



Sometimes Just The Sky | Mary Chapin Carpenter

Produced By Ethan Johns

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All songs written by Mary Chapin Carpenter
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Produced by Ethan Johns
Recorded by Dom Monks
Assistant Engineer: Oli Jacobs
Recorded at Real World Studios in Box, Wiltshire, England
Mixed by Ethan Johns at Three Crows Studios in Wiltshire, England
Mastering Engineer: Mandy Parnell at Black Saloon Studios in London, England

Mary Chapin Carpenter: Acoustic Guitars, Vocals
Duke Levine: Electric Guitar, Ebow, Acoustic Guitar, Mandolin on "Naked to the Eye"
Dave Bronze: Bass

And the Black Eyed Dogs:
Ethan Johns: Acoustic and Electric Guitar, Slide Guitar, Mandolin, Tipple, Mandocello, Mountain Dulcimer
Stephanie Jean: Piano, Omnichord, Organ, Harmonium, Wurlitzer
Jeremy Stacey: Percussion, Drums
Georgina Leach: Violin, Viola

Cover, back cover, farm photos by Aaron Farrington
Studio photo by Ethan Johns
Live Photo by Daniel Hosterman
Art Design: Lisa Wright
Stylist: Courtney Kivela Robinson
Management: Chris Tetzeli at 7S Management

www.marychapincarpenter.com

1 HEROES AND HEROINES

Heroes and heroines are scarcer than they've ever been
So much more to lose than win
The distance never greater

Way back when they made history
Flying planes across the sea
Embarking on the odyssey
You put away the danger

Heaven bless the one who flies
A pioneer on frontier skies
The world was dark and your only mark
Was the light of the northern star
I imagine what was in your eyes
Seeds of rust and days gone by
Your wings hang in a gallery sky
I wonder how you're flying

Way out on the western plains
The snow drifts high and dark clouds rain
The Chinooks blow their winds across the mountains

A life that's never safe and dry
Rodeos and riding high
Women and their men get by
On six-guns and white lightning
Heaven bless them on the road
Drifters and their dreams of gold
The world was wide and cowboy's soul
Could span the whole horizon
I imagine what was in your eyes
The dust and dirt under outlaw skies
A piece of land and a stubborn mind
Were the only things worth having

Now they say the moon is dust and ash
California's made of cash
One day those hills will crash
Into the sparkling waters

Rain and snow and sun and wind
You roamed the earth and you spread your wings
And long ago, a heroes' dreams
Belonged to all God's creatures
Heaven bless the ones who sleep
The ones who laugh and the ones who weep

Heaven bless the ones who keep
Their bearings strong and certain
Lord help the fool who said
Better quit while you're ahead
Dreamers born are heroes bred
On earth and up in heaven

Lord help the fool who said
Better quit while you're ahead
A dreamer born is a hero bred
On earth and up in heaven

2 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TRAVEL

From departure to arrival
what does it mean to travel
With your suitcase by the handle
holding everything you need

Are you going or are you coming
walking slow or running
Toward somebody or from something
trade your longing in for speed

and the freedom to be a stranger
is a bargain that's ours alone
sometimes you just want to be someone else
unencumbered and unknown

And from taking off to landing
you could feel your heart expanding
You walked halfway down Manhattan
till you met the Brooklyn Bridge

and in a 2 AM transmission
from a high wire act position
how the skyline behind you glistened
as if someone pulled a switch

and I don't want to be a stranger
and I don't want to be alone
but sometimes I just want to be somewhere else
untethered and unknown
when i am far from home

From departure to arrival
What does it mean to travel

3 I HAVE A NEED FOR SOLITUDE

I have a need
For solitude
I'll never be
Safe in crowded rooms
I like the sound
Of silence coming on
I come around
When everyone has gone

I have a need
For cool, verdant spaces
Beneath the trees
Secret empty places
Nobody knows
So no one will intrude
I have a need
For solitude

But you can find me,
when the light is changing
At that time of day when there's
Little day remaining
You can find me
where I've been waiting
Waiting here for you

I never was
The pretty girl in school
I never was
Fast, tough and cool
All I was
All my life it seems
Was hard to love
Harder now to keep

But you can find me,
When the light is changing
At that time of day when there's
Little day remaining

I have a need
For solitude
I'll never be
Safe in crowded rooms
I like the sound
Of silence coming on
I come around
when all the rest have gone...

4 ONE SMALL HEART

Call the folks, leave a note,
lock the doors and windows
Pack the truck, here's to luck,
here's to where the wind blows
Got the cash, got the gas,
now lose the map and compass
Read the signs, obey the lines,
follow all your hunches
Now it's just the open road
One small heart and a great big soul that's driving

Radio singing low like a true companion
L.A.'s lights wavy bright, they trail you like a lantern
Morning comes and desert sun
rises like redemption
Another day to make your way from answer
back to question
Out here on the open road
One small heart and a great big soul that's driving

No set of directions, no shortcuts
Just some empty soda cans,
some cigarette butts
The key to traveling light is to
not need very much

Late tonight you'll see the lights of a
thousand stars above you
And at a roadside stop you'll
call to talk to a voice
back home that loves you
But at the sound of the tone you'll
hang up the phone
and head into the night
You try again, God knows when,
until the morning light
They lost you to the open road, one small heart
and a great big soul
That's driving, driving
Out here on the open road
One small heart and a great big soul that's driving

5 THE MOON AND ST. CHRISTOPHER

When I was young I spoke like a child
I saw with a child's eyes
And an open door was to a girl
Like the stars are to the sky
It's funny how the world lives up to
All your expectations
With adventures for the stout of heart
And the lure of the open spaces

There's two lanes running down this road
And whichever side you're on
Accounts for where you want to go
Or what you're running from
Back when darkness overtook me
On a blind man's curve

I relied upon the moon
I relied upon the moon
I relied upon the moon and St. Christopher

Now I've paid my dues 'cause I have owned them
But I've paid a price sometimes
For being such a stubborn woman
In such stubborn times
I have run from the arms of lovers
I have run from the eyes of friends
I've run from the hands of kindness
I've run just because I can

But now I've grown and I speak like a woman
And I see with a woman's eyes
And an open door is to me now
Like the saddest of goodbyes
When it's too late for turning back
I pray for the heart and the nerve

And I rely upon the moon
I rely upon the moon
I rely upon the moon and St. Christopher

I rely upon the moon
I rely upon the moon
I rely upon the moon and St. Christopher
To be my guide

6 SUPERMAN

The night is ending everywhere
Dim the lights, put up the chairs
Walk me home, take my hand
Maybe you can be my superman
Tonight I wore my party dress
For no one else but me I guess
That's alright you understand
Tonight you'll be my superman
No confessions now, or later
Hold me cause you can
Tonight love is not a traitor, but a friend
No you don't have to save the world
With x-ray eyes and cape unfurled
Simply whisper in my ear again
That you're gonna be my superman
No confessions now or later
Hold me 'cause you can
Tonight love is not a traitor, but a friend
Oh the night is ending everywhere
Streets rolled up, sidewalks bare
But we don't have to give a damn
'Cause I'm dressed to kill and you're superman

7 NAKED TO THE EYE

I've been walking these streets, been deciding what's true
Been hands in my pockets, coat collar up, thinking 'bout you
I've been talking to myself, giving fate the third degree
I've been eyes on the pavement admitting my part to strangers passing me
And I know it isn't fair, but nothing's ever been
Hey when you look at me baby, my god how I feel so good again
I don't know where I went wrong, but it isn't right to lie
Hey when you look at me baby, my heart's wide open, naked to the eye

Now some lovers are apart, but they're never far away
I can see her in your eyes, hear her in your voice and I have to turn away
Oh what covet is to ache, is what aching is to me
For the arms of a man who knows who I am and where I need to be
And if I know what I know, then the lonely can't pretend
When you look at me baby, my god how I feel so whole again
Is there heaven after all, or just this empty space
That no amount of time, nor comfort in its hands can ever help me face
Which is worse is yet to come, your rebuff or my resign
Hey when you look at me baby, I'm helpless as a child, naked to the eye

It's like a fever and a spell, unbroken by a sigh
Hey when you look at me baby I'm going nowhere, just naked to the eye
Yeah when you look at me baby, everything's there, naked to the eye
Hey when you look at me baby, I haven't got a prayer, naked to the eye

When I was growing up, I loved playing my mother's instruments and singing, scratching out songs and throwing records onto the Sears turntable (with the speaker built into the plastic box) turned up as loud as it could go. I taught myself to play guitar from song books of chords, listening closely to records while playing along, memorizing everything I heard, eventually graduating from a baritone ukulele to the gut string Goya guitar gathering dust in a corner of the living room. (That Goya now serves as a trusted holder of tour laminates from 30+ years of accumulating.)

I listened to every thing in our house's record stacks, from Woody Guthrie and the Weavers to the Mamas and the Papas, Motown's finest, the Beatles, Randy Newman, every Broadway musical cast-recording of the last half century, Johnny Cash, the Allman Brothers, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. My father had a great jazz collection of 78 rpms and my mother would blast the opera through the house every Saturday afternoon during the Texaco Opera Theatre live radio broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

The collection of songs that become my first album "Hometown Girl" began taking shape in 1985 down in my future co-producer John Jennings' basement studio in the wilds of suburban northern Virginia. Eventually we would finish it at Bias Studios in Springfield, Virginia, as we would the next five albums, under the aegis of Bob Dawson, Grammy-nominated recording and mixing engineer and friend for life.

A CBS Records A & R scout from Nashville, Tennessee heard something in that first album, signed me to the label and released the disc in July of 1987. We hit the road as much as we could while I kept my day job, all the while working on the songs for the next album, which two years later became "State Of The Heart."

We kept touring, I kept writing songs at my childhood desk in my apartment just outside of D.C. and finally I quit my day job after "State Of The Heart" came out and I could make the rent with the proceeds of a modest publishing deal. Nothing could have prepared me for the extraordinary adventures that lay ahead...

Fast forward to May 2017...I am boarding an early

morning flight to London where I am going to meet up with producer Ethan Johns. We are going to hunker down at the celebrated Real World Studios in rural Wiltshire where we have a few weeks to record songs culled from 12 existing albums plus a new song, the belief being that by reaching back you are also moving forward. It feels both spooky and spellbinding to inhabit these songs once more, with a new band of musicians who immediately feel like old friends to me, who play the songs with hearts wide open. The sessions feel charmed, full of startling moments of recognition, emotion, memory and connection. At the end of my time with Ethan, Duke, Jeremy, Dave, Georgina, Stephanie, Dom, Oli and Tetz, Real World has become like a second home and I am feeling an appreciation and gratitude for this adventure that is so big and wide I cannot describe it much less hold it still in my hands.

When I was growing up, I never imagined I could make a living playing music; I imagined myself as a songwriter and musician only in my most private reveries. So to be able to release this album 30 years on from the release of that first record feels like an extraordinary stroke of good fortune as well as a true privilege. To be still making music, to be still riding the roads, to be still making up songs, but now at a kitchen table in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, surrounded by what Carl Sandberg called "the creative hush" of rural beauty, I am amazed and grateful for so many things – for the gifts as well as the lessons in the hundreds of thousands of miles travelled, the can't-live-without-friends who have locked arms, the strangers who have illuminated every moment onstage with incandescent joy, irreplaceable family and loved ones, experiences, adventures, the tribe I recognize as my own along the dreaming road... "sometimes everything at once, but sometimes just the sky." It is as simple as this.

Mary Chapin Carpenter
June 2017



8 RHYTHM OF THE BLUES

I can hear the rain come down, I can listen with my heart
I can see you with both eyes closed in the dark
Sleep will come in just awhile but 'til it does I choose
To listen to the rain, it's the rhythm of the blues

I walk along these streets of home that once belonged to us
And now baby I walk alone and I am lost
In the sound of my own footsteps on the avenues
I guess I'm only walking to the rhythm of the blues

I don't want to hear another word spoken
I don't want to see another tear shed
I can't seem to fix what's broken
Like this record baby in my head

Lonely looks as bad on me as lonely looks on you
And still we keep on moving to the rhythm of the blues

I want a place to call my own where you have never been
I want to look around and know you won't be coming back again.
On some pretense paper-thin that I can see right through
You come and go baby, like the rhythm of the blues
You come and go baby, like the rhythm of the blues
You come and go, you come and you go, you come and you go

9 THIS IS LOVE 10

If you ever need to hear a voice in the middle of the night
When it seems so black outside that you can't remember light
Ever shone on you or the ones you love in this or another lifetime
And the voice you need to hear is the true and the trusted kind
With a soft, familiar rhythm in these swirling, unsure times
When the waves are lapping in and you're not sure you can swim
Well here's the lifeline
If you ever need to feel a hand take up your own
When you least expect but want it more than you've ever known
Well baby here's that hand baby, here's my voice that's calling, this is love, all it ever was and will be
This is love

If you ever need some proof that time can heal your wounds
Just step inside my heart and walk around these rooms
Where the shadows used to be, you can feel as well as see how peace can hover
Now time's been here to fix what's broken with its power
The love that smashed us both to bits spent its last few hours
Calling out your name, I thought this is the kind of pain
From which we don't recover
But I'm standing here now with my heart held out to you
You would've thought a miracle was all that got us through
Well baby all I know, all I know is I'm still standing
And this is love all it ever was and will be

This is love
Standing up for you and it's standing up for me
And I see you still and there's this catch in my throat and
I swallow hard til it leaves me
There's nothing in this world that can change what we know
Still I know I am here if you ever need me
This is love

If you ever think of me let it be around twilight
When the world has settled down and the last round of sunlight
Is waning in the sky, as you sit and watch the night descending
A car will pass out front with lovers at the wheel
A dog will bark out back and children's voices peal
Over and under the air, you've been there lost in the remembering
If you ever wish for things that are only in the past
Just remember that the wrong things aren't supposed to last
Babe it's over and done and the rest is gonna come when you let it
And this is love, all it ever was and will be
This is love, when you let it, if you let it now
This is love, all it ever was and can be
This is love

10 JERICHO

You can't see me yet
seeing takes a long, long time
from the outside in
measuring each shift and sigh
but as you let your eyes adjust
to the darkness deep within
sifting through the ash and dust
we are the places that we've been

You can't hear me yet
listening takes a long, long time
and I've so much to tell
but words die on these lips of mine
but in the stillness you may sense
every thing I long to say
unraveling like golden threads
the walls will all come down this way
And you don't know me yet
knowing takes a long, long time
and time is all we have
never traveling in straight lines
So memorize each turn and twist
just be careful as you go
for if love is a labyrinth
then my heart is Jericho

11 THE CALLING

Deep in your blood or a voice in your head
On a dark lonesome highway it finds you instead
So certain it knows you, you can't turn away
Something or someone has found you today
Genius or Jesus, maybe he's seen us but who would believe us
I can't really say
Whatever the calling, the stumbling or falling, you follow it knowing
There's no other way, there's no other way
There's zealots and preachers and readers of dreams
The righteous yell loudest and the saved rise to sing
The lonely and lost are just waiting to hear
Any moment their purpose will be perfectly clear
And then life would mean more than their name on the door
And that far distant shore that's so near
They'd hear the calling, and stumbling and falling
They'd follow it knowing there's nothing to fear
There's nothing to fear
I don't remember a voice on a dark, lonesome road
When I started the journey so long ago
I was only just trying to outrun the noise
There was never a question of having a choice
Jesus or genie, maybe they've seen me but who would believe me
I can't really say
Whatever the calling, the stumbling and falling
I followed it knowing there was no other way
Jesus or genie maybe he's seen me, but who would believe me
I can't really say
Whatever the calling, the stumbling and falling
I got through it knowing there's no other way
There's no other way

12 THIS SHIRT

This shirt is old and faded
All the color's washed away
I've had it now for more damn years
Than I can count anyway
I wear it beneath my jacket
With the collar turned up high
So old I should replace it
But I'm not about to try

This shirt's got silver buttons
And a place upon the sleeve
Where I used to set my heart up
Right there where anyone could see
This shirt is the one I wore
To every boring high school dance
Where the boys ignored the girls
And we all pretended to like the band

This shirt was a pillow for my head
On a train through Italy
This shirt was a blanket beneath the love
We made in Argeles
This shirt was lost for three whole days
In a town near Buffalo
Till I found the locker key
In a downtown Trailways bus depot

This shirt was the one I lent you
And when you gave it back
It had a rip inside the sleeve
Where you rolled your cigarettes
It was the place I put my heart
Now look at where you put a tear
I forgave your thoughtlessness
But not the boy who put it there

This shirt was the place your cat
Decided to give birth to five
And we stayed up all night watching
And we wept when the last one died
This shirt is just an old faded piece
of cotton
Shining like the memories
Inside those silver buttons

And this shirt is a grand old relic
With a grand old history
I wear it now for Sunday chores
Cleaning house and raking leaves
I wear it beneath my jacket
With the collar turned up high
So old I should replace it
But I'm not about to try

13 SOMETIMES JUST THE SKY

Noises in my head and endless "should have"s rain
On me like a storm, like a hurricane
Losses piled up like wood stacked stories high
Feels like I've been framed, but I've no alibi
Used to be that all I needed was what I didn't possess
Yearning makes you who you end up as, more or less
Whatever choice I made that worked out was just a lucky guess
A lucky guess

Adventures half discarded and half held onto now
Like dancing on a ledge to the edge somehow
I can still pick out the faces though I forget the names
And the places that are gone, but the urge remains
To throw caution to the wind or is it to the stars
To hold out my open hands despite my empty arms
To wear my heart upon my sleeve just like a battle scar
These are battle scars

There is comfort in a late night kitchen radio
And in a letter sent, and lists of what you know
And when you don't know anything, you make another one
It's good to write it down, starting with the sun
And sometimes church bells, trees and seasons marking times gone by
Sometimes starlings swells and tidal moons and filled up eyes
Sometimes everything at once but sometimes just the sky
Sometimes just the sky

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