

MARK ARI ALL THE BONE



Title : ALL THE BONE

Artist : Mark Ari

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Track

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All words and music by Mark Ari, except Barbry Allen (traditional) and "Down by the Sally Gardens," (poem by W. B. Yeats).

Mark Ari, vocal, guitars, and harmonica

Noah Ari, 2nd guitar on "Wherever You Are Is Home."

Recorded in the kitchen with two mics, one or two takes per track.

Cover Design: Mark Ari, detail from "Ayeka," by Mark Ari, watercolor, acrylic and pastel on paper.

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Night-scented Orchids

I ought to sleep. But I'm teasing the memory of smoke and what smoke makes. I thought for a moment it might be mist. Night-scented orchids make such a fool of me.

About "Kezia's song":

My daughter, Kezia, sometimes calls me "old." She's getting back me for calling her "little bit." You're "weak," she'll say. "And old." She lets her eyes go wide when she says it and, rolling shoulders, shakes her head to heighten the drama of her words. The shake is a timpani roll for the slap and crash of the flung term hitting its mark. Right to my mush. It's all very theatrical.

I am unflappable. It is one of my superpowers. I have others. I am able to race through time with increasing velocity. I am fabulously more powerful than I someday will be. I can see through myself. And I can outstare Kez.

She fights back a smile. She can't beat it. She tries hard. When resistance is all but destroyed, she comes at me. A furious chaîné. Landing in my lap, she throws her head suddenly back with a force that startles me. I've got her. Of course. And when I look at her face, the smile is all out now. She is fearless in my arms.

Kezia's Song

I never believed in the healing kiss
I always thought love was a will o' the wisp
I never believed it could happen like this
Now I believe in a little bit

On all of the first stars that surely will be lit
Among the wishes you make are some you might forget
And you might call yourself crazy for placing the bet
But Honey, it's okay to believe in a little bit

Little bit, O love; little bit, little girl
Little bit an angel; little bit my world,
Little bit a flower that blooms in the hand
I believe in a little bit.

There's them that believe in any word that is writ
And them believe in whatever might fit
You can waltz the snake-charmer but try not to get bit
You just want to believe in a little bit

Little bit, O love; little bit, little girl
Little bit an angel; little bit my world,
Little bit a flower that blooms in the hand
I believe in a little bit.

About "Wherever You Are is Home":

April 9th, 2015 marked 27 years Jan and I have been married. A bit more than half a year before that, sometime in 1987, I was on the island of Crete. I'd been away from the states better than a year. Jan, who had been in school in Paris, joined me in Spain and we lived and traveled together for some months. She left for New York and I went to Greece. I wrote "Wherever You Are is Home" there. It was played once. That was for Jan on the day I arrived home in New York. And because the song was new and written for that one performance, I couldn't remember most of it after a while.

For years, I thought I'd lost the paper it was written on. I tried to find it. I knew I'd put somewhere for safekeeping, but it was out of my head. I looked in all my old songbooks, through every file and folder of papers, in every crack and corner of everything I owned. More than once. Plenty more than once. You know how it is. You know you have something, and you've searched everywhere. You tell yourself, it can't be gone. You must be blind. So you go back time and again. Then you give up and, Time playing the games it plays, you eventually give up on giving up and go try all over again. I did that so much, because I wanted it and it felt bad to lose it.

Recently—a few months back—I was clearing out my studio. I had a leave coming up, and I wanted to get things just the way I liked them to paint. In a drawer stuffed with old shit, I came across the address book I use to carry in my pack. I leafed through it. There were pieces of paper stuck in there. Notes. Phone numbers without names. Some with names of folks I'd meant to stay in touch with and didn't. Addresses for this or that in some city or another. Just scraps, torn and wrinkled. They were slipping out while I handled them, and some fell. One of these was a small, doubled over sheet of paper. I picked it up and, mood I was in, unfolded to see what it was about. And there was the song.

So I recorded it on April 9th, twenty-seven years and around seven months after that last and, up to then, only time I'd played it. This time, my son Noah played with me.

Wherever You Are is Home

Baby, it's been a long and sometimes dusty road.
Where tomorrow might have found us, we could
never know.
From the Alpujarras pueblos to the coast of the
Dead Sea,
Wherever you are is home to me.

I remember Paris, Rue Gît-le-Cœur.
I can't explain what was in my mind then to leave
you there.
For all our many partings reunions there would be.
Wherever you are is home to me.

Midnight on the Ramblas, I can still see you there
An island off the coast of Portugal--is that sunlight
in your hair.
At the Alameda Market there was no one else I
could see.
Wherever you are is home to me.

Sitting by fountains, walking on edges,
Biking up mountains, jumping off ledges,
Dancing like Turks, laughing like gypsies,
Clapping flamenco in underground cities.
I love this world and every place fits me
But wherever you are is home to me.

When the work-a-day work all day gravity of the
moment
Provokes familiar tendencies toward blues
I think of trails and trains, boats and planes
And they all bring me straight back home to you.

Baby, it's been a long and sometimes bumpy road.
We learn our way on our way, that's how it's gotta
go
Among the world's many wonders to redeem
uncertainty
Wherever you are is home to me.
Wherever you are is home to me.
Where you are is home.

When I Was In Love with You

When I was in love with you I read you the by the light of my mind's eye. You didn't break my heart so much as show me how to swallow the throat-stuck shattered pieces. And when I built myself, considering your clothes, you let me take what fit. You were that fucking great.

Barbry Allen

Was in the very month of May
When all green buds were swellin',
Sweet Davey on his death-bed lay
For the love of Barbry Allen.

He sent his servant to the town
To the place where she was dwelling,
Said, "You must come to my master's house,
If your name be Barbry Allen"

Slowly, slowly she gets up,
And to his bedside going
She drew the curtains to one side
And she said, "Young man, you're dying."

"I know, I'm sick and very low,
And sorrow dwells within me
No better, no better I ever shall be.
Til I have Barbry Allen."

"Don't you remember last Saturday night
When I was in the tavern,
You toasted all the ladies there
But you slighted Barbry Allen."
"Oh yes, oh yes, I'm remember it well,
That day down in the tavern,
I gave my drinks to all the ladies there,
But my heart to Barbry Allen."

He reached up his pale white hands,
Intending for to touch her,
She turned away from his bedside
And said, "Young man, I won't have you."

She turned away from his bedside
And said, "Young man I won't have you."

He turned his face into the wall
And bursted out a 'crying,
"Farewell, farewell, my good friends all.
Be good to Barbry Allen."

She had not walked and reached the town
When she heard the mourners chanting,
And as they did, they seemed to say,
"Hard-hearted Barbry Allen."

She looked to the east, she looked to the west,
She saw his pale corpse coming,
Crying put him down and leave him there,
So I may gaze upon him

And the more she looked, the more she mourned,
Her heart was struck with sorrow,
Saying, "sweet Davey died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow."

They buried Davey by the old synagogue
And Barbry there anigh him,
And out of his grave grew a red, red rose,
And out of hers, a briar.

They grew and grew to the ghetto wall
Where they couldn't grow no higher,
There they made a true love's knot.
The red rose and the briar.

Happy Birthday to Me

Happy Birthday to me,
Happy Birthday to me,
I'm not anyplace I thought I might be
But the sun comes up in the morning and it shines right down on me
So what the hell, happy birthday to me.

Happy Birthday to me,
Happy Birthday to me,
I'm not so well traveled as I thought I'd be
I've never been to Arkansas, but I've seen it on TV
So what the hell, happy birthday to me

Happy Birthday to me,
Happy Birthday to me,
I ain't the guy I fully expected to be
But when I look in the mirror
Someone's smiling back at me,
Singing happy birthday, happy birthday to me.

Now, I might blow those candles out,
Or let 'em all burn down
But that's just me, and happy birthday to me.

Happy Birthday to me,
Happy Birthday to me,
It's not clearly better to be than not to be,
But this guitar in my arms, and these boots on my feet,
Well, they're so sweet, so happy birthday to me.

Now, I might blow those candles out,
Or let 'em all burn down
That's just me, and happy birthday to me.

I might blow those candles out,
Or let 'em all burn down
Aw, what the hell, happy birthday to me.

About "I'll Be Glad When You're Gone":

One night stands have a pretty shitty reputation. We think of something cold, superficial, soulless, or even mean. Maybe it is like that a lot of times for a lot of folks—the kind of thing you grab in the moment out of hope or need or some terribly human thirst, and it leaves you feeling flattened. Less than you were before. Sadder.

But it's not always that. Someone once said the loveliest flower has the briefest bloom. I know someone said it, because it got into my head from somewhere. I don't think it's entirely true. But a lovely flower, and perhaps even the loveliest, might have the briefest bloom. It can happen. That's enough to know.

Love doesn't have to be long to be love. It can just happen for a few hours on a cool night with the wavelets from the wake of a passing boat lapping a nearby bulkhead under the young moon visible through a glass door. When it is as much to be a drink of water as it is to drink. You don't remember her name. How could you after decades? You only used it once. Twice at most, and never again. But you do remember the reach of skin, the soft and tender give of it against your own. Hair, peach-scented, the color of walnuts. A wet mouth and the taste of it. For that cupful of time, it was sweet, sincere, and so gentle it felt like what home must feel like.

Why shouldn't something like that hold its place among the loves of lifetime?

But this song isn't about that. It's about a whole other mood altogether.

I'll Be Glad When You're Gone

Great big eyes, crooked little smile,
I've been thinking about you a long, long while.
All night long,
It's been all night long.
I'll love you all night long
But I'll be glad when you're gone

"Wait a minute man," she said,
We were written in the stars."
"Where did you get that stuff from?
We just hang out in the same sort of bars."
All night long,
All night long.
I'll love you all night long
But I'll be glad when you're gone

Take a walk around me, girl
What strings to you see?
I may not be a good man, but you know I am free
All night long,
All night long.
I'll love you all night long
But I'll be glad when you're gone

If you're looking for some magic,
Baby, look no more
You wanna see the future, Honey?
There's the door
All night long (leave it open)
All night long.
I'll love you all night long
But I'll be glad when you're gone

4th of July Eve, 2017

Sometimes I want a destination. Sometimes I don't. I just want to get in the car and ride. Yeah, I know. Fossil fuel. Carbonic soot and ash. I push my foot down on the metal, and I'm tearing up a bit of the world. Choking off something vital. Laying heavy black smoke on the air. I know it. I'll feel bad if I think about it.

Still, that thrill of metal. The hum and buzz and rumble of it. In my legs, my ass. In all the bone of me. All around. Wind rushing through the open window, flapping my hair like the glorious freak flag I imagine it still to be. What else do I need but that and rolling ribbons of highway. A cup of hot Joe in the cradle. Tunes on the box. A lover close beside, hand on my thigh as I work the clutch.

It's 4th of July eve and I'm wondering about the American in me.

Driving a car on roads that go on forever is part of it. Feels damned American to me. And I've driven to lots of places. Wherever she's let me in. I swam naked in her icy mountain lakes. Pissed in her woods and rivers. Shouted into canyons. Feasted on beans and ketchup, potatoes roasted black on an open fire while a steaming water-pot cooled nearby, coffee grounds settling to the bottom in time to warm a lonesome guy on a cold night crazy with stars.

I love this country. It's the government I can't stand.

I'm not saying things haven't been fucked to shit. I'm not thinking about that right now. I'm thinking about people I know. Kind, generous, smart, creative, exciting, sexy American people. There was a time I wouldn't have a clue whether they had politics. All I know is more than a few had a big-hearted handshake. I know because they gave it to me. Still do. And great gab, too. And laughs. And something to eat and drink and a place to lie down when I've needed it. Wherever wheels took me. So maybe that's why I like to drive. Because I love the country. Velocity, too. But mostly the country.

About “Hot Dogs and Beer”:

I like a good manifesto. I always did. Even as a kid, introductions to TV programs like Superman—you know, that whole bit about truth, justice, and the American way—got me going. Just sent me. Truth is cool, right? I don’t always know what it is, but I dig the ring of it. And justice? I like justice, too. I’m more flexible about it now than I used to be, but I like it fine. If the American Way is the sum of those things, then I’m a Yankee Doodle dandy-do-or-die.

I’m thinking of Big Daddy Dada, Tristan Tzara. “We are like a raging wind that rips up the clothes of clouds and prayers, we are preparing the great spectacle of disaster, conflagration and decomposition” (Dada Manifesto 1918).

Okay then. Give me an ax, a hammer, a flag soaked in gasoline, and a Dark Knight. I’m good to go.

But it’s not always like that. Emotionally, I mean.

Every now and then, a person ought to take account of their convictions if only to discover if they’ve got any left, rattle one’s head to see what shakes out that matters. And to sing that. If it’s angry, that’s just all right. But sometimes it’s more of a love song.

Hot Dogs and Beer

I believe in hot dogs and beer,
And I believe the future is here,
I believe in every crocodile tear,
And I believe in you.

I believe in time when it’s spendin’
I believe in justice when it’s bendin’
I might believe in this world when it’s ending
Then I’ll believe in you.

I believe in wings over the world
I believe the universe curls
I believe why walk when you can whirl
But mostly I believe in you.

I believe we all want a home,
I believe that’s why we roam,
If it’s true we all die alone,
I’ll still believe in you.

I believe in the wind and the rain
The man in the moon, the house on the lane,

On this crazy old planet nothing stays the same
‘cept I believe in you.

I believe I might have played to the crowd
If I didn’t believe in laughing out loud,
Still I believe in paradise now
Cause, baby, I believe in you.

I believe I do
I believe in you
I believe because
You tell me to.

I believe in red hots and brews
In Rock and Roll and Rhythm and Blues
You already know that, so here comes the news:
I believe in you.

I believe I do
I believe in you
I believe because
You tell me to.

About "Down by the Sally Garden"

June 13th, I was out of it. Had a headache that had lasted days. Tried to forget it by browsing the internet and found a mention that it was Yeats' birthday. I thought about some of his poems. Then, I started singing Sally Gardens quietly and to myself.

The first time I'd heard the song was from a young woman singing it on the Boston Commons sometime in the past. I've heard it plenty since then but, for me, the song is still connected to the image of that woman in the billowy blouse, her dark hair pouring from a beaded headband over the top of a big guitar. Like me, she was playing for coins. She cut me that day. Nothing to do but pack up my box and follow a group of folks toward her. Her voice was honey.

Yeats said his poem was a reconstruction of "an old song from three lines imperfectly remembered by an old peasant woman in the village of Ballisodare, Sligo, who often sings them to herself." I don't know what that sounded like. It's always Yeats' words I sing, and it's always the voice of the girl on the Boston Commons I hear behind me when I do.

That night, we played short sets at the Turks Head on Charles Street--me and her, Railroad Pete, Swami Rivers, and some other folks. Afterwards, she waited behind a dumpster while a pal of mine who worked at a Greek restaurant passed out a bag of meat to me at the back door. Another pal looked the other way while we secreted beers under our jackets at the 24-hour store he managed. Then we went to the roof of the building where she lived, stuffed rolled newspapers into an old hibachi, and lit a fire. I recall the smell of roasting meat and how the edges of burning newsprint went up in lit fragments like fireflies. And how big the stars were all around.

We had guitars, so we played. I lit a jay. We talked. We laughed plenty. Damned if I know over what. But we kept at it a long while until our voices went soft in the night. For the life of me, I can't remember a single thing we said except when, half holding my breath, I asked if I could kiss her.

Now, I'm not saying playing a song is a surefire cure for a headache. Just that I was thinking about some hours in Boston when I reconstructed the guitar part and punched the recorder to sing this song on Yeats' birthday. Sometimes, you just need to let out a little air.

Down by the Sally Gardens

Down by the sally gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the sally gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears

Thank you.

