

Promised Land (1997)

Oh, who will come and go with me  
And we will sail the raging sea  
And we will sail for the West Country  
And the fields of the golden apple trees

Oh, sit right back, and I'll tell tales  
All about the brave ones who set sail  
Before the big jet planes, and the cable TVs  
Before the days of the gated communities

Oh, the promised land  
On Jordan's stormy banks I stand  
And cast a wishful eye, oh  
And cast a wishful eye, oh

[2<sup>nd</sup> x] Oh, the promised land  
On Jordan's stormy banks I stand  
And cast a wishful eye, oh  
And cast a wishful eye, oh  
And cast a wishful eye, oh

They found a land of milk and honey  
And fields of someone else's money  
Well the grandkids finally got the milk and the honey  
Now their kids just say, "Show me the money"

When I was a kid my American dream  
Was to be the little angel at the top of the tree  
Where the bells would ring and the choir would sing  
And the congregation would all join in

In the first part of a century  
My grandparents sailed the raging sea  
And cast their eyes for the West Country  
And dreamed of the golden apple trees

But things got bad in '33  
And my grandpa sailed back for the old country  
He left my mama and the family  
And a back yard full of apple trees

And my Grandma died when I was three  
And her sweet face I never did see  
In a two-story house in a northern city  
She sailed away for the next journey

Oh, the promised land  
On Jordan's stormy banks I stand  
And cast a wishful eye, oh  
And cast a wishful eye, oh  
To Canaan's fair and happy land  
Where my possessions lie, oh  
Where I can read my title clear  
And wipe my weeping eye, oh  
And wipe my weeping eye, oh  
And wipe my weeping eye, oh

Lord Have Mercy (2009)

It's late in the night and I'm driving this highway  
I'm sad and I'm weary but I must drive on  
If I can go on just a little bit longer  
Maybe, just maybe, I'll make it back home

Lord have mercy, have mercy, have mercy  
Lord have mercy have mercy on my soul

It's late in the night and my lord, I am haunted  
By what I just saw by the side of the road  
To think in one moment it all could be over  
I look for a moment, and then I drive on

It's late in the night and I'm driving this highway  
Thinking about all the choices I've made  
Now I am destined to search for redemption  
Maybe, just maybe, I'll find it someday

It's late in the night and I'm driving this highway  
On through the rain and the fog and the haze  
So is it here in this world of confusion  
To tell right from wrong as we pass through these days

Lord have mercy, have mercy, have mercy  
Lord have mercy have mercy on us all

When ages and passed and the fog has been lifted  
What do you think they'll remember us for?  
We did not hesitate and we read the newspapers  
And rattled our sabers, our sabers for war

Lord have mercy, have mercy, have mercy  
Lord have mercy have mercy on my soul  
Lord have mercy, have mercy, have mercy  
Lord have mercy have mercy on us all

4<sup>th</sup> of July (2004)

All alone on a weekend  
Nothing doing on a Saturday night  
But wait for Sunday, pray that someday  
All that's hidden will be in the light

Sometimes I wonder if there are others  
Feeling like I do deep in my heart  
That my country is like a lover  
But me and my lover have drifted apart

Now my lover's become a stranger  
And I'm a stranger to this country I was born in  
Am I still free, can you tell me  
And will anything be all right in the morning?

I was born here, I'm a citizen  
You might say I have a dog in this fight  
The people with money they buy whoever's getting in  
But all that gold'll never make it right

We got cell phones, we got the internet  
But we don't seem to talk to each other anymore  
And when we do talk, it sounds like we're selling something  
No one's buying 'cause we're all at war

The river's deep, deep as it is wide  
And that's the reason we don't hear the things we trying to say  
Send this message 'cross the great divide  
And if it reaches you, I hope we'll find a way

We got cable, we got the internet  
But we don't seem to talk and I don't know why  
But I don't care how they spin it  
We're not 9-11, we're the 4th of July  
No, we're not 9-11, we're the 4th of July  
No, we're not 9-11, we're the 4th of July

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done  
But I don't wanna wait till we all gone home  
Truth be told, justice done  
But I don't wanna wait till we all gone home  
No, I don't wanna wait till we all gone home

All alone on a weekend  
Nothing doing on a Saturday night  
But wait for Sunday, pray that someday  
All that's hidden will be in the light  
All that's hidden will be in the light  
All that's hidden will be in the light

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## Christmas in China

Our Christmas was made in China  
Human rights issues and all  
From my brand-new socks  
To my old gym shoes  
To the decorations on my wall  
Candleholders in a box  
Of the virgin and the cross  
Tell me how it was I got  
These things all made in China

Family comes over for Christmas  
Bearing gifts from China  
Like the little toy train with a song inside  
About a guy and a woman named Dinah  
Bring out all the uncles and aunts  
All the relatives you can stand  
Bring out all the pots and pans  
Bring out the fancy China

They don't have Christmas in China  
Like in the USA  
There they work for chicken feed  
Making things we think we need  
Thirteen hours every day  
People work their lives away  
So we can have our Christmas Day  
All the way from China

Sometimes I think about China  
But not about all these things  
I think about what distance brings  
Thinking how my heart still sings  
You can sail across the sea  
I still feel your love for me  
This Christmas Day your memory's  
Your gift to me from China

Like the very last time I saw you  
In some tiny diner  
You'd been gone for oh so long  
Smuggling bibles in China  
When you said you found the Lord  
Could have pierced me with a sword  
Sent my ashes sailing toward  
The heavens, bound for China

And you can sail my ashes into the wind  
Or off an ocean liner  
They say you can't go home again  
Not true, not even kinda  
I have known my whole life through  
I can go your way if I wanted to  
But that's something you could not make me do  
For all the tea in China

Our Christmas was made in China  
Memories and all  
Of how we built our hopes so high  
Enough to build our own great wall  
All these souvenirs, it's true  
And this living ghost of you  
So what am I supposed to do  
With all this stuff from China

There's a warm wind blowing through China  
All those miles away  
They say you can't go home again  
I don't believe a word they say  
You can sail across the sea  
I still feel your love for me  
This Christmas Day your memory's  
Your gift to me from China

Our Christmas was made in China  
All these things and all  
I think of how you loved me and  
I can climb so high above that wall  
I can dream my life away  
In my heart is where you'll stay  
Your gift to me this Christmas Day  
All the way from China

Ooh, I can dream my life away  
In my heart is where you'll stay  
Your gift to me this Christmas Day  
All the way from China

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Sweet & Sunny South (1997; 2004; 2010; 2012) also on *Love Hope + Transportation* (2004)

Well, the chicken is a-fryin'  
The humidity is risin'  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Moss on the magnolia  
And it's grits and not granola  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Where I was born  
Where I was born  
Oh, the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Where we love our musicians  
And our fascist politicians  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Well, that greasy food is endless  
You could slap yo' mama senseless  
In the po' defenseless south where I was born

Where congressmen are creepy  
And apologize to BP  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

[Where it's manners and decorum  
And Gingrich and Santorum  
In my old home way up south where I was born]

Where I was born...

Where it's grits and not granola  
And they know it from Shine-Ola  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Oh, I love it and I hate it  
Every now and then berate it  
Oh, the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Every now and then I dis it  
Oh but when I leave I miss it  
Oh, the sweet and sunny south where I was born

Where I was born...

Where Washington and Lee  
Can't get married legally  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

But they laugh at my bad jokin'  
And the circle's still unbroken  
In the sweet and sunny south where I was born

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Belle (traditional, arr. by Gina Forsyth)

Si j'ai une belle ici, belle  
C'est par rapport à toi, belle (2x)  
C'est par rapport à toi

J'ai pris ce char ici, belle  
Pour m'en aller au Texas, belle (2x)  
Pour m'en aller au Texas

Il y avait juste trois jours, belle  
Que mon, j'étais là-bas, belle  
J'ai reçu une lettre de toi, belle  
Que toi t'étais bien malade, belle  
Que toi t'étais bien malade

Que toi t'étais bien malade, belle  
En danger de mourir, belle (2x)  
En danger de mourir, belle

J'ai pris ce char encore, belle  
Pour m'en retourner-z-à toi, belle (2x)  
Pour m'en retourner-z-à toi

Quand j'arrivé chez toi, belle  
T'étais sans connaissance, belle (2x)  
T'étais sans connaissance

J'ai hypothéqué mon cheval, belle  
Pour te sauver la vie, belle (2x)  
Pour te sauver la vie

S'abandonner, c'est dur, belle  
Mais s'oublier, c'est long, belle (2x)  
Mais s'oublier, c'est long

Belle (Sweetheart) – translation\*

Translated by Barry Jean Ancelet and Gina Forsyth

If I have a sweetheart here, sweetheart  
It's because of you, sweetheart  
If I have a sweetheart here  
It's because of you

I took this train here  
To go to Texas [2x]

It was just three days  
That I was over there  
I received a letter from you  
That you were very sick

That you were very sick  
And in danger of dying [2x]

I took this train again  
To return to you [2x]

When I arrived at your house  
You were unconscious [2x]

I pawned my horse  
To save your life [2x]

Leaving is hard  
But forgetting is long [2x]

\*Most of the translation is from the double-album *Louisiana Cajun and Creole Music, 1934: The Lomax Recordings*, released on Swallow Records in 1987.

Sparrows (2003)

Wish I could fly like  
The smallest of sparrows  
High o'er the earth  
And far from the ground  
And all I would feel then  
Would be the wings beating  
To gravity's ceiling  
I'd never be bound

In some other lifetime  
I was just like them  
High o'er the earth  
For one joyous day  
And with my wings open  
I dove into silence  
Caught by the wild winds  
And carried away

Far from my wondering  
Far from my longing  
Far from this burden  
As I could go  
One of these mornings  
I'll go like the sparrows  
Free from the sorrows  
Of this world below

Now I am human  
And heavier laden  
Longing and waiting  
To fly once again  
Free from this burden  
Free from this hurting  
One thing's for certain  
Free I'll be then

Free from my wondering  
Free from my longing  
Free from this burden  
As onward I go  
One of these mornings  
I'll go like the sparrows  
Free from the sorrows  
Of this world below

Free from my wondering  
Free from my longing  
Free from this burden  
That is for certain  
One of these mornings  
I'll go like the sparrows  
Free from the sorrows  
Of this world below

What I Did on Mardi Gras Day (2005)

I'll tell you a story but I'd rather not say  
What I did on Mardi Gras Day  
Sing you something but I'd rather not say  
How I spent my Mardi Gras Day

They called me up on the telephone  
"Would you like to make some money and have some fun?"  
So while you're out there begging for beads  
Won't you please please think of me

I'm working for the man and that ain't all  
My folkie friends would be appalled  
I'd tell you more but I'd rather not say  
What I did on Mardi Gras Day

Long time ago you could work down here  
For a whole lot more than tips and beer  
Things around here have changed I fear  
And the union ain't been here for years

Musicians union ain't dere no more  
So now you play till you hit the floor  
And when you hit the floor they don't miss a beat  
They sweep you to the end of Bourbon Street

I'd tell you more but I'd rather not say  
How I spent my Mardi Gras Day  
I wish I didn't have to say  
What I did on Mardi Gras Day  
Yeah, I wish I didn't have to say  
What I did on Mardi Gras Day

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Copper Rooster (2008)

I got a rooster, a copper rooster  
I paid for pennies at the antique store  
I got a rooster, a copper rooster  
Gonna crow about it, gonna crow some more

Crow on daddy, crow on daddy  
Crow on daddy, crow on daddy

I got a rooster, a copper rooster  
My copper rooster's copper and proud  
I got a rooster, a copper rooster  
You better get used to me crowing so loud

Crow on mama, crow on mama  
Crow on mama, crow on mama

Somebody stole my copper rooster  
They took it and gone, gone from me now  
Copper thieves stole my rooster  
That's what I get for crowing so loud

Crow on people, crow on people  
Crow on people, crow on people

I called the cops about that rooster  
Thought they could find it, but they can't  
Somewhere in town, my copper rooster's  
Crowing at the recycling plant

Crow on daddy [4x]  
Crow on mama [4x]  
Crow on people [4x]

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Just Like Eddie (1999)

Well, I can't stay out of trouble  
There you'll find me  
Whenever I call on the phone, and  
I owe the whole world money  
Think that's funny  
Well, wait till you hear  
That now they got it all  
And I got none of my own  
They've got it all  
And I got none of my own

I am born for trouble  
Big ass trouble  
Feel so bad to burst your bubble  
And to call you after oh so long  
You don't want my trouble  
Make that double  
But now you're gone and I  
Must face my trouble all alone

And I don't know who I'm foolin'  
All that schooling  
What in the hell did I miss, and  
Those who cheered me on  
I find them nowhere  
Glad they're not here  
All that schooling  
What did I miss?  
I sure don't want 'em to see me like this

So sit beside me my beloved  
Take my hand for one last time  
And let's say all the things  
That never got said  
Just for once I'd like to see you  
Really here  
And not just somewhere lost  
Inside of my head

And the people on the bayou  
They will tell you  
If you'll make it  
If you'll spend it  
By the itch in the palm of which hand  
But the wrong hand always itches  
Sons of bitches  
Rags to riches  
And way back down to rags again  
Please tell me this ain't how the story ends

I am born for trouble  
Me and all the fifty billion  
Souls who've ever  
Crawled into this great unknown

Once that deal goes down  
There's no reversal  
People blather  
How this ain't no dress rehearsal  
Well, if that's so universal  
Well, how come I feel so all alone

Thinking 'bout my only sister's  
Only son  
Whose name was Eddie  
Barely twenty  
Made his steady  
Living on things that don't pay, and  
All his friends came calling  
They were all there  
At the end  
With his old snare drum  
And a big bouquet  
And what a shame was all  
They could ever say

Now I cannot keep from crying  
Fell like dying  
I am trying  
To forget it all  
And never to feel  
But no matter how far down  
You try to lock up  
People pick up  
On the very thing you  
Try so hard to never reveal

So I don't need you to tell me  
You can't help me  
On the other end of the phone  
When I'm feeling  
Just like Eddie  
Born for trouble  
Jesus died for all my trouble  
Well, I'm still here to face my trouble  
Oh, but Eddie faces trouble no more, oh  
No, Eddie faces trouble no more, oh  
No, Eddie faces trouble no more

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11 days

I was in the hospital for all of 11 days  
For all the fun I didn't have somehow I still had to pay  
Maybe it was worrying, maybe it was dreaming or just something I heard someone say  
This happens when you get old, still I don't think of myself that way

Esther and Diane took me walking all over 7<sup>th</sup> floor  
Dudley brought *Mad* magazines from the comic book store  
Pat brought Kerouac, Patsy brought flowers, and Jan stayed for hours so long  
And Jonno brought the paper on which I wrote down this song

Then I get home after living on IV for 11 days  
I wanted to lose weight but I don't recommend doing it this way  
My jeans don't fit so tight, and I'm starting to look good in that tiny old T-shirt  
But when my cat tried to make biscuits on my belly, let me tell you that hurt

Friends held benefits and helped me out with my rent  
And I lost count of the emails and thank-you notes that I sent  
The one that stands out in my mind was when I told one friend  
That I'd been and cut and stapled and she wasn't sure what that meant

Now my incision looks a lot like a painting by Keith Haring  
If I've given you too many details you can thank me for sharing  
I can't be thankful enough to my friends for their caring  
My apologies to all of those I succeeded in scaring

[Almost bearable was the cost of my nausea pills  
But the real shocker was when the hospital sent me the bill  
The good news is when Medicaid's done, those five figures will be whittled to virtually free  
[Till the politicians do]  
Till Bobby Jindal does away with health care for people like me]

People say I should write songs about this or that now and then  
This one came to me but I don't ever want to go through that again  
When I went back to visit the nurse could not look me straight in the eye  
She just said "Congratulations for getting out of this place alive."

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Just For Tonight (2006)

I saw this friend  
A few days ago  
Only last week  
Next thing I know

The phone call it came  
That he came and went  
Now I think about  
Time never spent

I seldom hang out  
I can't find the time  
What will they say  
When that time is mine

They might say I talked to her  
A time or two  
But I hardly knew her  
Me neither. Did you?

Now you say to me  
It is what it is  
I thought we'd be  
Better than this  
Caught in our lives  
Before that goodnight  
Can't we just once  
Put all that aside  
Can't we just once  
Be what we dream  
Just for tonight

We go writing songs  
By night and by day  
Mostly too long  
And not much to say

I would write more  
If I could make those words fly  
And if they don't soar  
I've no reason why

So I might write that song  
That serious one  
Then people just think  
I do this for fun

But I know time will come  
When I leave this joint  
And if it don't count  
Yeah, what is the point?

It might be true  
It is what it is  
I thought we'd do  
Better than this  
And rise above  
Before that goodnight  
Can't we just once  
Put all that aside  
Can't we just once  
Do what we dream  
Just for tonight

Before we are done  
Can't we just face  
The terrible mess  
We've left of this place

Jesus is here  
Allah is too  
Whatever you call Him  
She is in you

But we forget  
All that it's worth  
And quietly waste  
This time here on earth

May I remind you  
If we don't know for sure  
In each one of us  
Is what it's all for

It might be true  
It is what it is  
I know we can do  
Better than this  
And rise above  
The way we are now  
Can't we just once  
Put weapons aside  
Can't we just once  
Take stock in our lives  
Can't we just once  
Be one world in peace  
Just for tonight

Can't we just once  
Put weapons aside  
Can't we just once  
Take stock in our lives  
Can't we just once  
Be one world in peace  
Just for tonight  
Just for tonight

We Will Be Reborn (2007)

Look at all the immigrants here they come  
Crossing our borders one by one  
Just like my grandfather done  
When America was young  
Yeah, America was young

Columbus sailed the ocean blue  
Killed the Indians [peoples all] two by two  
A whole lot more of us came here too  
And America was born  
Yeah, America was born

Now the President has a great army  
Sending his soldiers three by three  
To an oil rich land across the sea  
Look how far we've come  
From the place where we begun  
Look what we've become  
Good Lord, what have we done?

Someday we'll look back at the days of yore  
And the soldiers come home four by four  
We'll say we've had enough of war  
And we will be reborn  
Yeah, we will be reborn

We'll say no more pre-emptive war  
And we will be reborn  
Yeah, America reborn

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