

## **I Got Dreams Rolling Around inside My Head**

Early morning fog filled the hollow in the foothills of the Sierras, above the Sacramento Valley. Pine and fir trees close around my cabin dripped as if a small rain came to visit. A breeze carried fog off through the forest on the ridges around me and scattered it where sunshine melted it into clear blue sky. Sun shone down through trees into the hollow in fall of the year.

I took my guitar out onto my front porch and put music together in sunshine. During the night just past, I dreamed music, new songs I try to capture in sunshine.

My mind that dreams, possessive of its inventions, grabs at remnants of dreams and songs and tries to pull them down into depths beyond the reach of my consciousness before I can knit them into my repertoire. I capture pieces of them, isolated from context. I want the strange rhythms and chord progressions, if I can find them on these six strings in morning sunshine. When context escapes from me, I build new context that fits what I retain of the song.

Over the sound of my guitar resonating into mountain air, I didn't hear his car stop down at the highway, but Sam walks up my muddy driveway, guitar case in one hand, his other hand deep in his coat pocket. Once stuck, weeks ago, was enough. He doesn't drive my driveway anymore.

He puts his guitar case down on the bottom step, takes off his coat and puts it on the step, opens his case, takes his guitar out and straps it to hang from his shoulder. He faces me with a question on his face.

I play him a fragment of last night's dream, in mixed keys. Mixtures never bother Sam. He tunes his guitar to mine and speaks back to me.

What comes from his guitar is not quite what I dreamed, but he catches much of the meaning of my dream, its interpretation and extension into daylight symbols and structures. We give back and forth until we find a song that proceeds up a clear trail between the trees of the forest, guitars traveling side by side among D, G, A7, and E minor chords. Without breaking stride, Sam asks me for words to knit our sounds together, and I sing, either what I remember, or what comes to me just then,

I wake from dreams of forgotten things  
when the rain has ended  
and grey clouds break from the moon  
in the dark time when the moon sets  
and it's so hard to remember where I am.

Shadows of trees  
the sound of water.  
Grey clouds break around the moon.  
I'm cold and afraid  
and the wind has an empty sound.

Snow melts to the spring streams  
grey clouds break from the moon.

There's something in my soul  
that feels like changing seasons  
that feels like dreams that fade  
in the dark time when the moon sets  
and it's so hard to remember where I am.

Sam and I build from there. It's a good morning, just warm enough for songs out of the clear blue sky. The sun rises above the tallest trees around us and climbs to the middle of the morning. Our guitars and voices come to silence.

"I haven't had breakfast, Sam. I'm going to make pancakes. Can you eat?"

"Sure."

Pancakes and milk and coffee at the kitchen table. Sun shines through the window. Sam asks me, "Where's Laura?"

"She went down to visit her mother." I don't say maybe she won't come back. I don't know yet.

There's only one world, right? This earth, the earth beneath our feet, with stone and soil and green grasses and trees, this forest of green evergreens growing from deep in this earth up into the blue morning sky, drying from fog in the blue sky, sunshine and slow breezes. This is the earth beneath my feet.

Some say I have to deal with the world. The world they speak of is airplanes, jet liners up in the clear blue sky, cars and trucks and busses and railroad trains hurrying, noisying, panting, breathing in oxygen and out carbon dioxide, smoke, dirty smoke, wars across the oceans, money, jobs, mostly jobs. The world is not of this earth.

I'm healing better and faster. I have to decide, what am I healing toward, of and on this earth of soil and life? Toward the world of war, commerce and jobs and industry? Insofar as it is destructive to this earth, I want no part of it. Getting severely injured when a drunk driver hit me bought me distance from it, time to think about it, but found me no solution, gave me no answer to the question, what do I do about it? It won't settle in my mind. I try to work it out day by day.

Sam puts his guitar back into its case. "I got a job to do. Clean up a place. Haul off the garbage. Put some beans on the table."

One day soon, Sam's wife leaves him. He won't work steady. Takes just enough odd jobs to keep beans on the table, doesn't care about any money saved or what might come next week. He plays his guitar hours every day. Buys a cheap used piano, learns to tune it himself, learns to play it himself, piano and guitar hours every day.

Sam's wife leaves, takes the kids with her, gets a job down in the valley in the city, divorces Sam, marries a steady man who believes in the world, puts money in the bank, and talks about ten years from now, when the kids start college and learn how to earn money.

Not long after she leaves, Sam, by coincidence, not by trying, falls in with a group and begins to make money from his music. He travels with the group to the coast, then to cities. I never see him again. Sometimes, I think about him. I wonder where Sam is. I wonder what he's doing right now.

In the day I started out talking about, Sam carried his guitar and walked away down the driveway. Widely separated clouds scudded across the tall blue sky. Sunshine held its own.

I put my guitar in its case and the case in my bedroom. I wash breakfast dishes, leave them to drain dry, and walk up the hill behind the cabin. My dog and cat go along at first, but Ba-Room, Ka-Crack, high-powered rifles go off on the ridge above us, and cat and dog panic back down the hill and under the cabin. Deer hunting season has started. Rifles punctuate the day and echo between the ridges.

I wait. It stays quiet. I walk on up the ridge. It might not be safe to be out in the woods today, but is it safe anywhere in the world?

Oak leaves turn in the falling wind and cushion the earth beneath my feet as I walk. The first snowstorm of the year builds dark clouds in the eastern mountains. High above me, geese fly south, calling as they fly. Green ferns grow dense in

the drainage I cross on my borrowed trail. I flush a covey of mountain quail, and they fly away from me on noisily drumming wings.

Three deer stop to watch me walk in the gentle wind. Two does and a towhead, they will probably be safe, if this is a bucks-only hunting season. I haven't checked; I don't know. Songs still run into my mind.

I think a lot about things  
That don't buy me no wings  
to fly on out of this life  
that I've been leading.

Geese are flying home.  
Grey whales swim 8,000 miles  
for the changing seasons  
and I got a growing feeling  
there's someplace I should be going.

I walk a long way up the mountain. Once in a while, I hear deer rifles bellowing and booming, but a long ways away, over a ridge, up the mountain.

I've walked farther than I can return without getting off my feet for a while. I'm healing, but not healed. My knee starts feeling like someone drives nails into it with a sledge hammer every time I put my weight on it.

I sit down on thick pine duff under trees and wait for cessation of pain. I lie down, flat on my back, slide my hands into my jacket pockets and drift into sleep.

Something wakes me. I sit up slowly. A hundred yards below me on the slope, two men with rifles walk across an open area. They don't see me. I wait until they're gone a long time before I stand and start back down the mountain. The rest helped. My leg hurts, but not so bad I can't walk on it.

Clouds bunch up, gather their forces. The day has gone from the mountain before I walk through the meadow and down the grown-over logging road to my cabin. The moon hangs full above the horizon. Mars shines bright in the sky. Moonlight falls golden through my windows and fills my room when I find my way to bed. Then clouds cover all the lights in the sky.

During the night, heavy rain pours down the wind and drums on the metal roof above my head.

I woke up this morning to heavy rain.

Restful sleep has eased my pain  
there's fragments of dreams  
and songs I sing rolling around my head.

The rain stopped and started, couldn't decide whether to blow away up the mountain and become a high-elevation snowstorm or stay another day or two.

Late afternoon, almost dusk, Laura walked up the driveway, pack on her back, muddy boots. She had hitched all the way up from the valley. I almost said, "Hitch-hiking is a crazy thing for a woman to do in these times," but I didn't say it. She got here. She's safe. She is like a grey doe, frozen on the hillside, watching me. Any sudden move, and she will panic into flight.

We are reserved, almost formal with each other, not ready to touch, each wondering what goes on in the other's thoughts. What do you mean to me? What do I mean to you? What will tomorrow bring? What lies beyond tomorrow? Why does tomorrow and beyond tomorrow become important when we are together? Alone, today is enough.

Only a few months ago, I came close to being killed. I learned, tomorrow doesn't mean much. Today is sufficient.

She brought a quart jar of honey in her backpack, from the orchards down in the valley. In the morning, I cook pancakes, and we spread honey on them and put honey in our coffee.

The rain stops, but the clouds stay. I say, "Do you want to go with me to see if the bears have left any apples?"

"Sure. Where is it?"

"I'll show you."

We took a pack and walked down the driveway and crossed the highway. The old footbridge above the creek is falling apart, but it bears us. The stream carries mud from the heavy rain. Moss along the banks grows dense and dark green.

The year's leaves swirl in the current. Some of the leaves catch in the moss and rest there.

We hike up the hill. Clouds gather dark again for a new rain. Two canyons off, on the Feather River, I feel the rumble of a lumber train. Quail run ahead of us, out of the cover of dense brush, back into the cover of dense brush.

The old house and old barn at the edge of the meadow stand dark and weathered, paint washed away in storms and sunshine. Someone long ago boarded over the windows of the house. Laura walks around the buildings. "This is still a good house. People could live here. This is a beautiful place."

Housing developments march up the mountain. Mobile

home parks, modular homes, expensive, custom-built houses. Retirement communities, housing developments for commuters down into the busy valley work. Inexorably, developments climb the mountain. Workers will tear these old buildings down; build roads to web the meadow; houses and garages and paved driveways will crowd the meadow. Rainwater, now wild through the wild meadow grasses will be curbed into concrete gutters, herded to drains and sent subterranean to specified gathering and containment.

Five apple trees bear fruit, a ways from the old house. Winesap apples, gravenstein, golden delicious. Deer and bears have been here, harvesting. As many apples lie on the ground as hang ripe in the trees. Laura reaches up into a tree, pulls a branch down, and picks a winesap apple. With my grey felt, broad brimmed hat on, a grey sweater, and faded jeans, she looks far too much like a graceful deer standing on hind legs, reaching into the tree.

I hurry down to her, take out my red handkerchief and wrap it around the crown of the grey hat.

She lets go of the branch and looks at me with a question in her eyes, bites the apple, white-fleshed apple with veins of red through the flesh. She is ready now to touch, puts her arm around me and draws me close, her smooth body molding to mine, breasts against my ribcage, abdomen against mine, thighs to thighs, clouds dark above us, wind touching us, curling cold and filled with autumn smells around us. She offers me her apple, and I bite out a piece of the crisp, sweet flesh.

Rain begins again, tentative at first. I take bright yellow rainclothes out of the pack, a jacket for each of us. I am more satisfied with her bright yellow appearance. We fill the pack half full of apples and start down the hill, back toward my cabin. Wind sings down the hill and carries heavy rain.

Trees drip rain water on the tin roof. Jacob brakes on log trucks rolling loaded down the mountain highway hammer against the day.

Fog curls up the draw and stands against the rain.

I build a fire in the stove, and Laura puts water on for tea. She asks, "Do you have flour and butter and cinnamon? Some sugar? I could bake an apple pie. I could use honey instead of sugar."

"I do have. My cupboards are almost empty, but I do have what we need for pies."

While Laura makes crusts, I peel and slice apples. She says, "You don't have a pie pan. That's okay. I can bake it in the

frying pan.”

I take my guitar from its black case. The pie bakes, and its smell spreads through the cabin. Songs roll out of me again,

I've been thinking about jobs for money  
tasting the sweet taste of honey  
and taking long walks when the storm breaks for birds to  
sing.

I feel worried cause the cupboards are empty  
and I should be finding jobs for money  
but I'm writing songs instead.

There's apples in the meadow and still a little grain in the  
jar  
and I know we'll make it through till tomorrow  
and something will be changing somewhere soon.

We got sunshine coming down through the clouds so fine  
We got a rainbow hanging above the pines  
I got songs I'm singing or something you said  
I got dreams rolling around inside my head.

Hunting season will end. The deer I saw on the mountain above the cabin will make it through the season and through the winter and mate and give birth to young. The species will continue. Bears will move farther up the mountain as people build their way toward the top.

The apple trees won't be there in a few years, but bears will eat the apples every season they are available and then move on up the mountain and go on living without apples, as they did for centuries before apple trees grew there.

World and earth might never coincide. I haven't any answer to that still resonating question, what will I do? but the darkest answers, that suggest not continuing at all, fade, drop into darker dreams that fade from me.

I believe what comes out of me in song. I know we'll make it through till tomorrow, and we'll deal with tomorrow as it opens around us. Laura says, "That's a beautiful song. Keep singing songs. Almost everybody has jobs for money. Very few have songs and dreams."

We eat hot apple pie as rain drums on the metal roof above us. Daylight drains away into the forest around us.

Pine and cedar firewood pop and snap inside the stove. I

look at Laura. She looks at me and smiles. The smells of hot apples and cinnamon fill the cabin in the rainstorm. Songs and dreams rumble all around inside me and find their way out into the cabin. I give them to Laura. The more I give, the more I have to give.