

## Lyrics

### 1. **Creation Myth**

(original song, with arrangement of “Greasy Coat” at the end)

Say you grew here

your mother a restless gust

rising and falling in tangles of bare branches

Say your first word was “light”

and your father tried to make you a paper God

all blonde hair and

endless ignition

Say the words behind you beat back a ragged silence

winding paths into the shattered heart of the world

Say the horizon curves and bends people back

here

beside you

waiting for a sign to begin

### 2. **Gallows Pole**

(inspired by John Jacob Niles and Led Zeppelin)

Hangman, hangman, slack your line a while

I think I see my father coming, riding many miles  
Did you bring me a little silver or did you bring me a little gold  
What did you bring me, my own father, to keep me from the gallows pole?  
“I didn’t bring you no silver, I didn’t bring you no gold  
I just came to watch you swinging high up from the gallows pole”

Hangman, hangman, slack your line a while  
I think I see my mother coming riding many miles  
Did you bring me a little silver or did you bring me a little gold  
What did you bring me, my only mother, to keep me from the gallows pole?  
“I didn’t bring you no silver, I didn’t bring you no gold  
I just came to watch you swinging high up from the gallows pole”

Hangman, hangman, slack your line a while  
I think I see my brother coming riding many miles  
Did you bring me a little silver or did you me a little gold  
What did you bring me, my one brother, to keep me from the gallows pole?  
“I brought you a little silver and I brought you a little gold  
I brought a little of everything, just to keep you from the gallows pole”

Sundown, sundown, moon on the rise  
I think I see the hangman coming, murder in his eyes  
I thought I heard a little silver, I thought I heard a little gold  
Down in the well of the hangman’s pockets, walking to the gallows pole

### **3. Trouble of this World**

(inspired by Abbot Kinney & Lighthouse Choir, Bill Landford & the Landfordaires)

There'll be no more weeping and wailing (x3)

I'm going home to live with God, my Lord

Well soon I will be done with the trouble of this world (x3)

I'm going home to live with God, my Lord

Well I'm going up to meet my mother

I'm gonna shake her loving hand

I'm gonna tell her all about my troubles

As I've been travelling through this land

Well soon I'm gonna burn down what, what needs to burn (x3)

I'm going home to live with God, my Lord

I died a thousand times I could die a thousand more (x3)

I'm going home to live with God, my Lord

Well I'm going up to meet King Jesus

I'm gonna shake his loving hand

I'm gonna tell Him all about my troubles

As I've been travelling through this land

Oh I soon will be done with the trouble of this world

I'm going home to live with God, my Lord

#### **4. Glory in the Meeting House**

(instrumental, inspired by Luther Strong)

## **5. Motherless Child**

(inspired by Skip James)

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child (x3)

And a long way from home

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone (x3)

And a long way from home

Sometimes the world's in the palm of my hand (x3)

And sometimes I let go

Sometimes I think on the way that we fell (x3)

A long time ago

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone

And a long way from home

## **6. Long Gone**

(inspired by I.D. Stamper, Bob Dylan, Tom Waits)

Lost John's sitting on the railroad track

Waiting for a booster, ain't due to come back

He's long gone, long gone

Lost John hiding like a weasel in the rye

Bottle full of trouble and the devil in his eye

He's long gone, long gone

He's long lost John from Bowling Green

Lost John cutting through the Indiana Corn

Thousand people chasing him have never been born

He's long gone, long gone

High up in the treetops, way up in the air

Branches in the ribcage, kerosene prayer

He's long gone, long gone

He's long lost John from Bowling Green

Lost John sitting on a railroad track

Waiting for a booster, ain't due to come back

He's long gone, long gone

## **7. Rocky Island**

(inspired by Dirk Powell, Bruce Molsky, Sam Amidon)

Going to Rocky Island, ho honey ho

See my candy darlin', I am bound to go, I am bound to go

Dark clouds on the horizon's a sure sign of rain

Dark clouds in my woman's eyes, sure sign of pain, sure sign of pain

Going to Rocky Island...

Mama gave me meat and daddy gave me bread  
Pretty girl gave me one sweet kiss, just about killed me dead  
Ah just about killed me dead

Mama gave me one drink, daddy gave me two  
Want another one so bad, don't know what to do  
I don't know what to do

Going to Rocky Island...

Going to Rocky Island, don't you wanna go

Well I went up on the mountain and as far as I could see  
Couldn't see any place, looked like home to me, looked like home to me

Going to Rocky Island...

## **8. Can't Keep From Crying**

(from Blind Willie Johnson)

Well I just can't keep from crying sometimes (x2)  
When my heart's full of sorrow and my eyes are filled with tears  
Lord I just can't keep from crying sometimes

My mother often told me, "angels bonded your life away"  
She said I wouldn't accomplish my trust in God and pray  
Well I'm on the King's highway, I'm trusting Him every day

But I just can't keep from crying sometimes

Well I just can't keep from crying sometimes...

My mother, she said "glory, thank God I'm on my way"

Father, he gone too, and darlin' she could not stay

Well I'm trusting Him every day, trusting Him to bear my burden away

But I just can't keep from crying sometimes

Well I just can't keep from crying sometimes...

I thought when she first left me, I'd grieve a little while

Soon it all would be over, I'd journey on with a smile

But the thoughts as I get older, I think of what I told her

And I just can't keep from crying sometimes

Well I just can't keep from crying sometimes...

## **9. God is Not Dead (He's Still Alive)**

(inspired by The Cooke Duet)

I know that God's not dead, He's still alive (x3)

I can feel Him in my hand, I can feel Him in my feet

I can feel Him all over me

I talked to him this morning...

He found me when I was lost...

He healed me when I was sick...

He kicked me when I was down...

He picked me up again...

God's not dead, he's still alive...

## **10. Our Little Things (for Vic Chesnutt)**

(original song, inspired by Vic Chesnutt)

Hunkered down in my nest today

I am a dusty-winged bird of prey

Every time someone passes by

I cast an imperious eye

And I squawk a mighty squawk

This yellow-taloned hawk

Likes to watch a single sunbeam

Illuminate the dust of our history

I didn't mean to scare you that day

But I've heard that all the soft words are the first to fly away

Perching up on the banister

My head reverberating with some angry words

I once thought you'd hang onto me

I didn't know how wrong I could be

All you saw were my wings

Kicking up a bit of dust on our little things

The sun hides behind those clouds again



And coming up is an ugly wind

She said to rub some tar on them today

“When you’re flying too high, they’ll burn much better that way”

## **11. That Suits Me**

(inspired by Bessie Jones & Hobart Smith)

Well the devil wears those hypocrite shoes, that suits me (x3)

If you don’t mind, he’ll step on you...

Now if this ain’t the holy ghost, I don’t know (x3)

Never really felt any love before...

Tobacco and snuff you’d better quit (x3)

When you get to heaven there’s nowhere to spit...

The rich man died, well he lived so well (x3)

When he died, he got a home in Hell...

Oh Satan like a snake in the grass (x3)

Always on some Christian’s ass...

Well if this ain’t the holy ghost, I don’t know (x3)

Never really had any love before...

## 12. Into Grace

(original song, for Cheryl Grace Bodner)

I sat alone inside a Mars Hill diner  
It was my first time to North Carolina  
Chicken-fried steak, corn bread and okra  
Lord I started getting choked up

And 40-year-old Jane at university  
Told me she read the Bible literally  
She played a banjo tune and smoked a joint with me  
I was only 23, I was only 23

Driving all around the Blue Ridge Mountains  
It seemed like a good place to get found in  
The way the hills are covered up in green trees  
Like there's no place life could not reach

And Alex took me out on the hillside  
To play us some songs in Virginia moonlight  
He ran over his fiddle with his truck that night  
He said "I'm getting drunk tonight, boys I'm getting drunk tonight"

It was just eight months ago that I'd got married  
It was four months since mom was buried  
My son was just two weeks when she was done in  
She said "one goes out and another comes in"

And Alex let me stay over at his place  
Down by the New River for a couple of days  
He said it was the oldest river in the States  
I watched it wind its way into grace

Ridin' on the New River train (x2)  
Same old train that brought me here, gonna bring me back again

### **13. Jubilee**

(inspired by Jean Ritchie)

All out on the old railroad, all out on the sea  
All out on the old railroad, far as I can see, far as I can see  
Swing and turn, jubilee, live and learn, jubilee

Some will come on Saturday night, some will come on Sunday  
If you give 'em half a chance, they'll be back on Monday...

If I had no horse to ride, I would go a-crawlin'  
Up and down the rocky road, lookin' for my darlin'...

If I had me a needle and thread, fine as I could sew  
Sew my true love to my side, down the road I'd go...

I won't have no bitter girl, neither will my cousin  
You can get such stuff as that, 15 cents a dozen...

All out on the old railroad, all out on the sea...

### **Bonus tracks**

#### **14. Jack o' Diamonds #2**

(inspired by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Mance Lipscomb, Bob Dylan)

Jack of diamonds wants his time

He's a starving friend of mine

Jack of diamonds was a hard card to play

Jack of diamonds wants a meal

Gonna borrow, beg or steal...

Jack of diamonds, jack of diamonds...

I played him against a king

I never won a thing...

I tore myself apart

Trying to play the jack of hearts...

I played him against a five

More dead than alive...

Jack of diamonds can be tough

I'm never high enough...

Jack of diamonds, jack of diamonds...

Jack of diamonds in my eye

Play that card until I die

## **15. Long Steel Rail #2**

(inspired by Fred Cockerham, Jody Stecher & Kate Brislin, and the song "Ryland and Spencer")

Long steel rail and a short cross-tie

I'm gonna hammer my way till I die

I'm going down the line, where that sun never shines

Gonna speed on that cold ice and snow

Well I call up my sheep, lord I feed my little lamb

Oh goodbye my honey, I'm gone

Look up, look down that long lonesome road

You can hang down your head and cry

Tell me whatcha gonna down with your \$20 bill

When the whole fuckin world's gone dry?

You can cut down the flowers all around my grave

Well they'll rise and bloom again

Oh they'll rise and bloom again

A long steel rail and a short cross-tie

I'm gonna slam down that hammer till I die