

# James McMurtry, Ruby And Carlos

Ruby said you're gettin' us in a world of hurt  
And down below the Mason Dumb Ass line 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 dark of 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

The grey colt nickered at the gate  
She said "you're right it's gettin' late  
You and me got work to do  
We can't be burning daylight too"  
She took down the long lead rope  
And stayed off that slippery slope

The 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 just how they do nowadays  
We should all a'been so lucky"

By spring she'd had the run of all the freeborn men  
Ruby turned fifty in a sheep camp tent  
Her body still could rock all night  
But her heart was closed and locked up tight  
Potato fields all muddy and brown  
The gossip long since quieted down

After one more Coggins test  
Pouring coffee for the county vet

Pictures on the ice box door  
Of Carlos in the first Gulf War  
Black eyed, brown and youthful face  
Smiling back from a Saudi base

Then Carlos on the big bay mare  
Heavier now and longer haired  
Looking past the saddle shed  
From way on back inside his head

The old vet said one day Rube  
That colt will break an egg in you  
Now and then one comes along  
You just can't ride then he went on home

The storm door didn't catch  
It blew back hard As she struck a match  
But she cupped it just in time  
Then she sent that ash tray flying(

CHORUS)  
Holding back the flood  
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 a hollow sound  
That 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 of Music Row  
Carlos never saw the studio  
Session guys had that all sewn up

He looks out the window as it starts to sleet  
Layin on a friend's couch on Nevada Street  
Lately he's been staying high  
Sick all winter and they don't know why  
They don't know why or they just won't say  
They don't talk much down at the VA

Ruby's in his thoughts sometimes  
What thoughts can get out past the wine  
He feels her fingers on his brow  
And right then he misses how  
She looked in that grey morning light  
She never shaved like they all do now  
He sees it all behind his eyes  
His hands go searching but they come up dry

Halfway in that waking dream  
Carlos lets the land line ring

He'd never have guessed it was Ruby calling  
A pin in her hip from the grey colt falling  
Figure eights in a lazy lope  
Stumbled on that slippery slope

(Chorus x1)