

LYRICS from the LP "Overflown" by Return to Normal

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1. Joe Casey

A woods of sturdy perfect trees,
seven cattle in a meadow standing, strained,
a two lane highway, a truck rolls down
loaded full with yellow grain.
Somewhere in America.

An empty house up on a hill,
the lights are on, the drapes are open.
An empty window, an empty porch,
beside an empty driveway.
Somewhere in America, Somewhere in America.

His daughter pearls, his wife knits,
he sets his easel up and sits,
and paints these scenes from yesterdays,
takes his memory back away.
To the Ozark hills, big Missouri rivers
the dripstone table at Meramac Caverns,
where the James boys gathered to split the loot,
to the hollows and ridges where they'd fish and shoot.
On his canvas the hills are melting.
(hills are melting, hills are melting)

Here he's a toddler on this mother's knee,
all around, his family,
on chairs arranged and posed real nice,
look at the camera and smile
twice as long as they ever smiled before.
He's got suspicious eyes, he wonders what they're smiling for.

Different colors, different days,
different people with different ways,
a common story, a simple scene,
a sky that's blue above a land that's green
Somewhere in America.

2. The Lincoln Highway Song

That's when I woke up, that's when this whole thing started.
It was an afternoon in July.

Don't recall driving, don't recall ever arriving.
Not a single cloud in the haze, not a drop in my eye, no.
You shouldn't have been there.

But there you were anyway.
You couldn't have been out walking on such a miserable day.

Mirage on old 30, you walk on a dry sea – now I'm going.

I turned on the Max A-C, I stopped at the Busy Bee.
I told myself it just couldn't happen,
It had to be your double, I laughed and felt sane.

Out in the sun too long maybe,
if not the heat, the humidity.

Back behind the wheel, still laughing at myself,
I saw you on the pavement – a mirage, and nothing else.
You shouldn't have been there.

But there you were anyway.
You couldn't have been out walking on such a miserable day.

Mirage on old 30, you walk on a dry sea – now I'm going.

Mirage on old 30, you walk on a dry sea, now I'm going
I'm going to see you, now I turn my head,
and maybe catch a fleeting glimpse,
in the shadows in the trees, in my rearview mirror.

Now I'm going, I'm going to meet you,
out on the Lincoln Highway.

I know you're there, I've seen you there, you've got to be there.

On the Lincoln Highway.

Now I'm going.

3. Consuming

It's too late to be lonely, no sadness comes around here.
It's never a Tuesday, call me my dear.
The dahlias are blooming, I have a nice pinot noir,
and a love that's consuming me only so far.
 It's consuming me, I'm in flame.
It's consuming me, burning me down, devouring and fuming,
 Burning me down, consuming.

Some say love can never die, but before you kissed me,
it knew how to hide, (down in the darkness).
Waiting for summer to rise up and dazzle
 and then whither back to the earth.

No, I won't be lonely, no sadness comes here,
never a blue day, a faultless veneer.
The dahlias are blooming, I have a nice pinot noir,
And a love that's consuming me only – so far.

4. Nothing Here.

A great sorrow has fallen, it keeps falling down, down.
Another voice is calling, but I don't know what I should do.
A great hollow is opening, it's always waiting, waiting.
I came home the next morning and I found the place wide open.

Nothing here is missing. Everything can be rearranged.
Nothing here is broken. We only need to close the door.

I turned my back on Chicago, and walked away from the fire,
across the asphalt and plastic debris,
past the faces of angels and thieves.
The pretty towers are sparkling,
in the misty distance they seem so bright.
They're calling me to go back there,
mumble about on the streets in the night.

So don't you worry about me, I'm just digging in a burial mound.
I'm just standing at the edge of the landing,
painting horns on a billboard clown.
A great hollow is opening, for so long it's been waiting, waiting.
Meet me here in the morning, maybe we'll find something that's new.

5. Beehunter

In those days,
there were many bee trees in the woods,
then some men learned to find them.
One of the first was Oolat,
known as "Oolat, the Beehunter".
One of the first was called Oolat,
 Oolat the Beehunter.

To find the bees,
Oolat had a bee hunting bird.
Oolat and the honeyguide went to the bush together.
Oh, and they found bees,
no hive could stay hidden from them.
When they went out,
soon they would find a sweet tree –
 full of honey.

And when they'd found the bees,
Oolat was finished with the Bird.
Because Oolat brought fire,
with fire he made smoke,
with smoke he tamed the bees.
Oh, honey to ashes,
he took what he wanted.
Oh, honey to ashes,
 he took what he could.

And when Oolat went back to his village,
when he went back to his people,
back to his kith and his kin,
Oolat brought honey, sweet honey.
Oh, he was a big man then!
All the women talked to him.
He got respect from all of the men.
 After him running the children –
 (Oolat! Oolat! bring me some of that honey!)

Nowadays, it's hard to find a bee tree
in what's left of the woods.
I don't know why,
it can't be good.

6. Peppermint Garden

In the air there's a taste like candy,
a chemical sense of the place.
Everything's shiny and everything's green.
And the sun is still burning late in the evening,
and we laugh at the morning,
in a peppermint garden.

The clashing of tigers-
swallowtail butterflies
dancing in gyres,
spinning in circles
on the wings of delight,
high on the heels of desire.

Running rings 'round your head,
flashing from lavender flower to flower.
You saved them impaled on a pin,
formaldehyde and a bottle of gin,
in the garden,
in a peppermint garden.

That's the way it is,
and it's never going to change,
in the garden.

I knew a girl,
she was Chaos,
she had a boyfriend,
let's call him Sin.
They drank herb in the morning,
and played out their youth in a dream.
And they never did nothing worth writing home,
and they never gave in, they just wrote off disaster.

But that's how love's always been,
in the garden,
in a peppermint garden.

7. Palm Sunday

Now telephone wires are dancing,
dancing, dancing, just like we did until late last night.
Rolling on a gravity wave, rolling like big water,
rolling like a surfin' guitar.

No, we didn't get to church this morning.
It was too hot and humid for coffee or bacon.
We just laid in bed listening to the radio,
static crackled while we made love,
sweat trickled then it fell like tears.

Across the fields
out to the west,
that anvil chorus was singing.
Hammers and howitzers screaming
into the dreams we were dreaming.
I heard the big iron gates
to that dark other world,
they were opening.
on Palm Sunday.

This is how they said passion would start,
but it doesn't feel quite how I expected.
I'm caught in a tempest tearing at my heart,
it's pulling me, it's twisting you,
but we're connected.

Well, the preacher said that he was coming,
and the radio bulletin sounded the warning,
And though years have passed,
sometimes it seems like I'm still running from
the statistical face of fate I met after that morning.

Down the streets, knee deep in mud
he comes riding. Astride a stolen white horse,
with garlands of willows under his feet.
Do you think we have time to run,
or should there be a 'hohsanna' sung?
Is there a prayer for folks like us today?
on Palm Sunday

[we are here...we are gone]

8. Ode to the Overflown

This open blue expanse so well I know,
a contrail passes for a compass here.
West by northwest to or from Chicago,
seven minutes overhead, and disappear.
Crazy, happy, dizzy when I dreamed I'd fly,
in a savage, childish mind so restless,
a 727 five miles far,
gleaming engines steaming in a cobalt sky.
The nations and destinations endless,
higher yet above was arcing Telstar.

So when I grew to be a man, my fingers
held a ticket, suitcase, and a passport.
The flavors of Osaka fed my hungers.
Rain clouds in Death Valley, dust in Freeport.
But still beyond my view lands more remote:
the temple at Knossos on the isle of Crete,
the massif Ahaggar in the Sahara.
the outer Seychelles by a chartered sailboat,
the maui of Rapa Nui, a Bengali street,
Buddha parinirvana at Galvihara.

These places and these faces only waited,
as each working day passed into the next.
Bills and deadlines flowing unabated,
until the good and honest life seemed vexed.
An atom in the geometric sprawling,
between the coasts and underneath the radar,
counted but discounted, trusted and unknown,
once a decade, candidates come calling.
It's best to typecast millions from afar.
Stranded, shrouded under-clouded, overflown.

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9. Rusty Screen Door

Dark clouds, thunder, hail and rain, it's hardly a day at all.
Mean dog tugging at a heavy chain,
barking at footsteps in an empty hall,
barking at the sound of my footsteps, and that's all.

Gully-washer, now there's a funny name,
'cause it's pouring down in muddy water,
a dirty, muddy stain. Everything I had I ventured,
nothing have I gained. It's been such a long time,
yeah, it's been such a long time, (a long, long, time).

My memories sound in mono, I see them black and white,
momentary fragments, dirty little scenes.
Now softly faded grays from the deepest shades of green,
outside your rusty screen door, outside of your screen door,
but no more, no more, no more.

10. Back There Again

My teacher told me I was a procrastinator.
I said, "There's nothing to do that can't wait 'till later,
and if nothing is done, then all will be Zen,
and I'm never going back there again."

My father took his son to church, 'cause it was his duty.
And the preacher filled it up with fire up to the brim.
I said, 'Dad why's he so mad? - he said "Amen,
and I'm never going back there again."

She told me, "There's no need to hurry,
Because we're getting-we're getting nowhere fast."
She told me where - then she told me when...
and I'm never going back there again.

I yeah, I know I gotta' make my own way,
but I will tell you another thing that's equally true.
I'm not tugging on loads for any plowman or lawman,
and I'm never going back there again.'

I'm not going back, no you can't make me go,
I'm staying right here, so now both of us know.
I've got this funky old piano and another glass of bourbon,
and I'm never going back there again.