

1. *Talking to a Stone*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Dobro: Ivan Rosenberg

Bb mid tempo 3:52 Folk

Appreciating loved ones while they're alive

A man confronts the gravestones of his loved ones and realizes he's neglected them

Written one summer while losing an in-law and seeing the many graveyards and stone walls of New England.

Adjs: haunting, gripping, poignant, melodic

Similar to: Robin and Linda Williams, Ann and Pete Sibley, Honey Dewdrops, Dan Tyminski, Red Molly

Don't jump, my mother said
that wall is way too high
I jumped, I broke my leg
I began to cry
As she kissed my tears away and
carried me on home
she said, "I might as well be
talking to a stone"

Like a stone I didn't listen
like a stone I didn't speak
All too soon my mother
she grew old and she grew weak
Now I've finally come to tell her
just what she meant to me
I'm standing in a field of stones
quiet as the sea

Chorus: If these stones could talk
I know what they'd say
Tell the ones you love
Don't wait another day
Don't wait till the ones you love
Have gone to dust and bone
Don't wait till you're talking to a stone

I'm talking to my father here
two of my old friends
I never thought
I'd never see them again
Talking to a girl I loved
who never really knew
I was just as hard as these
stones I'm talking to

Chorus

Bridge: Names and dates are on these stones inscribed
Lives so full, so briefly described
These stones can't hear a word
I'm telling them today
I'm going home 'cause
I've got some things to say

Chorus

2. *River, Railway, Road*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Banjo: Bill Evans;

Mandolin: Barry Lawson

B Uptempo 3:27

Man hopes lost sweetheart will return

Guy is pining for his lost love and hoping she'll return by any means—by the river, the railway or the road.

Adjs: twangy, lively, hopeful

Similar to: Seldom Scene, Alison Kraus and Union Station, Blue Highway, Gibson Brothers

First time I saw you, on a rock in the sun
the river was running fast and high
Last time I saw you, you told me you were done
You told me your love had run dry

Well, rivers rise and fall, rains come and go
Someday I know you'll come back again
I know that day is coming, but I also know
That someday doesn't tell you when

Chorus: A river, a railway, and a road
Wind side by side across this valley floor
If ever you decide to come back to my door
Come by the river, the railway, or the road (2x)

Three in the morning, the whistle blows long
Cars like water flowing by
I live with the sound of people moving on
But I'll stay here and wait till I die

Chorus (2x)

3. *Twelve Days*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Dobro: Ivan Rosenberg
Key: Cm mid tempo 3:16

Woman faces homelessness in twelve days

Based on a true story about a woman during the current recession who was facing eviction in twelve days. She imagines living in doorways and ponders how she'll eat.

Gene was inspired to write this after hearing a story on NPR about how the current recession was affecting people. A woman who was being kicked out of her apartment in twelve days, and the story mirrors many of the details of her life.

Adjs: poignant, anxious, sweet, sad

Similar to: Nanci Griffith, Alison Kraus, Claire Lynch, Red Molly

I ran a good size office
made fifty grand a year
I lost that job two years ago this week
The unemployment checks ran out
My savings are all gone
I got twelve days till I'm on the street

I get up every morning
Put my good dress on
knock on doors and walk the city streets
I can't help but notice
the doorways that I pass
and size them up as places I might sleep

Chorus: I've sent out 50 resumes
made a hundred calls
haven't had one call in return
I'll wait tables, push a broom
I'll take any job at all
I got twelve days for my luck to turn (2x)

I've sold most everything I owned
My furniture and car
I kept a suitcase and some good warm clothes
What I'll eat, where I'll sleep
how I will survive
come twelve days, God only knows

Chorus

4. *Everyday Things*

Written by Gene and Gayla Mills

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Fiddle: Jim Skelding

Key: Bb slow 3:48

Man pledges to show his love with everyday things

Man says that, unlike the extreme things that others promise to do, he'll do small everyday things to show his love

Adjs: funny, sweet, touching

Similar to: Randy Travis, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson

I've heard those love songs, you've heard 'em too
about all the things those lovers would do
They'd climb the high mountain, swim the wide sea
Walk through a fire, even die if need be

Oh, but how many times in the course of our lives
does the need for any of those things arise?
If that's what you need, I'll do my best
But it's small things that really put love to the test

Chorus: Oceans are wide, mountains are steep
Fine words are pretty, fine words are cheap
If you want to know how I really feel
That's what the small, everyday things reveal

I'll make the salad; you won't have to ask it
I won't use the floor as my laundry basket
When I see a dust bunny under the chair
I won't pretend that it isn't there

And when you come home mad from a bad day at work
your boss is a tyrant, a fool, and a jerk
I'll sit and listen till you're all through
I won't try to tell you what you ought to do

Chorus

I'll help with writing the holiday cards
I'll brush out the dog and scoop up the yard
If you wash the dishes, I'll gladly dry
and give you a shoulder, when you need to cry

Chorus

5. *Bright Blue Eyes*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar: Gene Mills; Upright bass: Gayla Mills

Key: D mid-fast 2:32

Upbeat, bouncy

Similar to: Russ Barenberg, Dan Crary, Aly Baine

6. *Forgetting*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

© 2011 Heart Pine Music

Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Mandolin: Barry Lawson

Key Bb mid-tempo 3:36

Iraq vet mourns loss

Poignant true story of wounded soldier in Afganistan and Iraq who mourns how his life and marriage are forever changed

Inspired by story on the radio about veteran at Walter Reed

Adjs: sad, wistful, bittersweet

Similar to: Dixie Chicks, Steve Earle, Gordon Lightfoot, Seldom Scene

Jenny Davis was my sweetheart since the seventh grade
She and I were partners when we all learned to waltz
Dancing at our wedding was the plan we had made
Now that plan has gone to pieces and it's neither of our faults

That bright September day, I became a soldier
Afghanistan was where I was sent to do my part
After 10 months there, I was 10 years older
But I came home to Jenny with a proud and purple heart

Then they sent me to Iraq, that hot and dusty land
I was proud to help bring down that statue of Saddam
But I could never figure what was in that sand
that made it worth the cost of all those roadside bombs

Chorus 1: I remember how it felt when Jenny told me yes
I remember how it felt to waltz her 'cross the floor
But I don't remember how it felt to lose my legs
And I guess that makes sense, or what's forgetting for

I was the leadoff hitter for my high school team,
Out in center field, oh how I could fly,
Playing for the Cardinals had always been my dream,
Now that's just another dream I'll have to tell goodbye.

Chorus 2: I remember how it felt, sliding into second,
I remember how it felt to run like the wind,
I remember feeling eager when my country beckoned,
Now I reckon I won't feel those things in my life again.

Chorus 1

7. *Milk and Honey*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Banjo: Bill Evans;

Fiddle: Jim Skelding

Key: C up-tempo 3:04

Couple seeks idyllic farm life

Adjs: bouncy, hopeful, happy

Similar to: Gibson Brothers, Larry Sparks, Alison Kraus, Patty Loveless, Red Molly

How did we end up with this big, big house
and jobs we hardly can stand?
Remember when we dreamed of that sweet little cottage
and making our living from the land

Well your job is gone now, and mine's looking bad
This might be a blessing in disguise
Let's trade in this house on forty good acres
and live the dream we had for our lives

Chorus: We don't need a lot of money
'cause we don't want what most people need
We'll make our own land of milk and honey
with a milk cow, a beehive, and some seed

Now my idea of heaven is an orchard and a field
a garden, a woodlot, and a pond
and you there beside me, listening to the sound
of the whippoorwill and wood thrush's song

Chorus

Bridge: I know the work is hard, the money's harder
But easy work and money are hard too
I've seen enough to know that most people go
for what's easy over what they want to do

Chorus

8. *Thriving*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Fiddle: Jim Skelding

Key: D mid-tempo 3:31

Man drowns sorrows humorously

Brokenhearted man humorously thinks that drowning his sorrows is healthy because
alcohol is made from vegetables

Adjs: silly, funny, humorous, lively
Similar to: Garth Brooks, Willie Nelson, Steve Goodman

I got the message from the USDA
Eat fruits and vegetables five times a day
Olives and nuts, lots of whole grain
Good for your heart and good for your brain

Now heartache and headache, I know how that feels
That's why I'm striving for healthier meals
As long as I keep eating healthy I find
You and me both are out of my mind

Chorus: Now I'm drinking my grapes, red, white and rosé
I'm drinking corn at least twice a day
Vodka is made from potatoes I hear
Some like theirs mashed, but I like mine clear
And I'm eating beer nuts when I'm eating at all
And hops are whole grains, and so's barley malt
In vino veritas, vigor, and youth
Olives are good with a little vermouth

Hard cider's good for an apple a day
It helps keep the doctor and the memories away
Tomato juice helps me start each day off right
with the hair of that dog that bit me last night

Now I'm thriving on five, like they recommend
I'm thriving most days on at least nine or ten
They say you should run for an hour a day
Well, I do at least that much running away

Chorus

9. *Better Late than Never*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

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Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Banjo: Bill Evans;

Mandolin: Barry Lawson

Key: D up-tempo 3:07

Message: seize the day

At midlife, 2 people realize they shouldn't delay pursuing their dreams

Adjs: bouncy, hopeful, encouraging

Similar to: Gibson Brothers, Seldom Scene, Claire Lynch

Since he was seventeen, Charlie Williams had a dream
to build himself a house with his own two hands

But he never got around to ever breaking ground
Now it's 35 years later all he's got are plans

Chorus:

And it's better late than never, you could wait forever
if you wait till there's nothing standing in your way
But if you're gonna to do it, then you better get down to it
don't wait for tomorrow, better start today

Molly Arnold knew what she was meant to do
She was full of stories just waiting to be told
But kids grow up so fast, years go flying past
And she hasn't written anything and now she's growing old

Chorus

Bridge: Now at last Charlie's dream
is turning into post and beam.
And Molly's writing words for all to see
They wish they'd started younger
but they're feeding that old hunger
living life the way it ought to be

Chorus

10. *Blue Runway Lights*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

© 2011 Heart Pine Music

Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills; Dobro: Ivan Rosenberg

Key: Bb mid-tempo 3:28

Woman says final goodbye to old lover at airport

Adjs: wistful, poignant, sweet, sad

Similar to: Alison Kraus, Nanci Griffith, Robin and Linda Williams, Red Molly

Drive me to the airport, walk me to the gate
One kiss for old time's sake although I'm running late
I'll wave to you from the window seat
as you're walking back to your car
Then away I'll fly in that autumn sky
that's slowly growing dark.

And I'll go on a journey to some unknown place
See in the clouds the contours of your face
I'll fly beneath the jumbled stars
that've seen a million nights
till I see the long straight lines
of those blue runway lights.

Bridge: Those blue runway lights flashing by in the night
That sinking feeling deep inside when you leave the ground in flight
And there ain't no use in running when you got the means to fly
And I'll let the engine's humming be my lonesome lullaby

Repeat verse 2

11. *Great Divide*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)

© 2011 Heart Pine Music

Guitar and vocals: Gene Mills; Upright bass and vocals: Gayla Mills

Key: Bb Mid-tempo 3:30

Small choices change lives

Small decisions affect whether someone turns to crime, gets married, etc.

Similar to: Tom Paxton, Jesse Winchester, Claire Lynch, Robin and Linda Williams

Two muddy children, five years old
One mother laughs, one mother scolds
Two decades later, two young men
One plays it safe, one plays to win

Chorus: We're raindrops falling on the Great Divide
an inch one way or the other might decide
which way you're headed, where your destiny lies
We're raindrops falling on the Great Divide

All night grocery, help-wanted sign
Seventeen years old, trying to decide
Does he go in, see about that job
Or does he come back later for to rob

Chorus

Bridge: A fork in the road will sometimes stare you in the face
Sometimes you only see it looking back at some far place
And you don't know what might follow from a single word or glance
You do the best you can and leave the rest to chance

A shy young woman trying to read a book
A shy young man trying not to look
Does she ignore him, does she give him a smile
One small decision, two different lives

Chorus

12. *The Dying Fire*

Written by Gene Mills (BMI)
© 2011 Heart Pine Music
Guitar: Gene Mills; Upright bass: Gayla Mills
Key D slow tempo 2:00
Adjs: contemplative, mellow, melancholic
Similar to: Bert Jansch, John Renbourn
If Stones Could Talk (photo TBA)

1. Talking to a Stone 3:52
2. River, Railway, Road 3:27
3. Twelve Days 3:16
4. Everyday Things 3:48
5. Bright Blue Eyes 2:32
6. Forgetting 3:36
7. Milk and Honey 3:04
8. Thriving 3:31
9. Better Late than Never 3:07
10. Blue Runway Lights 3:28
11. Great Divide 3:30
12. The Dying Fire 2:00

Gene Mills, guitar and vocals
Gayla Mills, bass and vocals
Bill Evans, banjo
Ivan Rosenberg, dobro
Barry Lawson, mandolin
Jim Skelding, fiddle

Gene Mills, guitar and vocals; Gayla Mills, bass and vocals; Bill Evans, banjo; Ivan Rosenberg, dobro; Barry Lawson, mandolin; Jim Skelding, fiddle

All words and music by Gene Mills (BMI) except *Everyday Things* by Gene and Gayla Mills

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Produced by

Gene and Gayla Mills

Recorded, mixed, and mastered by Bill McElroy at Slipped Disc, Ashland, VA.

Additional recording by Gabriel Taylor at Packing Shed Records, Lovingston, VA, and Ivan Rosenberg at The Sctood, Portland, OR.

By Genre

Bluegrass

1. River, Railway, Road

2. Milk and Honey
3. Better Late than Never

Country

1. Everyday Things
2. Thriving

Folk/Americana

1. Talking to a Stone
2. Twelve Days
3. Forgetting
4. Blue Runway Lights
5. Great Divide

Instrumentals

1. Bright Blue Eyes
2. The Dying Fire

By Topic

1. Talking to a Stone (importance of relationships)
2. River, Railway, Road (lost love)
3. Twelve Days (unemployment during current recession)
4. Everyday Things (love pledge)
5. Bright Blue Eyes
6. Forgetting (Afghanistan and Iraq war victim)
7. Milk and Honey (Idealized country life)
8. Thriving (humor: drown sorrows with liquid veggies)
9. Better Late than Never (midlife pledge to pursue dreams)
10. Blue Runway Lights (lost love)
11. Great Divide (vagaries and randomness of life)
12. The Dying Fire

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