



## YOUR HEART'S A BIG TENT

*Willi Carlisle: Words, Banjo, Percussion*  
*Grant D'Aubin: Bass, Guitar, Vocals*

This morning a miracle happened as promised:  
The rising of the world's closest star  
And the almanacs warned us that  
    in fast-coming weather  
Might blow us away like dandelion flowers

And if I had a nickel for every time I've taken shelter  
from the storm  
Alone and naked in my bed sheets  
I could pay off all our loans, buy some nicer clothes  
Find a job that didn't always scare me  
But I've been trying not to think before my  
    third cup of coffee

How the heart's a big tent  
You gotta let everybody in  
Doesn't matter who they are  
If they do right or where they've been  
Everybody gets in

I think I know a secret, still not really sure  
It's somewhere between I'm livin' and I believe I can fly  
What's up's I saw the devil in a used bookstore,  
Rippin' up and spittin' on Catcher in the Rye

And I am coming to myself a man finding religion,  
Am I baptized, drowned, or washed in the blood?  
If life's an open field, I'd like to plant a garden  
And get ready for the fire and the flood  
I need a theory of all love

My conclusion's not a great one, I'll leave that to  
    the smarter ones  
The soul is an idiot and it doesn't care why  
Whatever you do with it, the gift's a pretty simple one  
Just sing until you love yourself, then love until you die

I have seen the trees, like pillars full of blood,  
Chlorophyllic laughin' swaying in their glory  
Seen the sparrows in the air alight on branches there  
And there's no way that they're afraid of being thirty  
If I can't live clean then I'd better love dirty

## LIFE ON THE FENCE

*Willi Carlisle: Words, Arrangement, and Acoustic Guitar*  
*Grant D'Aubin: Arrangement, Bass, Backup Vocals*  
*Jim Kolacek: Drums*  
*Chris Stafford: Pedal Steel*  
*Joel Savoy: Arrangement, Fiddle, Baritone Guitar, Dobro*

He's callin me up, he's sure I might love him  
I only answer when I'm drunk to the lees  
We talk about Memphis, livin' so rough then  
The strength in his voice makes me weak at the knees

Not sure what I saw 'fore I looked in his eyes  
We ain't star-crossed just 'cause stars might align  
Ain't proper high lonesome till it's  
Almost too sad to be true

What happened in Memphis made too much sense  
There's a part of my life she don't know exists  
Why is livin' a lie more easy than life on the fence?

I ain't cryin' in public 'til it's perfectly lovely  
I tried to fit in, I just can't in your town  
I swear I ain't tryin' to become nobody  
I tried to be hip, but it's tearin' me down

No tide without tempest, skip dinner skip breakfast,  
Drove halfway to Texas thinkin' on you  
Hidebound and determined that I could unlearn this  
She'd make me shiny and new

But what happened in Memphis made too much sense  
There's a part of my life she don't know exists  
Why is livin' a lie more easy than life on the fence?

He's callin me up, cause he's sure I might love him  
Why's livin' the lie more easy than life on the fence?

## TULSA'S LAST MAGICIAN

Willi Carlise: Words, Guitar  
Grant D'Aubin: Bass, Mandolin  
Jim Kolacek: Drums  
Joel Savoy: Dobro, Accordion

Well Tulsa's last magician got his start at four  
Pulled a quarter from his own ear and spun it on the floor  
Since there's no good tricks but old ones and lyin'  
ain't that hard  
He saved up all his quarters and bought a deck of cards

And he learned ragtime piano, though his teacher  
thought him slow  
Got a black belt in karate from a pawn shop video  
And he'd practice all his worst mistakes in a dirty  
bathroom mirror  
And when his mother drank, he learned to disappear

And his classmates thought him funny and good at  
sleight of hand  
But he had this grand finale that they refused  
to understand  
It's hard to tell the whole truth of a family sawed in half  
And that's why Tulsa's last magician left his home so fast

Well down and out in Reno, broke in Santa Fe  
Turnin' tricks on Los Sueñeros out in the Californ-i-ay  
They pushed him up against a wall said Buddy get a grip  
So he learned to set himself on fire on the Las Vegas strip

Then he wandered down to Tampa, blew  
everybody's mind  
'Cause the crowd was cheap and easy there, on  
beer and blow and wine

They said I wonder where my dollar went, how'd the  
flower bloom so fast  
He said I can't reveal my secret, though they rarely  
failed to ask

And the crowd all thought him funny, and good at  
sleight of hand  
But he had this grand finale they refused  
to understand

They demanded explanation when the card pulled  
was their own  
And that's why Tulsa's last magician lost his faith  
and headed home

Well he said he'd learn computers, like his  
second foster dad  
And free-range all the rabbits that were livin' in his hat  
His investments all went swimmingly, he had the  
boss on hidden strings  
His promotions were a certainty, he could make  
the numbers sing

Now time and space is easy for magic to control  
Still it was forty years of workin' 'fore he noticed  
he was old  
And now his great escaping act is just untying  
both his shoes  
And most days he's in the easy chair, yellin' at the news

And the weatherman is funny and talkin' with his hands  
But black clouds are comin' in, and no one  
understands  
That somebody's true religion's always someone  
else's joke  
And that's why Tulsa's last magician pretty much  
went up in smoke

So friend if you're the kind that thinks no one quite  
gets quite what you are  
Like you're cobbler or mechanic in this age of flying cars  
If you think that you see right behind what's right  
before our eyes  
You might be a small town's last magician in disguise

And we need you to be funny, please be good at  
sleight of hand  
'Cause there's a grand finale we can't hope  
to understand  
And there's a 1 in 52 chance it's all magic and it's true  
So won't you please help us believe in you?

## VANLIFE

*Willi Carlisle: Words, Acoustic Guitar*

*Grant D'Aubin: Bass, Acoustic Guitar*

*Chris Stafford: Electric guitar, Pedal steel*

*Jim Kolacek: Drums*

*Joel Savoy: Tambourine*

Well I quit my job making minimum wage  
I look fairly well twice and act half my age  
I'm looking for somewhere that can handle the rage  
Of a young man on the run

With rarely paid taxes and shitty insurance  
And a glove box full of summons and warrants  
And a finely-tuned wish that things were that weren't  
You could say I was lookin' for fun

So I bought an '01 red Dodge Ram  
Bought two pints of whiskey and a 30 of Hamm's  
Now I'm peein' in bottles and eatin' from cans  
But ya can't call me homeless, cause I live in my van

They call it...  
Vanlife, I been told this  
It's a fine life, I've been sold this  
But it's a fine line between having to and choosin' it  
Let's roll up, let's blow this!

Well the 7-Eleven is a sure bellyache  
I subsist upon a mere wake-and-bake  
Talledaga to Chicago's lakes  
I'll take your largest queso

And all the girls from Chickamauga to Passamaquoddy  
Speak enviously of my vans, rusty body  
And this old thing might just be a Bugatti  
The way I get it to sixty from zero

Yeah I'm sixty miles of Fargo on a northern track  
I'm burnin rubber no lookin' back  
Pushin' that thang like a maniac  
I get tipped out like a stripper, in singles and crack  
Man I wish someone would fund Amtrak  
Instead it's the...

Well the south of San Louie can be a lil' gritty  
It's a far cry from Seattle's tent cities  
All in all life's pretty pretty  
From the Starship Enterprise

Still a guy with a house and a big old lawn  
Thinks his block's too good for me to park on  
And bangs on my door with a letter that tells  
About a thousand ways he can make my life hell  
And he's worse than the guy who put a brick  
through my glass  
Robbed me blind and siphoned the gas  
At least I know that guy needed it bad  
Oh I wish that old boy well

In the meantime a cop is bangin' my door  
Tellin' me I can't park here no more  
And what can you do, friends, whaddaya say?  
Rev up the engine and drive away  
Chalk it up to the...

It's a sexy kinda lifestyle for certain folks  
Fractal highways, friends like smoke  
It all goes up and you end up alone  
It's like the internet is your real home

Call of the wild, call of the road  
The endless search for a free commode  
I'm a trucker of emotive payloads  
Backed up on guitar

Yeah I'm a public park patron, library sleuth  
I'm a thrift store grifter of Western suits  
Wringin' out three chords and the truth  
Like a washrag on the bar

Every time I'm feeling down on my luck  
Think I might trade it in for a coupla bucks  
Here's some guy like Elon Musk  
Talking about how we're all gonna get cyber trucks  
And I think, God, life must be easy when you're one of  
these dang rich... Gentlemen

And I'm pretty sure that I prefer the...

Let's roll up  
Let's smoke 'er down  
It's a big rig, new town  
It's the same old night  
The whole world over  
Whole world over  
Sittin' sad and wonderin' why  
Meritocracy's a lie  
Oh let's blow this!

## ESTE MUNDO

*Trad. First arranged by Steve Cormier / John Sparrow  
Arranged here by Willi Carlisle, with apologies to  
Santiago Jimenez Sr.*

*Willi Carlisle: Vocals, Button Accordion*

*Max Baca: Bajo Sexto, Vocals*

*Grand D'Aubin: Bowed Bass*

When I was a niño in Agua Fria  
We had all the water we'd need  
And the willows grew on the rio  
All the way down the Santa Fe

I tended my padre's cattle  
All the way from the arroyo long ago  
For a month I slept on the saddle  
My hair like a wild buffalo

Y el indio Antonio Dominguez  
Played soft, sweet and low  
For the dancers from all of the ranches  
Todo pasa en este mundo

I loved to be home when the mills were turnin'  
When everyone brought in their cane  
And the pacifiers were burnin'  
And children played among the beams

Those were the best of the good times  
All memories my spirit must uphold  
As the cane boiled out we danced about  
And marvelous stories got told

When I was young, we had all the water we'd need  
Now the water companies, they take it away  
And now we grow our corn in our fields  
Just by the grace of God's green

And I know God knows what he's doin'  
That everything must come and it must go  
I'll live and I'll die under this same sky  
Todo pasa en este mundo

## I WON'T BE AFRAID

*Willi Carlisle: Words and Guitar*

*Grant D'Aubin: Backup Vocals*

*Ordinary Elephant (Crystal & Pete Damore): Backup  
Vocals*

I won't be afraid anymore  
I won't be afraid anymore  
Lord knows I've done some dumb shit  
And I plan to do some more  
But I won't be afraid anymore

I'm gonna dance the way my grandma wanted  
I'll twist and shout and get down on it  
Twist and shout and get down on it  
Show these punks how much they want it  
Dance like someone's proud of me

And then I'll get up early and haul ass  
I'll get there before the bosses ask  
Get up early and haul ass  
Hope they don't check on my checkered past  
I'll haul ass to heaven when it's over

And there I'll stand in line and I'll be counted  
I'll be sorted among the ones that doubted  
As for the saved, I wish you well  
I'm alright with going to hell  
Seems like the city on the hill is gettin' crowded

I will clear the beer cans from the coffee table  
I will clean the ashtray on the coffee table  
I will do a third thing I'm sure I'm able  
I will say one nice thing before noon  
Before one before two...

And I will love whoever I well please  
I will kiss my friends upon the cheek  
Kiss my friends upon the cheek  
Repeat till I believe  
I don't have to be ashamed of what I love

## BUFFALO BILL

*Words by e e cummings*

*Willi Carlisle: Arrangement, Vocals, and Fretless Banjo*

*Nicholas Pence: Rhythm Bones*

Buffalo Bill 's

defunct

who used to

ride a watersmooth-silver

stallion

and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat

Jesus

he was a handsome man

and what i want to know is

how do you like your blue-eyed boy

Mister Death

## THE DOWN AND BACK

*Willi Carlisle: Words, Fiddle and Banjo*

*Grand D'Aubin: Bass, Guitar, Vocals*

Get up gents, shimmy up the holler,

Down and back for a silver dollar

It's a pretty big haul for pretty small pay

Down from upriver in the mud and the rain

Workin' for a livin' is a pretty raw deal

And Jesus on the mainline is hell on wheels

Whoah, I'll ball that jack

Till my money comes back

Down on the down of down and back

I'll be right here till my money comes back.

Won't ya cut all the timber and mine all the coal,

Till half of West Virginia is a fishin' hole?

Ya mamma's sittin' on the piglets in the pen

Big can't get to heaven in a big black Benz

I'll vanish in the woods without a damn trace

They'll never forget 'ol whatshisface

Small town gossip, the wrath of god?

Fish, cut bait, or spare me the rod

I wanna be saved but danged if I'll try

The designated hitter is a goddamned lie

Whole lotta doin' tween done and needs did

'Tween a crazy old man and a messed-up kid

## PECULIAR, MISSOURI

*Spoken and played by Willi Carlisle*

*With a few partially recalled words from Carl Sandburg's poem "At a Window"*

*Joel Savoy: Calliope, Cacophony*

You ever had a panic attack in a Walmart and been visited by the ghost of Carl Sandburg?

## THE GRAND DESIGN

*Willi Carlisle: Words and Banjo*

*Effie Savoy: Harmony*

*Joel Savoy: Autoharp, Accordion, Fiddle, Guitar*

All I asked of you is your better years

All I know how to do is waste 'em

We'll philosophize on the grand design

And mourn all of creation

And rejoice 'cause we're sorry and we tried

I'll rejoice if you're more than just alive

Now let the gods that give the world its sins

Let 'em lay their lights down low for you now

I know they said we'd meet in eternity

Still I wait for you below somehow

Comin' home you should know I ain't the same

Comin' home forever changed

'Cause there is evil enough in a half-full cup

To tempt me towards that deep, dark fine

When I believe in love, and the things thereof

I know I feel you shine...

I dunno but I heard that there is more

I'm uneasy knockin' on the door

All I asked of you is your better years

All I know how to do is waste 'em

Now I laugh and cry at the grand design

And mourn all of creation

## GOODNIGHT LOVING TRAIL

*Trad. written by Bruce "Utah" Phillips  
Willi Carlisle: Guitar, Harmonica  
Chris Stafford: Accordion, Pedal Steel  
Grant D'Aubin: Bass, Mandolin, Harmony*

Well you're too old to wrangle or ride in the swing  
You beat the triangle you curse everything  
If dirt were a kingdom, brother, you would be king

On the goodnight trail, on the loving trail  
Your old woman's lonesome tonight  
And your French-harp blows like a low ballin' calf  
It's a wonder the wind don't tear off your skin,  
Get in there and blow out the light

With your snake-oil and herbs and your linnaments too  
You can do anything that a doctor can do  
Except find a cure for your own goddamn stew

Well the cookfires are out, and the coffee's all gone  
The boys are all up and they're raising the dawn  
You're sitting over there lost in a song...

And I know that someday I will be just the same  
Wearing an apron instead of a name  
No one can change it, and no one's to blame

That the desert's a book writ in lizards and sage  
It's easy to feel like an old torn out page  
Tattered and cracked by the colors of age

## RAINBOW MID LIFE'S WILLIOWS

*Traditional, learned from Almeda Riddle of Heber  
Springs, Arkansas  
Willi Carlisle: Fiddle, Vocals  
Joel Savoy: Organ*

Last night I dreamed of my true love  
All in my arms I held her  
But I awoke, she was not here  
Now I must live without her

Her yellow hair like strands of gold  
Lay streaming o'er my pillow  
Oh she's the only one I love  
My rainbow mid life's willow

I searched far-high, I searched far-low  
I made some low inquiries  
They all said no, she is not here  
We would have no such in our keeping

And when she heard from me those words  
She whispered low at her window  
She said oh, I'd be with you now  
Though locks and chains doth hinder

And when I heard those words of hers  
I swore that room I'd enter  
Or I would pray have reasons why  
She was locked and chained within there

Up stepped her father stern and wise  
And likewise stalwart brothers  
They said before you enter there  
In your life's blood you will wallow

They've taken 'way my own true love  
And tears now stain my pillow  
Oh she's the only one I love  
My rainbow mid the willow

Recorded and mixed by Joel Savoy at Valcour Records in Eunice, Louisiana  
Mastered by Dan Emery at Black Matter Mastering  
Photos by Chuck Davis and Jackie Clarkson  
Design by Dan MacDonald Studios