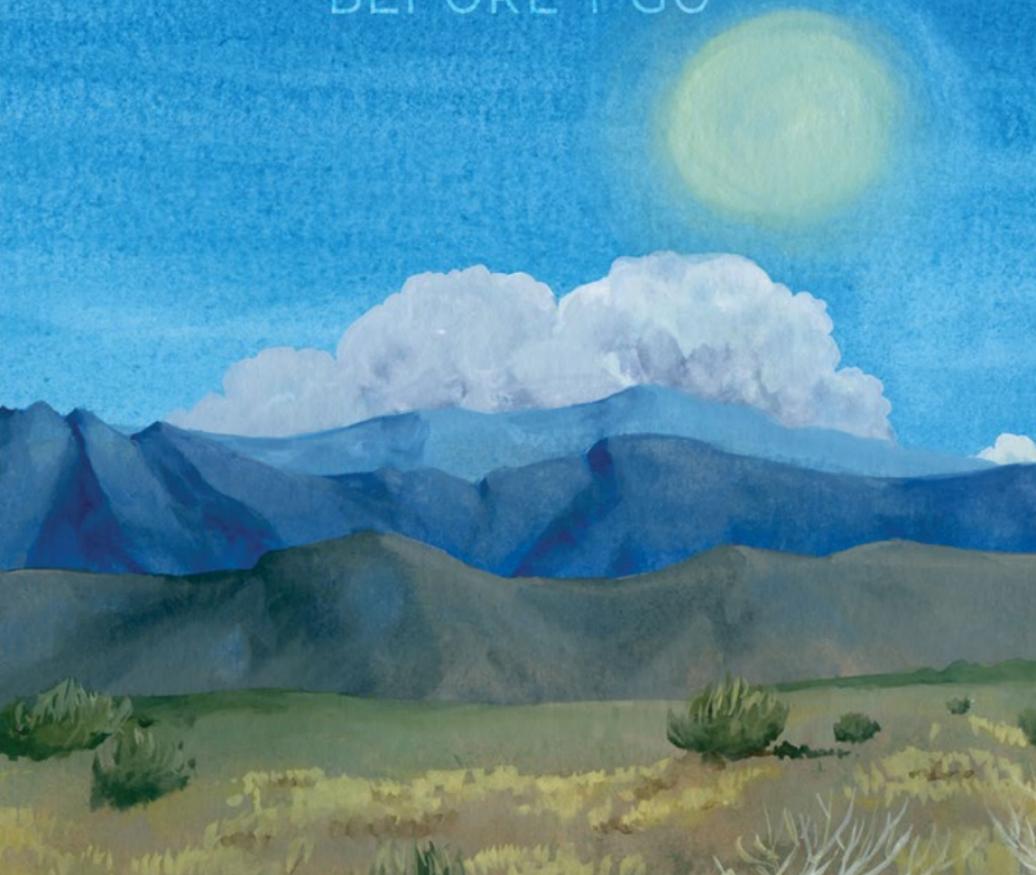


ORDINARY ELEPHANT

BEFORE I GO



BEST OF YOU

As Guy Clark said, "somedays the song writes you." Yes sir, they do.

Over in the corner
Like an old barstool
He held me up
Right when I needed him to

He said "Listen up my friend
Let me tell you what I know
You can wish you were someone else
Then you gotta let it go

Cause that's a good way
To get a bad start
I don't care what straw you drew
You gotta let it make the best of you

We ain't playing a game
We ain't running a race
It's a way of life, boy
You just gotta find your place

I used to be like you
Would sit here in the dark
Watch 'em in the spotlight
And pick myself apart

But that's a good way
To get a bad start
I don't care what straw you drew
You gotta let it make the best of you

You don't need
To bring down the house
If you can bring 'em inside
When they bring down the lights"

Then the room went dark
I could barely see his face
Picked up his old Martin box
Ready for the stage

He said "Let me ask you this
Whatcha gonna do?
Will you pick yourself up
Or find a crack to fall through?"

Cause that's a good way
To get a bad start
I don't care what straw you drew
You gotta let it make the best of you

You don't need a good way
To get a bad start
I don't care what straw you drew
You gotta let it make the best of you"

RAILROAD MAN

I will never hear a train whistle and not think of my dad, and he will never live a day and not think of his grandmother. -Crystal

My daddy was a railroad man
Raised by a woman whose life
and love showed in her hands
She saw fire and death, was given less
Than her fair share,
but never asked for more
She just thanked her stars and garters
And held close her 9 sons and daughters

When the south wind carries home
The whistle of that freight train
I can hear him speak to me
See the strength she gave,
and the man she made
Makes me proud to share his name

Through the fields of cane and corn
Across the tracks, then back again,
to see her when we could
As a child I did not see
The story behind the smile that she,
put in his eyes
She lived a small town life
But taught him what it means to try

When the south wind carries home
The whistle of that freight train
I can hear him speak to me
See the strength she gave,
and the man she made
Makes me proud to share his name

In the summer sun we drove back
To that town where the dirt turns red,
and the rivers, brown
He stood tall and strong, full of song
That she gave him for times like those
When we watched fly away
A woman of amazing grace

When the south wind carries home
The whistle of that freight train
I can hear him speak to me
See the strength she gave,
and the man she made
Makes me proud to share his name
Share his name
Share his name



CAN I COUNT ON YOU?

Marriage, children, fear, insecurity, infidelity, and the questions that come in the wake.

You're trapped inside your head
Have you even heard, a word I've said
Will you open up and be you again
Or keep this up, right to the end
Hey that's neither here nor there
Let me just clear the air

Can I count on you
To see this thing through
I want us to shine again
Like something old,
made to feel brand new
But would we just be
scraping the surface
Of the dirt and the rust
Ready to come back and cover us
At the first sign of rain or dust

Your hammer's ready to fall
How it follows through, is your call
Will you help me build this house back up
Or just keep working at that wall
You put yourself behind
Please come out if you're so inclined

Can I count on you
To see this thing through
I want us to shine again
Like something old,
made to feel brand new
But would we just be
scraping the surface

Of the dirt and the rust
Ready to come back and cover us
At the first sign of rain or dust

You've thrown me out to see
How life could be, without me
But it's not just me,
my skin's not thick enough
For all three, of us
Don't talk at me under your breath
Just tell me all the lines
you've transgressed

And why I can't count on you
To see this thing through
I wanted us to shine again
Like something old,
made to feel brand new
But we would just be
scraping the surface
Of the dirt and the rust
Ready to come back and cover us
At the first sign of rain or dust

ANOTHER DAY

When you think there is no way out, sometimes the best medicine is the words of those who love you.

I fell asleep with the TV on
Hand around the telephone
Thinking about you

Came close, but I got scared
Didn't think you should have to bear
Witness
To something, something like this

Another day, another dollar spent
On shit made to make me forget
Because I can't stop

They say it's do or die man
But I forget what I am
Fighting
For, who am I fighting for

Cause looking in the mirror
I am barely reminded
Of somebody I used to know
You say you got what I need
To keep me from crossing
This line I toe

So I will try
to keep the medicine down
But it's hard
when I'm alone in this house
And I'm not sure I wanna stick around

I could change if I wanted to
But what I want's got nothing to do
With what I need

What I need is a wildfire
As loud and bright as a gospel choir
To burn me
Down, back to something good

Cause looking in the mirror
I am barely reminded
Of somebody I used to know
You say you got what I need
To keep me from crossing
This line I toe

So I will try
to keep the medicine down
But it's hard
when I'm alone in this house
And I'm not sure I wanna stick around

You know all my promises
They just end up as good intentions
Because what I say can never seem
To hold my attention

So I'm trying
to keep the medicine down
But I'm desperate here in this house
I'm trying to want to stick around
For you

HIGHWAY 71

Between Houston and Austin, Highway 71 runs through Bastrop, TX, which saw the worst wildfires in Texas history in 2011. For years it remained a swath of charred trees, ash, and concrete foundations where homes once stood.

A murder of crows
Between the trees, beneath the boughs
Black feathers shine like armor
Around the frail bodies they house

And he, too, is frail
On the inside, and out
Ork—deep in ash, once his porch
Or maybe his wife's blouse

And they'll never know
Because today it's all the same
Their lives are just piles
Of black and white and grey

Like a wild crow
Flying around a caged bird
Listening to her sing
Feeling every word

On the outside we pace,
And cry, and love, and wait
For better days to come
As we try to share the weight

But we'll never know
Because today we're not the same
Their lives are just piles
Of black and white and grey

Like a lost bird,
in the dusty dark of dusk
Searching the sky,
for something he can trust

Covered in dust, of things he did not think
he would outlast
He's thinking in questions, he never thought
he would ask

Like a fallen bird
In an unsteady voice
He replies "I'm alive,
But I'm not well

Too many pictures
Sat on those shelves
That told stories
I could never tell

And now they'll never know
Because today we're not the same
Our lives are just piles
Of black and white and grey"

A murder of crows
Between the trees, beneath the boughs
Black feathers shine like armor
Around the frail bodies they house

LEAVING KERRVILLE

About five minutes after leaving the 2014 Kerrville Folk Festival, waiting to turn in to a convenience store to say goodbye to three friends, we were reminded that tomorrow is not a guarantee.

Two small lanes, to come and go
It's a little roundabout,
by the standards of that crowd
Flying by to say, hey it's not
It's not your time

I didn't see it coming,
from the passenger's seat
I was shaking Kerrville dirt,
off my dirty feet
I'm not sure how something so fast
Could ever feel so slow

The humming
of a thousand freight trains
Everything and nothing,
flying through my brain
Like a summer storm,
right out of nowhere
So violent, then it's gone

Two small lives, in the grand scheme
Stopping by to say goodbye,
to another three
Waiting at a time and place,
that was more right
Than they will ever know

From the dirt and grass,
of the roadside
A shadow broke across the sun,
and bright blue sky
A familiar face,
so many miles from home
For a moment let me forget

The humming
of a thousand freight trains
Everything and nothing,
flying through my brain
Like a summer storm,
right out of nowhere
So violent, then it's gone

Without any fanfare
Just leaving splatters on the glass,
for the sun to erase
Like the blood on my skin
Left by wounds that marred my face

And I just can't shake
The look on his face
Trembling, pale, and pained,
by what he saw
As we sat in thankful silence
Knowing how it could have gone

LADY IN THE ELEVATOR

The smile and story of a 4 1/2 foot spitfire stayed with me beyond our short elevator ride down to the hospital lobby.

Done-up hair, atop a frail frame
Eyes that smile,
words that make me do the same
A glimpse of who she was,
in the shine of her dancing shoes
A glimpse of who she is,
in what she has to lose

She's been waiting for him, to change
That's something
she never thought she'd want
She said "I don't want you
to leave me, darlin'
But don't let me hold you back
I'll see you some bright morning"

He picked her up at 8, in May 1962
In his Ford Fairlane, gulfstream blue
It was a little run down,
the one thing to his name
But he had a ring in his pocket,
and something to say

She's been waiting for him, to change
That's something she
never thought she'd want
She said "I don't want you
to leave me, darlin'
But don't let me hold you back
I'll see you some bright morning"

Too many machines,
sing their song around his bed
Too many words, that she never said
"I don't know if you can hear me,
but I'll keep talking anyway
I don't want there to be,
something I forgot to say

I've been waiting for you, to change
That's something
I never thought I'd want
I don't want you to leave me, darlin'
But don't let me hold you back
I'll see you some bright morning

Oh my hands they may be empty
But my heart is full
I will see you again
I'll see you some bright morning"

WHO I AM

We could not ask for more supportive families. This is the voice of our friends, and strangers, that share the burden of not being accepted for who they are.

I remember all those rides
Home on the backroads,
that twist and wind
You'd call me over to your lap
And then you'd let me drive

Have you forgotten
the games we'd play
On the coffee table,
at the end of your day
And that dog you didn't want
But got me anyway

*Oh and what about the name
that you gave to me
Have you forgotten
The blood that runs in our veins
Oh and the times that came before
I was just something
You have to explain*

I remember when I knew
And not knowing how to tell you
You'd swear the words that I spoke
Were stones that I threw

I haven't forgotten the look you gave
What you said, and didn't say
Went from family to stranger
Cause you needed someone to blame

Chorus

Who I am
Didn't end up how you planned
So you threw me off your sinking ship
And started rowing for land

Maybe I won't look so different
From that far away
I'd like to think we'll close
This distance that you've made

But I can't swim this sea, or walk on water
And I don't think you're coming back for me

*Oh I remember the name
that you gave to me
I have not forgotten
The blood that runs in our veins
Oh and the times that came before
I was just something
You have to explain*

Who I am
Didn't end up how you planned
But don't forget that who I was
Is still who I am

I can't swim this sea, or walk on water
But I think you should come back for me
Yeah I think you should come back for me

EVANGELINE

In 1847 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the story of Evangeline and her lost love Gabriel. Gabriel lost his love, too.

If the night falls, before I do
I won't be far behind
There's nothing left, for me here
Nothing but too much time

This is the last time
I want to say goodbye
For the last time

The sun rose, my heart fell
I didn't really want to make it through
the night
Let me, be dreaming
Let me wake on the other side

Because this is the last time
I want to say goodbye
For the last time

I am shaken, I am rattled
I hear voices in my head,
jump at my own shadow
I am lost, but not for long
Because one day I will find you
Evangeline

I'll keep looking for, the answer
Until it starts to show
I'll keep listening, for your call home
On the lonesome winds that blow

Because this is the last time
I want to say goodbye
For the last time

I am shaken, I am rattled
I hear voices in my head,
jump at my own shadow
I am lost, but I am grateful
To have called you my darlin'
Evangeline

THE THINGS HE SAW

Alzheimer's disease is a thief, but he gave us so much. We love you Pop.

Band of gold, spinning around
A finger on a hand that felt the sound
That rang through the dirt of a battleground
Across the sea in a foreign town

Worried hands trace his jaw
And that old El Camino with its every flaw
But a blank page is all he can draw
You'd swear he's never seen the things he saw

Pacing a yard starting to wilt
Brown and green, like a patchwork quilt
Picking up leaves the trees have spilt
Outside a house he doesn't know he built

Band of gold, spinning around
A finger on a hand that's bearing down
On a wooden cane dug into the ground
You'd swear he's never seen a thing in this town



WASHINGTON SAID EAST

The night was cold, the year was 1998, the car was an old Nissan Stanza, and the driver was one of my best friends. Louisiana to Mississippi, greasy diner at 5 AM, then back home, thankful. -Crystal

We flipped a quarter, to find direction
Answers to our questions,
maybe forget where we had been
Picked a song to take us there,
and back again one day
"At the Stars," I will always find you

300 miles through, Louisiana pines
We passed a man with a cardboard sign
His eyes didn't look at mine,
but I could read between those lines
That cut deep across his weathered face

Take a second look, you know
We've all got something to hide,
something to show
We've walked straighter lines,
we have taken higher roads
Please don't give in
to all that is broken
Until you give in
To what you've got

Threw a penny in a fountain, at 3:33
Took off with a one-way sign,
pointing right at me
We turned around and got on track,
can't believe how much we laughed
I hadn't seen you really smile,
in way too long

The trees were on fire,
in the rising sun
Shining off the water,
and the face of the one
Who would drive me anywhere,
and love me anyway
And remind me in the half-light,
of that brand new day

Take a second look, you know
We've all got something to hide,
something to show
We've walked straighter lines,
we have taken higher roads
Please don't give in
to all that is broken
Until you give in
To what you've got

BEFORE I GO

A few months into our nomadic journey, we found ourselves in the southern New Mexico desert, in the purest silence. "The desert's quiet, and Cleveland's cold..." from Townes Van Zandt's Pancho and Lefty came floating in among the other thoughts.

You know, Townes was right
The desert's quiet
It ain't Cleveland
But it sure gets cold in the moonlight

Mountains in the western sky
They were always meant to occupy
It's times like these you don't ask why
It's bigger than you and I

When the sun lets down its guard
The colors come like a postcard
Slow, but worth all it can afford
A reminder of all we're moving toward

I'm gonna let my bones be my anchor
Ground myself to what I know
When today becomes a long time ago
Maybe I'll have learned to let go

Slowing down under the strain
Pulling weight I couldn't sustain
Took leaving what's known, for change
To find it's me that needs to change

Shades of grey
among the black and white
I'm seeing things in a different light
Finding what feels free
Finding what I know is right

I'm gonna let my bones be my anchor
Ground myself to what I know
When today becomes a long time ago
Maybe I'll have learned to let go
I'm gonna take it slow,
see what this world's got to show
And try to let go, before I go

As the day lies down to rest
The sky takes off her Sunday best
Shedding all it had to confess
Leaving what's true
to shine from the darkness

Townes was right, the desert's quiet
Take it slow, so it don't pass you by

THANK YOU

The wandering life is a lucky one.

In the belly of this canyon
Carved by the hands of the Río Grande
A thousand miles from what I once called home

I am just a speck
On this west Texas wind
Blowing through these hills of stone

When I feel like next to nothing
Next to something like that
I know there's nothing I need I don't already have

Talking about tomorrow
Looking at a sky full of past
The only thing that's new is the moon

Our eyes collect the light of stars
Born three million years ago
Showing up as we are passing through

When I feel like next to nothing
Next to something like that
I know there's nothing I need I don't already have

So thank you for taking me to the trees
And where the mountains talk to me

Time ain't slowing down
Guess you and I better learn to

Cause what's the worth of living through
A life that cannot catch up with you