

# The Ashen Revel

There are no bystanders at the Ashen Revel. We are the dead, every last one; and the dead will dance.

"When you've nothing else, construct ceremonies out of the air and breathe on them."  
- Cormac McCarthy

## On Every Mile

Well, the dust gets in through every pore  
and your skin's cold and dry to the touch  
and your tears are more bitter than the water out here  
and words never count for much  
I told you I dreamed of a black car  
on an ocean road under thunderclouds  
of two figures huddled close in the gathering dusk  
these I believe are your footprints in  
the attic of my wishing  
and I'll miss you on every mile  
of the saltbush run

<instrumental>

I'll open my arms to the Lightbringer  
and I'll fall with him into the fire  
The decisions I made lead to miles of heat haze  
and a heart like a pulse in a wire

And the angel turns away  
and everything fades to white  
and you're borne screaming into Hell again  
and I'm sorry  
and I'll miss you on every mile of the saltbush run

# Emma Burns

Sometimes I can hear the children laughing  
as the flames take hold about me  
I've died so many times  
and sometimes I can hear the sound of gunfire  
in a café in the morning  
I've died so many times  
and sometimes in my dreams I drop my mind into my soup  
and Emma Burns is burning in the purple afternoon  
Wake up  
I've died so many times  
and sometimes in my dreams I catch a glimpse of something falling  
and Emma Burns is sleeping, cannot hear her mother calling  
Wake up  
I've died so many times  
and sometimes in my dreams I drop my mind into my soup  
and Emma Burns is burning in the darkening afternoon  
Wake up  
I've died so many times



# Night

<instrumental>

On damp nights when the streetlights hang their heads and drown their sorrows  
and the drunkards stagger like fat penguins to their burrows  
you will find me warm and sleeping cosy in the weeds  
with my tight breath whistling like a kettle in the reeds  
For I cannot keep a home while your feet are in the air  
In a nest of sacks by the railway tracks is where I'll make my lair

<instrumental>

While you're folded in Manila in between their stiff white sheets  
or stifled in an alley by the smell of foreign meats  
I'll be wrestling like an alchemist to find a way to breathe  
just like you in the departure lounge, still weeping as you leave

<instrumental>

With our locket chains all twisted and our visions lightly misted  
we will find ourselves in places we don't know  
Through hail and sleet on blistered feet we'll find our way down every street  
'til finally there's nowhere left to go  
Then when May arrives at last and cries as April marches past  
you'll tuck your tale between your legs and turn for home  
I'll wear an old suit coat with stains in my mansion made of drains  
and I'll wait there with a feast in styri foam  
Then one damp night as the streetlight hangs its head and drowns its sorrows  
and the little things in England are all stirring in their hedgerows  
You'll stumble on me sleeping like a bottle in the weeds  
with my heart inside your locket and a pocket full of seeds

# Clusterfuck

Jim Kunstler's on the TV  
and he's frothing at the mouth  
says he's got the figures  
this whole thing's going south  
so I took ten inches off the barrel  
packed my pockets full of shells  
if you come sneaking round my garden  
I'm gonna take us both to hell  
and I'm telling you  
civilization can't end well

Traffic winding home along the M2  
six twisted braids of blinking lights  
I don't care to be the last man standing  
but equally I don't want to be sitting out here in this tonight  
See it's hard to run a tractor  
when there's nothing left to burn  
and you can't make your fortune  
when there's nothing left to earn  
and I'm telling you  
this king tide's about to turn

<instrumental>

I feel the great black mass of the Earth turn slow  
beneath my wheels and I wonder where we will be when it grinds to a halt  
what we will do when it grinds to a halt  
how we will live when it grinds to a halt  
The feeder bands are overhead  
so check the tarps and count the dead  
and I'm telling you  
our entrails have been read

# Kings of infinite space

O poor me o poor me o pour me another  
How did we come to this juncture, my brother?  
From the ash in my lungs to the scabs on my face  
I was so sure we were the kings of infinite space  
By our own lights, the kings of infinite space  
We counted ourselves the kings of infinite space

I believe, I believe, I believe that I'll have one more  
Let me get you one too, what are friends for  
You walk Spanish up the twelve steps while I stumble from grace  
Not long ago we were the kings of infinite space  
By our own lights, the kings of infinite space  
We counted ourselves the kings of infinite space

<instrumental>

Brain fever, brain fever, burn till we're charred  
You threw up at my wedding, I smashed bottles in your yard  
We thought we'd transcended the whole human race  
Because by our own lights we were the kings of infinite space  
In our own nutshells the kings of infinite space  
We counted ourselves the kings of infinite space

But the gutter was just inches away  
All our reign's long day  
Nothing is given and nothing forgotten  
And our empire unravelled for want of some cotton

<instrumental>

# in over your head

I'm told Jesus saves  
what the Devil buys and sells  
and there's just one big heaven  
but six billion little hells  
this has been one of them  
but it's over now  
kid, you're going home

Your mama sat down  
on the asphalt beside you  
and sang you out into the black  
out past the frantic medical fingers  
to the endless time of not coming back

too soon cold night comes  
to the underside of the world

Everything flies momentarily  
and no-one's surprised  
when it reaches the ground  
we all inhabit these lives temporarily  
but once we're in for a penny  
we expect to be here for the pound

And when, when you are dead  
A blanket so red  
will be tucked down into your sides  
and over your head

# View from a high shelf

there's a cold blue light on these bare hills  
when night falls here it falls so chill  
this old gold town is a bitter well  
for whom it feeds it also kills

and even the clouds go round

empty bottles in the hall and a table with a single glass  
and all the empty staring heads arrayed in each days class  
this old gold town with its churches and bells  
every day i'm here it feels a little more like hell

and even the clouds go round

when i turn the headlights out it's black like the open sea  
i've worked so hard that i wished there were two of me  
this old gold town is a cat'o'nine tails  
i hold onto the wheel and i wish there were two of me

and even the clouds go round

I approach each day anew with upturned palms  
I seek refuge from my crumbling life in another's gentle arms  
this old town is just bone there's no flesh to be had  
i'm cold up on a high shelf and the rains just sweep right past

and dark is measured by the glass  
hour after hour after hour

# Home from the sea

You've been asleep a couple of hours  
When I come home  
Put the children to bed early  
Unplugged the phone  
I curl beside you in the dark  
In the heat of your breath and the beat of your heart

I've been a long time gone  
But piece by piece I'm coming home  
And maybe soon  
I'll learn how to smile when I'm smiled upon

I've turned in a whirlwind of shit and nails  
Broken the mast and torn all the sails  
Drowned in a private inland sea  
Prayed for the sky to open up and swallow me  
Somehow you're still waiting here  
To hold me still while I fight the fear

I've been a long time gone  
But piece by piece I'm coming home  
And maybe soon  
I'll learn how to smile when I'm smiled upon

Every night when you go to bed,  
you say love, don't stay out there too long  
but I've been out here all my life, swimming like a rat  
It's been so hard to find my way home  
Your signal fire by the shore of my black sea  
As bright as the moon, is following me

I've been a long time gone  
But piece by shining shivered piece I'm coming home  
And maybe soon  
I'll learn how to smile when I'm smiled upon

# Black Dog Prayer

Let down on the corner of lost and found  
like a ghost with no-one to haunt  
still bothered by the whispering shadows of my friends  
their pleas, their excuses, and taunts

oh please, oh please, if you're gonna keep sparing me  
from the might of your sword and your shield  
then spare my love from the power of the dog  
it's by her hand that my heart is being healed

I don't know why all my friends seem to die  
while I have been sentenced to live  
but to watch my love torn by the jaws of the dog  
well it's more than I'm able to give

<drunken salvation army band interjects>

oh please, oh please, if you're gonna keep sparing me  
from the might of your sword and shield  
then spare my love from the power of the dog  
it's by her hand that my heart is being healed

half cut on the corner of bait and switch  
waiting for the last bus home  
still scratching the scabs from a 20-year itch  
and the rust from the holes in my chrome

oh please, oh please, when I get home let me see  
a smile on my only love's face  
and bury that dog 'neath the old apple tree  
and light up our hearth with your grace

<cheering, car horns; drunken salvation army band exeunt, marching>

# Hurricane seeds

I.V. ivy waits  
like a seed  
poised to coil into into your veins  
just like your need  
never went away

at the bottom of the ninth ward there's a potter's field  
where I can't see and you can't feel  
the message in the bottle graphs addiction's sharp math  
where one is far too many but three can't be enough  
it'll wash away our hopes it'll wash away our prayers  
it'll was away the church it'll was away the stairs  
our puny levee can't hold back a hurricane of hopeless thinking  
and nobody can save me from the king tide that I'm drinking

I.V. ivy waits  
like a seed  
poised to coil into into your veins  
just like your need  
never went away

they say you're only given what you can hold  
and I was only given this drink and told  
it's one for the road with an ambulance chaser  
because a tweaker met a junkie on the way to outer space  
so now I'm trying to sell out but nobody's buying  
I want to save the world but it insists it isn't dying  
I'm counting the cards on a half full deck  
and my blood's just as thick as my next paycheck

I.V. ivy waits  
like a seed  
poised to coil into into your veins  
just like your need  
never went away

I'm slowly rounding up the empties, casting demons from our home  
I know I should have started this a long long time ago  
There's an awful lot to lose and fucking nothing good to gain  
so I'm patching up our roof against the boiling neon rain  
and yet tonight in our kitchen's heat it pours on down  
and me just standing here with my mouth open  
somehow you're still talking, I can hear it far away  
and I wish to Christ that I didn't believe a goddamn thing you say

I.V. ivy waits  
like a seed  
poised to coil into into your veins  
just like your need  
never went away

# Polymers are forever

I can't see for the cinders and snow  
and all that the slaughterhouse animals know  
is to follow the straight path down to the knife  
for the saddest end to the meanest life  
when it all goes black and the line goes slack  
we'll see what we have learned  
from all that has burned

I can't see for the cinders and snow  
and the sound of sand falls from the radio  
the secret sound for today  
was the scratch of my match at our auto-da-fe  
now that all that we've ever been has been charred away  
let's see what we have learned  
from all that has burned

Polymers are forever  
irony corrodes with exposure  
the things that persist are not what you expected  
how long can you say that and still claim you're joking?  
It's not what you've learned it's the form of the lesson  
it's not what you bought it's the bag that it came in  
it's not what you've learned it's the form of the lesson  
it's not what you bought it's the bag that it came in  
it's not what you've learned it's the form of the lessons  
it's not what you bought it's the bag that it came in:  
that's what you can't lose

We got monsoons for our April showers  
we asked of the cards and we drew the Tower  
we got ghost nets and polythene and a distant glow  
turning real slow in a new Sargasso  
but all that we slaughterhouse animals know  
is cinders and snow  
just cinders and snow

# Rabbit Drive

The Victa crops birthright close in to the hardpan  
the hunter was Abel when Cain first fenced fields  
we still sow the wind with our ashen pity  
on invasion day

We savour the taste of our own slow poison  
the blind are not dogged by dark savage memories  
we all celebrate by burning the flesh  
on invasion day

<choral part>

We toast to the Coxes and their famous roses  
grown rich and bloody on Bathurst's black soil  
old forest's ash falls upon Cook's Endeavor  
on invasion day

While we prosper we are not sorry  
while our fences stand we are not sorry  
while our children live we are not sorry  
it's just a numbers game

# Everything is always ending

There's a last time for eyes  
There's a last time for teeth  
There's a last time for love  
There's a last time for grief

If you want to see anything you'll have to be quick  
because everything is always ending all the time

There's a last time for wealth  
There's a last time for toil  
There's a last drop of blood  
There's a last drop of oil

If you want to see anything you'll have to be quick  
because everything is always ending all the time  
And the little that we've learned cannot save it  
But that's alright, it's alright, just let it all go

There's a last time for want  
There's a last time for need  
There's a last time for talk  
There's a last time for greed

If you want to see anything you'll have to be quick  
because everything is always ending all the time

# 1981

Adoring her black hair shining on the shore  
swimming out to the Birdrock to be her hero  
following the cliff track on to Mornington  
our wheels click and shine in the early sun  
it was always now all time is one  
in the simple-minded innocent heart of 1981

Storm at five each afternoon  
We lie on the floor and watch cartoons  
We don't know that when we grow all this will be gone  
these are the days we base our days upon  
a haze of snowy tv-ghosted guns  
from the stupid empty heart of 1981

All the evil that I've done  
will around my neck be hung  
I'll see it all once more at the very end  
but you know, you can't go home again  
back through the winking camera sun  
to the silver-salt soaked heart of 1981

Cards in our spokes  
no cars on the roads  
the public pool's cicada song  
carries us on, carries us on  
carries us on, carries us on  
through the empty vacant-lot heart of 1981

# it is time

when the fires scald the earth clean down to the rock this is mine  
it's my time

when the sky is a bruise and the air is alight this is mine  
it's my time

when the land is a blanket of ash and of sand this is mine  
it's my time

<instrumental>

when the rain is relentless and black waters rise this is mine  
it's my time

<THIS ONE ISN'T FINISHED YET, MORE TO COME>

# I <sup>THE</sup> make my own way out

Shellshocked by life, my head in a sling  
as old as the taste of a cold water spring

I made a beeline for the pub and braced myself against a glass  
and then spent all I had at the old rail o'brass

just watering the weeds in my soul  
and then  
I made my own way out

When the shit's in the fan I'll do what I can  
though I am no longer a violent man

now the sun is a new coin tossed over the sea  
life's blank on both faces but it brought you to me

thank your mother for the rabbit  
keep an eye on that dog of yours

and I'll just make my own way out  
It's OK  
I'll make my own way out

I'll make my own way out  
I'll be fine  
I'll make my own way out