
Forgive your redeemer for imposing his slaves  
40 hard hours for criminal wages  
who's to blame them  
if they return from the grave

A game of chess  
the red stones whisper  
You slip past the guards at Absalom's gate  
Don't follow me down the philosopher's well  
You'll find me mumbling, tumbling,  
turning through pages  
or weeping for mercy on the horse's neck

I stare all night into a city of rivers  
their waters are crowded with invisible shapes  
Forgive your redeemer if he drinks dead swimmers  
who's to blame  
if they return from the graves

## **Another Man's Blues**

(from the album *Liminal Blue*)

Something went wrong in the course of the stars  
An enemy wind tore the sky apart  
I feel the serpent move around beneath my feet  
Time fell out of joint into that secret life  
we hide in our heads so hypnotized  
by the struggle to weave the lies that make ends meet

There's someone on the other side of that door  
I can see his shadow pacing the floor  
Maybe that's me waiting to make my move  
and slip into another man's blues

Teddy stood astride the Great Divide  
while a gospel choir sang the glory road rag  
and God's city on a hill turned dollars neon red  
A mushroom cloud in Los Alamos  
The Brits crashed and burned, the books were closed  
call the accountants in to clean up the mess

In an ammo box left back at the farm  
photos of soldiers standing arm in arm  
Maybe one of them was me for all I knew  
lost in another man's blues

The killing fields don't matter now  
Black cars in a line through the center of town  
shake the dust and ash off your feet  
All us AMA junkies standing in line  
at the golden calf of pharmaceutical science  
The advertisement is complete

I used to talk a little too fast  
a little too wired, now the world's gone flat  
and I can't find a face in the mirror I can use  
This must be another man's blues



## **Fire In The Garden**

(from the album *Liminal Blue*)

There's fire in the garden of the Palatine  
The oracle cannot speak  
Her eyes are painted with Egyptian coal  
and deliver nothing but tears  
There's fire in the garden and the river is dry  
with drought for a thousand years  
Turn the stones and measure the days  
lost in the Palatine hills

There's fire in the garden of Jefferson  
His hands shake on the rail  
The senate chamber is filled with smoke  
broadcast around the world  
There's fire in the garden and Hamilton  
dies beneath the Brooklyn bridge  
The rebel son is sacrificed  
by the men that made him rich

There's fire in the garden of Abraham  
Open the charnel house door  
Ishmael is thrown to the wolves  
on the market of perpetual war  
There's fire in the garden and the red clay boils  
in the burning Georgia sun  
No woman or man ever grew from the grave  
as free as the day is long

## **So Many Birds**

(from the album *Liminal Blue*)

Blind priest stumbling on the railroad tracks  
with a wet knife in his hand  
Sirens singing in the grain,  
young woman in an ambulance  
crying in a fit of rage, waving a cross  
at a mother she'll never see

So many birds they erase the sky  
Too many soldiers on the road tonight  
don't let the weight of their fate chase you down

I was praying for Delilah,  
praying for Salome  
I was praying for Judith  
when she took Holoferne's head  
swinging it through the streets of town  
where the prophets drop and gather at her feet

Who put the poison in the old man's rye?  
Who set the mansion on the hill on fire  
and let it burn all night long?

The madam took her fiddle out  
from its dusty cabinet  
and played a song in a key so low  
only the dead could hear  
The wilderness can drive you mad  
There's no shelter from the evil your nature breeds

Too long smothering in metal air,  
cry out against the night into the nightmare's mane  
ride on, ride on until you disappear  
ride on until you disappear even from yourself

## **Some Other Time**

(from the album *Strange Parlors*)

South California, late World War II,  
Duke on the jukebox, that indigo mood  
I remember your gown, sea green, embroidered with lace  
You could have been Aphrodite in that nowhere place  
I'd almost disappeared into your eyes...  
We could have danced till broad daylight

I step out my front door in the middle of the night  
The details come through strange in the rain and flashlights  
There's a wreck on the road, glass and blood on the ground  
There's a radio on, static sputtering out  
Ambulance, cops, and bags in a line  
but you slipped my grasp into some other time

I head back into town for a night with a girl  
that'll do nothing but talk and fondle her dollar store pearls  
and say something like, as I slip her my money,  
"Of all them country boys, you're the best one honey."  
Another face in the crowd, another body downstream  
I lost my head at the scene of the crime  
I lost the thread into some other time

She switched me with branches on my soldier's sad face  
where the names of her desires are written to this day  
Now she's long underground and I watch as her memory fades  
The bodies retreat and return in an old man's haze  
they're like porcelain dolls in the stories I tell  
I lost my head at the scene of the crime  
I lost the thread into some other time

"My soul has grown deep like the rivers," he said.  
And Langston Hughes, in my way, I think I understand  
how the works of your days settle deep in your mind  
and you just let them slip into some other time...  
I seem to recall I had a fish on the line,  
but like I said, that was some other time

South California, late World War II  
Duke on the jukebox, that indigo mood... that was some other time

## **Swans Migrating \***

(from the album *Strange Parlors*)

It's my soul running loose in the landscape makes me dark this way  
I leave a distant trace  
I keep changing shape  
Can't find a bed, a rock or a seed to rest in  
Maybe this road where the tall grass grows  
through the asphalt breaks

I know every devil has his day  
I've seen him pass along this way  
Maybe this tall, twisted oak, branches hanging  
Maybe these swans migrating

There were roots, I remember them well,  
down in the deep black earth  
beneath the red clay  
You can read their shapes  
But there's always a wind and my eyes won't stop  
seizing at the world  
I keep changing shape  
I leave a distant trace

Give the devil his day  
I've seen him pass along this way  
Maybe this old car abandoned on the highway  
Maybe these swans migrating

Maybe the garter snake at my feet half awake  
Oh, it's only my soul loose in the landscape  
Spring's coming on deep enough green  
to call out the men and their noisy machines

Let the devil have his day  
I've seen him pass by my way  
Maybe a storm rushing through the fresh leaves  
Maybe these swans migrating

There is no place to lock sorrow away  
It just runs underground to its natural decay  
It leaves a distant trace  
The houses that sit on the hills facing west  
catch the pale yellow sun fading away in dark rooms and shade

I know the devil has his day  
He's free to pass by this way

deep as a heart beneath cold ribs breaking  
but maybe these swans migrating

\* the title comes from a movement in the composition *Cantus Arcticus*  
by Einojuhani Rautavaara

## **Vanities**

(from the album *Strange Parlors*)

They kept her carefully preserved from youth  
with the finest clothes and most precious jewels  
a rose on her pillow every morning  
with the thorns removed  
Kept in a jar hidden against the day  
she'd shed her clothes and stand naked in the truth  
It all comes down to a single motion that takes your breath away

Vanity of vanities the preacher said  
and she believed every word  
Vanity of vanities  
she swallowed each day her daily thorns  
until the day before her birth

I throw the sheets back off my bed each day  
and take my morning pill  
to keep the family ghosts securely at bay  
beyond my window sill  
I'd offer them protection,  
but it's more than they deserve  
for shrouding me in a nest of lies  
against the secrets of my blood

Vanity of vanities,  
I heard the preacher say  
Vanity of vanities  
It all comes down to a single motion  
that takes your breath away

I waited for you in the churchyard for days  
writing my confessions on your prayer book pages  
Every raging storm, every night in stranger's bed,  
every relic desecrated  
And the rain falls and the churchyard disappears  
and broken in this empty world  
I can't hold back the tears  
for shrouding me in a nest of lies  
against the secrets of my blood

Vanity of vanities,  
I still hear the preacher say  
Vanity of vanities,  
It all comes down to a single motion  
that takes your breath away

## Starlings

(from the album *Wilderness and Grace*)

Smoke out the starlings  
woven in the grain  
pouring from the graves  
out across the plains  
Pack up your mirrors, darling  
in a box of leaves  
There's language written on your face  
you don't want to read

Strangers in a world of asphalt, wire and steel  
Where do you go when you have no natural home?  
They tear at the eaves with beaks and claws until  
they claim a place in the roof for their own

The banker's men in cashmere coats  
track children in the streets  
Clean your gun my brother  
They may be asking you to bleed  
She trembles on the edge  
of the precipice and waits  
for the heavy brush of wings  
and a vision of the gate

The starlings wear strange constellations  
on a dark feathered sky  
Their song for mercy is laced with pain  
leaking from a mother's lullaby

Does a slaughtered lamb in spring  
somehow release the wheel  
and wash away a year of days  
that nailed the nightmares in?  
It's no different from the leaves  
that release the summer sun  
in the color of their leaves  
until they fall one by one

The starlings rise and make a cloud  
that twists and drives and turns  
no different from God's black fire  
on the pages in the letters where it burns

## November

(from the album *Wilderness and Grace*)

There's a ram in the thicket  
and a boy on the altar  
and voices in the storm argue  
which one should be slaughtered  
There's traffic out on the freeway  
locked up in the freezing cold  
and rifles up in the hills  
aimed at the village below

There's a cardinal in the maple tree  
singing for the thaw  
and a man with a knife standing at the door  
whose threshold is the law

November, November  
trembles like a woman  
dying in her bed  
while Orion rages across the sky  
with a bullet in his chest  
November, November

Gray doves are gathering  
in the light where evening fell  
and a cat on the window sill  
is falling back into herself  
Roots go clawing underground  
burning for the heart  
where the skulls of some forgotten race  
are barking out their poison art

Rain pours down the gutter  
The straw man crumbles in the great dissolve  
shakes off his coat and falls asleep,  
dreams his dust in muslin cloth

November, November  
November goes out weeping  
down into the day  
I'll see you across the river  
was all she had to say  
and walked away into the dark  
November, November



## **Dead Man Sleeping**

(from the album *Wilderness and Grace*)

Dead Man hanging on a picket fence  
staring at the cars going by  
Sun going down on the house where he lived  
A hoot owl calls through the holes in his eyes

The door left open on a old black Ford,  
white dress on the front seat  
stained with blood like the band of gold  
tied with a sash to the wheel for the wind to beat

The sleeper rises when he hears the voice  
of his sister weeping in the dark  
The film slips away like a hidden skin  
Open your eyes and release the cold dead stars

Weather beaten shutters slap against the cracked boards  
The sheriff in the front porch swing  
turning pages in a book written in a hand  
no one left alive knows how to read

He asked among the neighbors and kin  
and everyone that knew him well  
No one could explain the hard events  
It was as if the day had cracked and left its shell

Some old murder returns to the holy ground  
stained with bitter rage  
sets fire in a heart like a devil in the dark  
can make a man choose the worst part of his fate

Two bullet casings and a trail of boot prints  
at the edge of long rows of corn  
Standing brown and dry they testify  
with a rustling sigh where secrets hide to take their form

Thirteen teeth cut out of his head  
were delivered in the mail  
No post mark, just a note that read  
“Greetings sheriff, from your friends in the south of hell.”

The driver cursed and climbed aboard  
and threw the engine in gear  
A cache of bones in the baggage car  
older than the moons that mark the years

In the evening when night pours down  
and dew settles in the grass  
a horse and rider cross a stream  
running back to where they settle into the past

Banshees on the railroad tracks  
Sirens in the grain  
A girl stumbling round in the sycamore trees  
out of her mind, screaming at the thunder and rain

The sleeper came up out of the pit  
when his maker called his name  
The film slips away like a hidden skin  
again and again until nothing but faith remains

## **Sweet Misery**

(from the Bare Knuckles album *Trouble In Your House*)

I fell asleep in Eden  
beaten and left for dead  
Woke up in the valley of sorrows  
with a price on my head

It's a sad, sad world we're living in  
like lover's torn apart  
seduced away by the criminal kiss  
out into the dark

I went searching for the sacred rose  
Only came back with he thorns  
got caught with blood stains on my hands  
when Gabriel blew his horn

We all do time this side of the line  
No sinner rides for free  
The flames of love are a consuming fire  
But oh, what a sweet misery

I'm crawling from the ashes  
of a young man's wasted dreams  
I wept to see the sunrise  
I cursed the earth beneath my feet

To find the gates of paradise  
you must be nailed upon a tree  
The flames of lover are a consuming fire  
but oh, what a sweet misery

## **Death Is a Woman**

(from the album *Roses on the Threshold*)

She passed out in a laundry mat  
reading a letter from a Birmingham jail  
Woke up in a photograph  
hanging on the wall of the St. James Hotel  
I was looking out across the river  
from the backseat of her cadillac  
wondering if I ever really knew her  
while Hank Williams sang "I Saw The Light"

Death is a woman  
down here in the well  
where pain is a virtue  
no tongue can tell

Penelope removes her scarlet robes  
sheds her slip and sheds her skin  
vanishes into her radio  
where angels dance on needles and pins  
She said "Money talks, but talk is cheap.  
So put away your wallet and shut your mouth.  
I've been down in the bin  
with those dirty railroad men,  
seen murder walking through the brakeman's house."

Death is a woman  
the queen of paradise  
when everything else has  
been thrown to the fire

Our lady of Guadalupe  
can you help me please?  
I got 13 nickels and a pawn shop pistol  
for to write my tragedy  
I cut a deal with a faithless man  
with scars on his wrists and eyes like iron  
He took the throne in old Byzantium,  
traded a crown for Cain's barbed wire

Death is a woman  
waking into the mist  
with the taste of surrender  
left on your lips

I carried your body back into the trees  
wrapped in a blanket of Chinese silk  
I buried your relics beneath my tracks in the leaves  
and watched your shadow disappear in the hills  
I don't care if the sun don't shine  
I don't care if the moon don't rise  
as long as I can sit right here  
and drink the sorrow of your dying tears

Death is a woman  
on the bed you made  
where every promise is broken  
in a state of grace

Death is a woman  
at the end of the day  
Death is a woman  
walking away

## **From a String of Pearls**

(from the album *Shadow Resolve*)

There's a howling wind in Babylon  
rising from the bones of fallen kings  
and it turns the screws on Jersey Avenue  
till you can hear the lawyers scream  
Star crossed lovers by second nature  
set the four horsemen to run  
through prophecies of failure  
that reside in a loaded gun

And it turns the plow  
thorough hollowed ground  
where bodies fall like leaves  
without a sound

Mary undoes her perfumed hair  
and dries the master's wounded feet  
to hide the swans of Avalon  
from the Pentateuch's retreat  
In caves of the antlered dancer  
where Broadway meets divine  
I clipped your robes to save your soul  
when you hated your own life

And it turns to tears  
in an offered sun  
and the murdered sow  
of abomination

Oh, can you feel the wind  
tear the scars from your face?  
Oh, can you taste the sin  
dragging you back to that empty place?

I keep my books of formation  
in a bucket of Nazarite blood  
through hours of prostration  
and a voice that falls in floods  
And I know I'll never be redeemed  
but I keep faith with the signs  
that rise from these towers walls  
beneath a dark and threatening sky

And it turns the gears  
that drive the world,

tears a savior's heart  
from a strong of pearls

## **Lightning Scars**

(from the album *Shadow Resolve*)

Open your Bible and take your pill  
Wipe the crimes from your window sill  
Sweep away the storms  
that blow across your face  
Another day with the same old lies  
A confident grin and roving eyes  
They say there's one born every minute  
and that suits you fine

Forget your faithless evidence  
the season has changed  
tooth and claw and avarice are the code  
The past is gone, the spell is cast,  
nothing remains  
Set your satellite for overload

Mary Magdalene with your perfect smile,  
blonde Mercedes on a Jericho mile  
strung out with your crucifix, catholic style  
You're Blanche Dubois on broken glass,  
Madame Butterfly when your fantasies crash,  
Carmen with a backbeat  
in a backseat cage

Beneath the skin you're crawling in  
beneath the fear in your veins  
a generation's tears have turned to rust  
Illusion barks from a righteous box  
no religion can tame  
The siren's song comes on like a hurricane

Dewey eyed, I collapse in bliss  
murdered by a stolen kiss,  
lightening scars on my fingertips  
Genevieve where have you been?  
"I've been to the inferno and come back again  
strung out on a tree  
fed to the crows and wind."

That black sun rises like a heart attack  
exploding all night  
a better light to read the scars on your back  
You must speak a translucent tongue  
when the world comes undone



Or they'll find you in the morning  
stretched across the tracks

I got lightning scars  
from standing in the flames  
I saw faces and everything changed  
Innocence lost is wisdom's pain

I got lightning scars  
for the sins of my youth  
I went down to demand the truth  
from devils who stood stone silent  
'til I waked away

I climb the tower  
I watch and wait  
for lightning to strike  
Salvation in the dark does not come cheap  
I've seen your children crushed at the gate  
with the void in their eyes  
curled up in the storm fast asleep

Another day  
another turn of the gears  
another beggar for a dirty deal  
I got lightning scars on my fingertips  
It takes a season in hell  
It takes a season of rain  
There comes a day of reckoning  
I got lightning scars on my fingertips

## **Alabama Dust**

(from the Bare Knuckles album *Alabama Dust*)

“The moon is just a blue eyed witch  
with the devil in her soul,”  
so the old man said  
and he walked on down the road.  
I never saw him again,  
but the story went around  
that he fell for a blue-eyed girl  
and caught the last bus out of town

It was a dark day in the valley  
the day I met you  
You were a long tall Sally,  
lord, you played me for a fool  
If I could find the way out  
where I came in  
I'd hit the ground running  
I'd be gone with the the wind

I'm gonna pack my bags  
and get on the bus,  
bound for Birmingham  
in the Alabama dust

I bought a bouquet of flowers  
and set them on your window sill  
When you sent your boy around for money  
I gave him all that I could steal  
Now the heartbroken sky  
turns the stars to tears  
and I'd bet my soul to a dollar  
you'll be wanting them

I'm gonna pack my bags  
and get on the bus  
bound for Birmingham  
in the Alabama dust

Early last week  
in her Sunday go-to-meeting dress  
they laid sister Mary in the ground  
for a long, long rest  
You see it ain't what's real.  
It ain't about which God you trust.  
It's how disappear

in the Alabama dust

I'm gonna pack my bags  
and get on the bus  
bound for Birmingham  
in the Alabama dust

**Videos for some of the songs can be seen and heard at the following links:**

Garden House: <https://youtu.be/3NiJt1Vlf6I>

The Long Decline: <https://youtu.be/R-xGPEHGKQw>

Roots in a Basket (directed by Chris Mansel): <https://youtu.be/pXjDtsYzlDU>

Ash on the Roses (directed by Chris Mansel):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12RFQLj6PBs>

Another Man's Blues (directed by Chris Mansel): <https://youtu.be/Uko17pd88GY>

So Many Birds (directed by Chris Mansel): <https://youtu.be/oRjBbEcVjEw>

Swans Migrating (directed by Chris Mansel): [https://youtu.be/cAgKfbkBd\\_U](https://youtu.be/cAgKfbkBd_U)

Starlings: <https://youtu.be/sPVz1cPDRCA>

November: <https://youtu.be/LA5LgnW5gTA>

Sweet Misery (directed by Chris Mansel): [https://youtu.be/IqnlviSR\\_jg](https://youtu.be/IqnlviSR_jg)

From a String of Pearls (directed by Chris Mansel): <https://youtu.be/g78Ko2tbhHg>

**Songs selected from the following albums can be heard via these links:**

Mystery Songs: <https://jakeberry.bandcamp.com/album/mystery-songs>

Wilderness and Grace: <https://jakeberry.bandcamp.com/album/wilderness-and-grace>

Liminal Blue: <https://jakeberry.bandcamp.com/album/liminal-blue>

## About the Author

Jake Berry is a poet, musician and visual artist. The author of *Brambu Drezi*, *Species of Abandoned Light*, *Drafts of the Sorcery*, *Genesis Suicide* and numerous other books. He has been an active member of the global arts and literary community for more than 30 years. His poems, fiction, essays, reviews and other writings have been published widely in both print and electronic mediums. In 2010, Lavender Ink released a collaborative book, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes*, with poet Jeffrey Side and drawings by Rich Curtis; and *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* (with Jeffrey Side) was released by Otoliths also in that year. He regularly records and performs his compositions solo and with the groups Bare Knuckles, The Ascension Brothers and The Strindbergs. *Mystery Songs*, his tenth solo album, was released in 2016. Ongoing projects include books four and five of *Brambu Drezi*, a collection of short poems, and a wide range of musical projects.