

## Ruby And Carlos

James McMurtry

Ruby said you getting a sin of world of hurt  
Down below the mason dumb ass lined 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 darken 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

In a grey coat nicard at the gate, she said,  
"You're right it's getting late  
You and me got work to do  
We can't be burning day light too

She took down the long laid rope  
And stayed off that slippery slope  
Now 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 how they do nowadays  
We should have all been so lucky

By spring she had the run of the free born men  
Ruby turned 50 in a sheep camp tent  
Her body still could rock all night  
But her heart was closed and locked up tight

But Teddy feels all muddy and brown  
The gossip long such quieted down  
After one more Cogans test  
Pouring coffee for the county vet

Pictures on the ice box door  
Carlos in the first gulf war  
Black eyed brown and youthful face  
Smiling back from a Saudi base

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

And the whole vet said one day Rub  
that cold will break an egg in you  
Now and then one comes along  
You just can't write and he went on home

And the storm bird didn't catch  
And blew back hard as she struck a match  
But she cupped it just in time  
And she sent that ashtray flying

You holding back the flood

It 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 the hallow sound  
And 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 a music road,  
Carlos never saw the studio  
The session guys had that all sewn up

He looked out the window  
And it starts to sleet  
Laying on a friends couch on Nevada street  
Lately he's been staying high  
Sick all winter and don't know why  
They Don't know why or won't say  
They don't talk much down on the V.A

And Ruby's in his thoughts some times  
What thoughts can get out past the wine  
He feels his fingers on his brow  
And right then he misses how  
How she looked in that grey morning light

She never shaved like they all do now  
He sees it all behind his eyes  
And his hands go searching but they come out dry

Half way in that waken dream  
Carlos let's the land line ring

He'd never guess it was Ruby calling  
A pen in her hip from the grey coat falling  
Figure eights and a lazy loop  
Stumbled on that lazy slope

Holding back the flood  
It 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 the hallow sound  
And no one owns but you  
No one owns but you