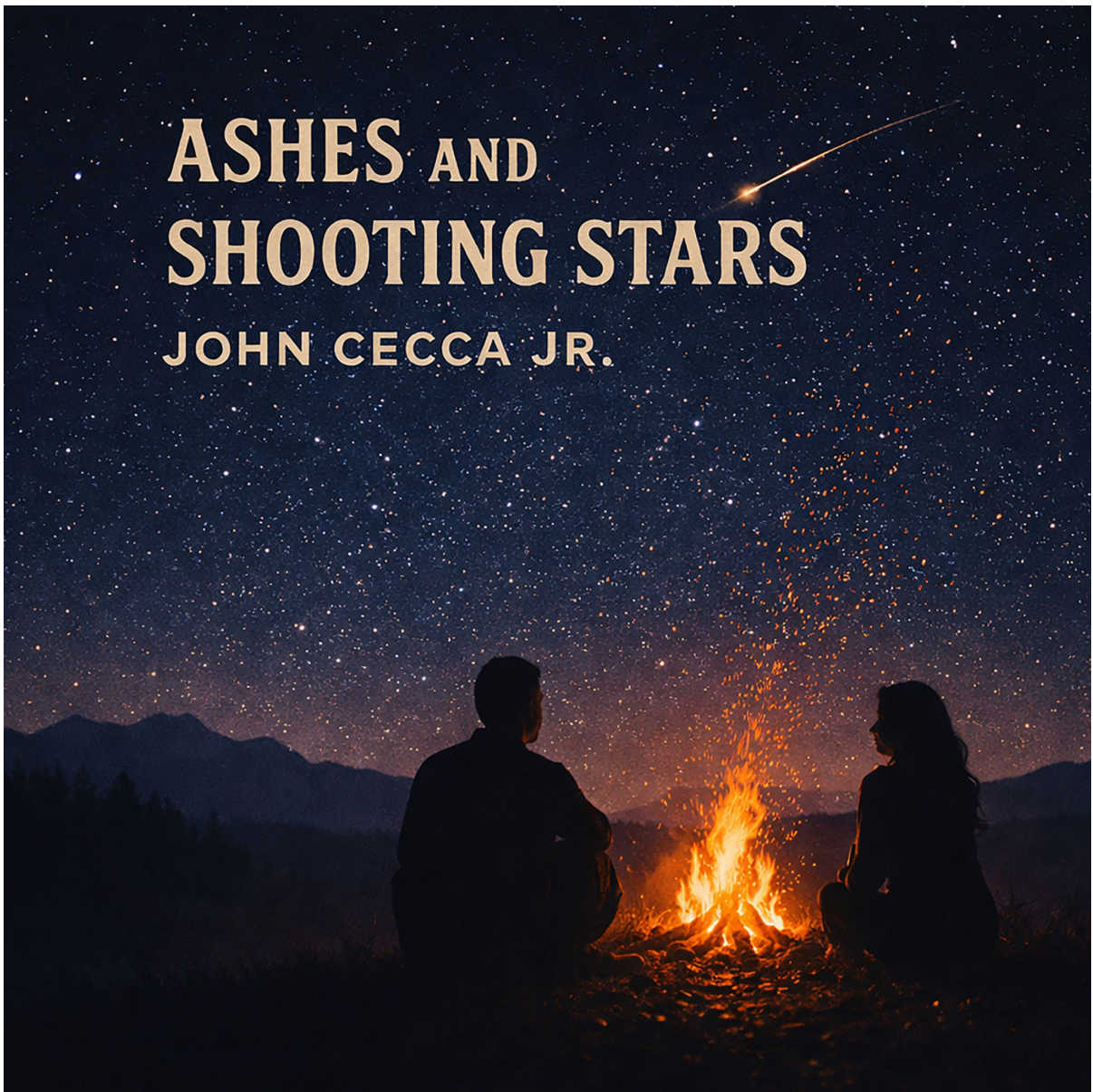




ASHES AND SHOOTING STARS

John Cecca Jr.

[LISTEN TO THE ALBUM](#)

A country album with the soul speaking.

About the Album

Ashes and Shooting Stars is a country album with the soul speaking.

These are songs about memory, love, loss, dreams, confusion, people and the roads we travel - sometimes willingly and sometimes because life puts us there.

The music moves through country, Americana, blues and touches of soul, but the stories come first. Some look backward. Others look around at the world as it is. A few simply ask questions for which there may never be an answer.

Different voices and musical approaches appear throughout the album, sometimes even offering completely different interpretations of the same song.

At its heart, Ashes and Shooting Stars is about what remains with us: the people, places, mistakes, hopes and memories that somehow become part of who we are.

Some things burn away.
Some keep shining.

Track List

01	Ashes and Shooting Stars
02	Ghosts on The Page
03	Blue Line Blues
04	Insanity is Peaking
05	Lost in Time
06	Freeway Toll
07	Blue With Joni
08	You Fill My Senses like the Way You Fill Those Genes
09	Love and Love Again
10	Child in the Box
11	Ghosts on The Page
12	The Victims

LISTEN TO THE ALBUM

TRACK 01

Ashes and Shooting Stars



LISTEN TO THIS SONG

From poem to song: persistence, memory, and discovering that you may be part of someone else's dream.

About the Song

The road toward a dream is rarely straight. It is filled with walls, bridges, unexpected turns and, occasionally, rudely slammed doors. Ashes and Shooting Stars grew from the idea that through all of them, you have to keep your dream in front of you.

But there is another side to that thought: while you're pursuing your own dream, you may discover that you are also the dream inside someone else's dream.

The song developed from my poem Blinded, published in Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads. The original poem was about persistence - getting knocked down, revising the plan and continuing forward. When that idea became a song, it became more personal. A mother's encouragement turned the original message around: the person chasing the dream discovers that, all along, he was part of hers.

- John Cecca Jr.

The Original Poem

Blinded

A beginning is just that.
It doesn't matter where you're at.
Golden is life.
That slides into that glass slipper.
Don't be blinded by your fate.
Life can be good.
It could be great.
If you keep your dreams
In front of you.
You've heard it all before.
Walls, bridges, rudely slammed doors.
They slap your face,
Suck your grace,
Knocking you back
To your lonely, lowly place.
Cut to your knees
Logic says, "Please pray!"
Or you'll pay on your back.
but remember,

Day Dream, Night Dream
Boys scream, girls scream

“Let me out of here!”

Hear yourself,

By not altering or faltering your plans.

Keep your head,

Keep your plan on the move,

Be wise

Add chapters.

Revise!

Always!

Keep your dream in front of you!

The Lyric

Ashes and Shooting Stars

Picture-perfect memories
Scattered 'round the fire,
Ashes climb the midnight sky
Before their short-lived flight.

Shooting stars and that old guitar,
Laughter, wine, and stories
That carried me through the night.

And even now,
I still hear Mama say:

**Ashes and shooting stars -
That's how dreams begin.
Fading quick or flying far,
It's up to the fire within.**

**Don't be blinded by your fate.
Life can be good - it can be great.
But through the dark, whatever you do...
Always keep your dream
In front of you.**

"It's just the start," you'd tell me.
"Don't matter where you stand.
A golden life will find you
If you're brave enough to plan."

"This dirt road you're walkin'
Will turn to a highway someday -
Just keep the faith.
Don't lose your way."

Oh, starry night,
You've heard it all before -
The bridges I crossed
And those slammed-shut doors...

Ashes and Shooting Stars - continued

**Ashes and shooting stars -
That's how dreams survive.
They'll burn and fade,
But leave their spark
To light the rest of your life.**

**Don't be blinded by your fate.
Life will be good - it will be great.
Through every turn, through all you do...
Always keep that dream
In front of you.**

The climb's been steep,
The road's been long.
I stumbled more than twice.

But your love was always there
To pull me back to life.

And one night I asked,
"Mama, what dream's been guiding you?"

You smiled and held me close and said,

"Honey, it's standing right here -
It's you."

**Ashes and shooting stars -
They still light my skies.
From every spark you gave to me,
I learned to rise.**

**Don't be blinded by your fate.
Life can be good - it can be great.
And Mama, every step I go through...
I'll keep that dream
In front of me.**

Yeah... ashes and shooting stars, Mama...

You're still my light
In the dark.

Listen

Hear the recording and choose your preferred streaming service through the LANDR release page.

[LISTEN TO ASHES AND SHOOTING STARS](#)



Ghosts on the Page

Upbeat Contemporary Country Version

Track 2 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

This song could easily have been called *Love Penned in Disappearing Ink*.

The idea begins almost like a magician's trick: words are written on a page, and then the ink slowly disappears. What happens when love does the same thing?

Sometimes you discover that you never completely knew the person you loved. The closer you try to become, the farther away they seem to move. Eventually the relationship disappears, but unlike the ink, the memories don't. They remain behind like ghosts on a page - traces of something that was once very real, lingering inside a half-finished dream.

The image of disappearing ink came from lines in my earlier poem *Amaranthine Eyes*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*: **“All dreams lie ahead, / Future penned / In fools' disappearing ink.”**

In the poem, disappearing ink represents an uncertain future. In the song, that image has changed direction. The future has become the past, the love has disappeared, and yet its memory remains.

One Song, Different Voices

This upbeat contemporary-country band interpretation is the first version heard on the album, and one of my favorites. There is something almost haunting about hearing such a melancholy lyric carried by a recording with more movement and energy.

Later on the album, the same words return through a softer female-country interpretation. Elsewhere in the catalog, the song takes yet another turn as a dance recording. The words haven't changed. The person - and the musical world - telling the story has. Sometimes that changes the song completely.

- John Cecca Jr.

Ghosts on the Page

Lyrics

Love penned in disappearing ink -
It slipped through the cracks before I could think.
You shattered my reason, rewrote what I knew,
Even the dark side of the moon bows to you.

Your gaze still lingers, infinite, deep,
A mark on my soul I still ache to keep.
The closer we came, the quicker you'd turn,
Binoculars backwards, a lesson to learn.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
Erased from the page, but not from the brink.
Your breath still haunts like a ghost in the rain,
Your touch is a whisper that still knows my name.
The story is gone, but the echoes remain -
A love that was fleeting still sings through the pain.**

The pieces fell scattered, blown by the wind,
We started too early to ever begin.
I swore we had power to weather the storm,
But half of a heartbeat can't keep a soul warm.

The closer we got, the further you'd drift,
A shadow unanchored, too fragile to lift.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
Erased from the page, but not from the brink.
Your breath still haunts like a ghost in the rain,
Your touch is a whisper that still knows my name.
The story is gone, but the echoes remain -
A love that was fleeting still sings through the pain.**

We were a flame too wild to contain,
A comet that burned through the heart of my vein.
You vanished like smoke, but I still see the spark -
A ghost of forever still lighting the dark.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
A trace on my soul that won't let me sink.
Faded and distant, but somehow still near,
A love that once vanished still whispers right here.**

And if ink disappears, let the memory stay -
Written in silence where words fade away.
For some loves don't end, they just change what they mean...
Like a ghost on the page of a half-finished dream.

LISTEN TO GHOSTS ON THE PAGE



Blue Line Blues

Track 3 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

I lived in East Boston, Winthrop and Revere, Massachusetts, and for a time the Blue Line was part of my morning commute to work. Anyone who has ridden it during rush hour knows the setting: crowded cars, shoulder to shoulder, everyone simply trying to get where they are going.

The subway scene in *Blue Line Blues* is fictional. The memory it awakens is not.

I wanted to write about the power of the senses - especially smell - to carry us backward through time without warning. In the song, a woman politely squeezes past on a crowded train. She is wearing Jungle Gardenia, a fragrance I had not smelled in years.

One breath is enough. The train disappears, and suddenly I am nineteen again.

The heartbreak in the flashback is real. What interested me years later was not simply remembering it, but how completely a scent could reopen a moment I thought had been packed away. We often think memory is something we deliberately retrieve. Sometimes memory finds us first.

That's the country story at the center of the song: an ordinary morning commute, a stranger, a familiar fragrance - and a few seconds in which the past climbs aboard the train with you.

- John Cecca Jr.

Blue Line Blues

Lyrics

(Verse 1)

Morning crush on the Blue Line,
Shoulder to shoulder, nowhere to lean.
I'm hangin' from a tired old strap,
Letting the rumble cover what I mean.
Headphones try to take me someplace
Softer than this city noise-
But memories don't ask permission,
They just climb aboard with the rest of the crowd.

(Verse 2)

She brushed past me - a simple moment,
Just a stranger's smile in a subway sway.
Said "sorry," I nodded, nothing special...
Till her perfume drifted my way.
Jungle Gardenia.
Haven't smelled that in years.
And suddenly I wasn't on a train-
I was nineteen, standing in the dark behind my fears.

(Chorus)

Funny how a scent can open a window
You thought you'd boarded up for good.
One breath and I was back beside you,
Believin' you the way I once would.
You said you were done with him,
Said that night was ours to start.
But you slipped back to an old familiar fire...
And it branded more than just my heart.

Blue Line Blues

Lyrics - continued

(Verse 3)

I still see you leaving in that car,
His arm around you like nothin' changed.
Roy Orbison on the radio,
Me on the sidewalk, rearranged.
Never talked to you after that,
Didn't see the point in stayin' sore.
Life moved on, like trains do-
But some turns stay etched in the floor.

(Chorus)

Funny how a scent can open a window
You thought you'd boarded up for good.
One breath and I was back beside you,
Believin' you in ways I never should.
Young hearts trust too easily,
Old habits pull too strong.
And sometimes the right thing for someone else
Is the thing that breaks you all along.

(Bridge)

That lady stepped off two stops later,
But the fragrance lingered, soft and slow.
A reminder that first loves don't last-
They just settle somewhere
You don't always choose to go.

(Outro)

Train rolled on, and the moment faded,
Like perfume in an open door breeze.
I smiled to myself, a little older now-
Some stories hurt...
But they still bring you to your knees.

Singin' those Blue Line Blues,
Just ridin' on
With who I've learned to be.

LISTEN TO BLUE LINE BLUES



Insanity is Peaking

Track 4 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Insanity is Peaking begins with life as a carousel: the daily grind circling around and around, always moving but somehow returning to the same place.

Inside that carousel is another image - the bell jar. The inspiration comes from Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*, but here the image becomes my own metaphor for the invisible enclosure we sometimes build around our lives. We can see freedom outside it, yet still feel trapped beneath the glass.

The brass ring connects the two ideas. On the old carousels, reaching for the brass ring meant taking a chance at winning something while the ride continued beneath you. In the song, that ring has lost its shine. The dreams are still there, but repetition has worn down the desire to reach for them.

Then the lyric turns toward a relationship. Love can fall into its own carousel - years together, storms survived, moments of distance and reconnection. The question becomes whether two people keep circling until the fire disappears, or choose to put something back into it.

The answer arrives in the final chorus. The bell jar doesn't win. The carousel doesn't have to dictate the destination. The song that begins with uncertainty ends with a decision: keep the fire alive, break through the glass and grow old together.

This is the female contemporary-country interpretation, with a touch of indie character. Other versions move through related country territory and, in another recording, into a full dance setting - the same lyric escaping its own musical bell jar.

- John Cecca Jr.

Insanity is Peaking

Lyrics

Verse 1

This daily grind's a carousel spin,
Round and round, it pulls me in.
Tearin' at my peace of mind,
Yeah, insanity's peakin', ridin' the line.
Should I get off... or hold the line?

Chorus

Gotta break out of this bell jar,
Freedom's close, but it feels so far.
That brass ring's lost its shine,
Used to dream, now I just kill time.
I just don't know...
Lord, I just don't know.

Verse 2

The fire burns low, but it's still warm,
Ain't much left, but it's weathered the storm.
Your touch still pulls me, your eyes still call,
We build it up, we let it fall.
Baby, can we rise at all?

Chorus

Gotta break out of this bell jar,
Freedom's close, but it feels so far.
That brass ring's lost its shine,
Used to dream, now I just kill time.
I just don't know...
No, I just don't know.

Bridge

But I think about them years we've spent,
The nights we laughed, the words we meant.
Every storm we ever rode through,
Hell, I still believe in me and you.

Final Chorus / Outro

When the fire burns low, throw a little fuel,
Love's no game, but it breaks the rules.
We can work it out - that's plain to see,
No bell jar's ever gonna capture me.
Let's grow old...
Yeah, let's grow old, baby, you and me.

LISTEN TO INSANITY IS PEAKING



Lost in Time

Track 5 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

I lived for years with books as companions. Romance, fantasy, history and adventure were not simply things I read; they helped shape how I thought, imagined and understood the world.

Lost in Time begins by deliberately sending the listener somewhere else. A man is kicking back with a drink, thinking about the friends and pieces of life he has left behind. It sounds as though he is remembering people - and in a sense he is.

But the friends at the center of the song are also the books and characters that once filled his life.

I wanted to explore the power of those early books. We may forget titles, plots and even the names of characters, yet something from them remains. They helped build our imagination, our sense of romance and possibility, and perhaps even parts of our personality.

The song exists in three very different musical lives: country, soul and blues, and a hard-driving dance interpretation. Here, as a country song, the story gets room to sit back, relax and remember.

It grew from my poem *Lost*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*. The poem ends with the reveal in two simple words: *Johnny Tremain* came home.

- John Cecca Jr.

From the Poem

Lost

All my friends
Left behind
I miss you.

The shuttlecraft life
Has taken you
Light-years
From my memory
Heart and soul.

The feel
Of your vibrant lives,
Shaped and molded
My personality.
I am what we were.

My friends,
Sadly,
I don't remember
Who you were.

Intimate moments
Lost in life's daily routines.
We must meet again
And see what
Time has written.

Today.

"Johnny Tremain,"
Came Home.

Lost in Time

Lyrics

Verse 1

Kicking back, relaxing, sipping slow,
Gonna Bogart this drink and let it go.
Like watching an old friend fade from view,
I start thinking 'bout the things I knew.

Pre-Chorus

This little screen in my hand feels fine,
But I miss the friends I left behind.

Chorus

Lost, lost in time,
Memory's clouds in clouds unwind.
Lost, lost in time,
A part of me got left behind.
All those stories, all those lines,
They built my soul, they shaped my mind.
Now they're just ghosts on a shelf I can't find-
Lost in time.

Verse 2

Romance and fantasy steered my wheel,
They taught me how to think, to feel.
But life got busy, days got mean,
And I swapped my heart for a TV screen.

Bridge

They're sleeping in my memory,
Still playing softly in my soul.
I owe them more - they carried me,
When the world was taking its toll.

Final Chorus

Lost, lost in time,
Memory's clouds in clouds unwind.
Lost, lost in time,
A part of me got left behind.
Then with a grin and sweet elation,
I dusted off Great Expectations.
Lost in time...
But the soul never forgets.

LISTEN TO LOST IN TIME



Freeway Toll

Track 6 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Freeway Toll is an allegory built around the highway of life - the miles we travel, the people we carry with us and the tolls we willingly pay along the way.

The lyric grew from family relationships and experiences that remain personal. The details aren't important here. What matters is the feeling behind them: giving to the people you love, building their dreams, accepting responsibility and sometimes sacrificing pieces of yourself in the process.

For years you keep driving because that is what love and responsibility ask of you. But eventually another passenger makes itself known: Time.

Time is a temporary companion with no loyalty. It rides beside you, lets you believe the road stretches forever, and then quietly begins shortening the distance ahead. At some point the soul asks whether, while caring for everyone else, you have also been cheating yourself.

And still you keep paying the toll.

This recording takes that reflection into an upbeat country-rock setting. Elsewhere in the catalog the same lyric takes on a more danceable four-on-the-floor life - another example of how a song's emotional center can survive a completely different musical road.

The song draws from two of my poems, *Ocean Sand Mind* and *Where Has the Time Gone?*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*.

- John Cecca Jr.

From the Poetry

Ocean Sand Mind

Drifting, ocean sand mind,
Thought to thought,
Emotion to thought,
Thought to emotion,
Not grasping the meaning.

So confused,
Grabbing at clouds,
Sifting through
The hands of time,
So sad,

Long ago, I was a poet,
Of sorts,
Hearing echoes,
Forefathers, predecessors,
Friends, relatives.

Singing songs of innocence,
Darkened by experience.
So depressed.

**Time a temporary companion,
With no loyalty,
Takes, then abandons.**

I coveted the lamb,
Devoured by the tyger.
Oh! In innocence,
Ignorance was bliss.
Now, all of this!

Is life,
For me,
For you,
One and one
Is not
Really two.

From the Poetry

Where Has the Time Gone?

Infinitesimal to God,
The Universe,
Eternity,
Mortality,
A lifetime.

Chronicled in memorabilia verses,
Annals of family photos.
Scrutinizing the seed,
Flowering to fruition,
A sweet elation.

Yet feelings,
Loneliness,
Failure to my soul,
Wanting to revert to childhood.

At times thinking
The things I had made me rich.
Would that I could replay time,
All of its unique sights, scents, sounds,
All the senses, relive them all.

But,
Life moves vibrantly,
Washed by time,
Fades and frays away.

Freeway Toll

Lyrics

Freeway traffic put a halt on my life,
Got me asking where the years disappear each night.
Just me and the road, nothing left to console -
Meant to keep me moving, but it's wearing down my soul.

**Time, you're a temporary companion,
Smile, then you turn and walk away.
Give me a taste of forever,
Then you steal it day by day.**

Watched the flowers bloom, then fade in the rain,
Loved my woman deeply - felt the joy and the pain.
Still there's a part of me chasing the wind,
The barefoot dreamer I was way back then.

**Time, you're a temporary companion,
Smile, then you turn and walk away.
Give me a taste of forever,
Then you steal it day by day.**

I've built up the dreams of the ones that I love,
But my soul keeps whisperin' from somewhere above:
"Life burns bright, then turns to gray -
Washed by time, it all fades away."

Now I dream of my youth and the fire it had,
A sweet, bitter memory - a good kind of sad.
I've carried their joy, but I've paid with my own,
At the end of this road, I'm still driving alone.

**Time, you're a temporary companion,
Smile, then you turn and walk away.
I've paid every toll on this freeway,
Still you steal my soul day by day.**

LISTEN TO FREEWAY TOLL



Blue With Joni

Track 7 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Blue With Joni began with a quiet image: a woman alone on an eighth-floor balcony above the ocean, drinking Chardonnay, listening to Joni Mitchell and trying to understand how love managed to fool her.

The title carries its own small play on words. She is feeling blue while listening to *Blue*. Around her, the night is beautiful - cool salt air, stars, the sea - while inside she is still sorting through the remains of a relationship built on what she now recognizes as pretty little lies.

But the song isn't only about heartbreak. As the night moves on, something begins to change. The memories are still there, but they no longer own her. Solitude, which might once have felt unbearable, slowly becomes peace.

This soft piano interpretation gives that transition room to breathe. A haunting female voice leaves the listener alone with her thoughts. The same lyric also lives in other musical settings, including a male country-band version and an upbeat reggae interpretation whose island character turns the emotional temperature in another direction.

The song grew from my poem *Chilling*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*, and from the haiku *Pretty Little Lies* in *Misfortune Cookies*. One supplied the balcony, wine, stars, Joni and reflective stillness. The other supplied the deception. The song brought the two together.

- John Cecca Jr.

From the Poetry

Chilling

Summers' eve cool salty ocean clam-bed breath,
Chilled the Chardonnay filled frame,
The Big Dipper scooped
The dulcet rhythms
Of Joni.

Feeling Blue
On this 8th-floor balcony.

Sipping new thoughts,
Reasoning with sleep and indifference,
Ujjayi pranayama gentle exhalation,
Mother Nature heats the core.

Thoughts tumbling in a cerebral vinyasa,
Sense smiling,
Enjoying the clock's tick,
Adding a note
To another invisible folder.

Pretty Little Lies

Pretty little lies
Glossed smiles, repeller of truth
Congenital flaw

Blue With Joni

Lyrics

Cool wind drifts from the shoreline tonight,
Chardonnay lips in the pale moonlight.
The Big Dipper's scooping the dark out of view,
And I'm Blue with Joni, still tangled in you.

From this eighth-floor balcony, high above the sea,
I'm watching the waves where we used to be.
Covered by your smile, fooled by those eyes,
I built all my dreams on your pretty little lies.

Now the truth drifts in like a breeze I can't see,
And I'm chilling with the memories that don't own me.

Thoughts drift slow like smoke on the breeze,
I reason with ghosts and small mercies.
Mother Nature's curtain is soft and thin,
And I'm slipping toward a peace from deep within.

Still taste the hurt on the edge of my tongue,
But the ache fades away with each song that's sung.
Covered by your smile, fooled by those eyes,
I built all my dreams on your pretty little lies.

Now the truth drifts in like a breeze I can't see,
And I'm chilling with the memories that don't own me.

There was a time no light could break through,
No hope in the silence, no getting past you.
But the night has a way of setting things free,
And the dark ain't so dark when it's just holding me.

So I'll stay here a while with the stars and the sea,
Blue with Joni and finally - just me.

LISTEN TO BLUE WITH JONI



You Fill My Senses Like the Way You Fill Those Jeans

Track 8 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

You Fill My Senses Like the Way You Fill Those Jeans started with a simple country-song idea and a wordplay that was too much fun to ignore: the way someone fills a pair of blue jeans can excite you all the way through your genes.

The jeans/genes play gives the song its wink, but underneath it is a straightforward song about physical attraction overwhelming every sense - sight, scent, taste, touch and that involuntary rush of the body when someone simply walks into your world.

I wanted it playful and suggestive without losing the feeling that there is something more than desire underneath it. The bridge makes that turn: the fantasy may begin with those jeans, but the attraction has already worked its way into the heart.

Like several songs in this catalog, the lyric has proved comfortable in more than one musical setting. This interpretation leans toward country, while another version moves directly onto the dance floor. Both this recording and the dance version have found listeners in different parts of the world.

That ability to move between genres is part of what interests me about songwriting. The arrangement can change completely while the central hook - and the smile behind it - stays exactly where it belongs.

- John Cecca Jr.

You Fill My Senses Like the Way You Fill Those Jeans

Lyrics

When the night gets quiet and the stars shine low,
I feel your fire everywhere I go.
Every smile you give cuts deep and clean,
You're the sweetest sin I've ever seen.

**You fill my senses,
Like the way you fill those jeans.
Got my heart pounding,
Droppin' me down to my knees.
Blood rushing wilder,
Straight through my genes.**

Your kiss is whiskey with a cherry-red burn,
One little taste and there's no return.
Wrapped in your perfume, I can't break free,
You're a wildfire blazing right through me.

**You fill my senses,
Like the way you fill those jeans.
Got my heart pounding,
Droppin' me down to my knees.
Blood rushing wilder,
Straight through my genes.**

Oh, those jeans, where the fantasy starts,
Tight on my body, stitched into my heart.
More than desire, it's a love I know,
You light me up like a neon glow.

**You fill my senses,
Like the way you fill those jeans.
Got my soul trembling,
Bringing me down to my knees.
Blood rushing deeper,
Straight through my genes.**

LISTEN TO YOU FILL MY SENSES



Love and Love Again

Track 9 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Some songs arrive all at once. *Love and Love Again* took the long way around.

Part of the lyric - including the central idea that love doesn't play fair - was first jotted down back in the 1980s. I liked the thought, but at the time I had no musical destination for it. The words simply waited.

Years later, I was standing on a streetcar platform when I noticed a former student passing by on the car. She didn't see me and probably wouldn't have remembered me. There was nothing romantic about the actual moment, but the image stayed with me: someone from long ago appearing unexpectedly, framed for only a few seconds, and then rolling away.

That became the doorway into the song. I turned the former student into an old lover and let country fiction take over. The midnight streetcar became a chance encounter with the past, awakening an old relationship, old promises and the realization that yesterday can return vividly even when it can no longer be reclaimed.

The song asks what happens when love comes back like an old tune: familiar, bittersweet and capable of reopening something you thought time had erased. You may want to hit rewind, but sometimes the price of yesterday is simply too high.

Like several songs in this catalog, *Love and Love Again* lives comfortably in more than one genre. This interpretation leans country, while another version takes the same lyric onto the dance floor. Both have found listeners - another reminder that the song can remain itself even when the musical setting changes completely.

- John Cecca Jr.

Love and Love Again

Lyrics

Saw your face roll by on a midnight streetcar,
Looked even better than the picture in my heart.
Like a throwback song on the FM dial,
Lit up a fire I ain't felt in a while.

But just like smoke, you were gone too soon,
Left me humming that old tune.

**Love and love again,
It don't play fair, it don't pretend.
Spins you 'round, then it's gone with the wind,
Love and love again.
Yeah, love and love again -
It's the heartbreak that never ends.
Comes back strong like an old best friend,
Love and love again.**

We swore forever back in younger days,
Wrote it in a journal that time erased.
But change one page, and the story's gone,
Guess the past is a price we can't outrun.

Still every backroad pulls me near,
To the sound of your voice I still hear.

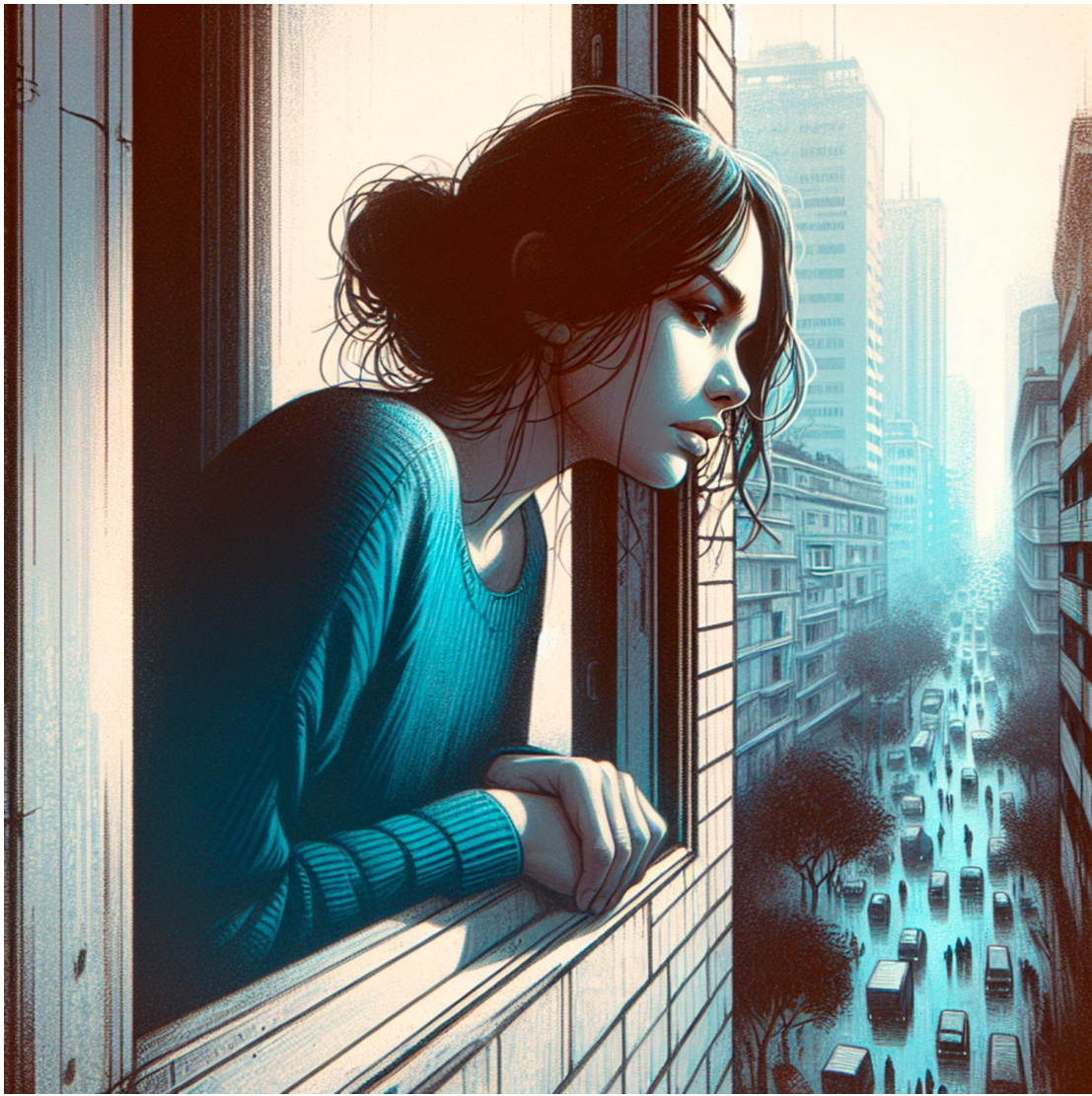
**Love and love again,
It don't play fair, it don't pretend.
Spins you 'round, then it's gone with the wind,
Love and love again.
Yeah, love and love again -
It's the heartbreak that never ends.
Comes back strong like an old best friend,
Love and love again.**

Some things fade, but the song remains,
A little bittersweet, a little sweet champagne.
If I had the chance, I'd hit rewind,
But the cost of yesterday's too high this time.

**Love and love again,
It's a wild ride you can't defend.
Burns like fire, then it's gone in the end,
Love and love again.
Yeah, love and love again -
It's the heartbreak that never ends.**

Comes back strong like a runaway train...
Love and love again.

LISTEN TO LOVE AND LOVE AGAIN



Child in the Box

Country Version

Track 10 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Child in the Box came from two related ideas about the ways we can confine ourselves.

The first is the image of a jack-in-the-box. Sometimes we wind ourselves so tightly with routine, responsibility, caution and expectation that it feels as though one more crank of the handle might finally release the person waiting inside. The child in the box is that spontaneous part of us - the part that still wants to splash in the rain, laugh without worrying who is watching and occasionally do something simply because it feels alive.

The second idea is about people who do everything by the book. Plans, calendars and routines can give life structure, but they can also become invisible walls. If every step is mapped in advance, where is the room to wander outside the lines?

The song isn't arguing against responsibility. It's asking whether safety can sometimes become its own kind of prison, and whether we occasionally need to step outside the box we have carefully built around ourselves.

That idea has traveled easily between musical styles. *Child in the Box* exists in country, reggae and dance interpretations. The rhythms change, but the invitation remains the same: crank the handle, break the routine and let that child out for a while.

- John Cecca Jr.

Child in the Box

Lyrics

Invisible lines keep you locked inside,
Same four walls, same daily ride.
You've got your map, your route, your plan,
But where's the part that makes you dance?
I don't claim to know what makes you whole,
But safety can be prison for the soul.

**Crank that handle, let the chains fall off,
Unlock that child in the box.
Take one step and hear the skyline talk -
Unlock that child in the box.**

Calendars written weeks before,
Life on repeat, just a revolving door.
But one wild breath could spark a flame,
And nothing ever feels the same.

Step outside, splash in the rain,
Laugh so hard you forget the pain.
Cue cards burning, rules erased,
Freedom's waiting in your face.

**Crank that handle, let the chains fall off...
Unlock that child in the box!**

Unlock, unlock, unlock that child in the box.

LISTEN TO CHILD IN THE BOX



Ghosts on the Page

Soft Melancholy Female Country Version

Track 11 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

Near the end of the album, *Ghosts on the Page* returns.

Track 2 introduced the song through an upbeat contemporary-country band interpretation - energetic, yet still carrying something haunting beneath it. Here, the same words are placed in a softer female-country setting. The change of voice and arrangement makes the lyric feel more intimate, vulnerable and reflective.

The central image remains disappearing ink. Sometimes you discover that you never completely knew the person you loved. The closer you try to become, the farther away they seem to move. Eventually the relationship disappears, but unlike the ink, the memories don't. They remain like ghosts on a page - traces of something once very real, lingering inside a half-finished dream.

The idea reaches back to my poem *Amaranthine Eyes*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*. In the poem, disappearing ink represents the uncertainty of a future that has not yet been written. In the song, the image reverses direction: the future has become the past, the love has disappeared, but its memory refuses to vanish.

This second appearance is one reason I wanted both interpretations on the album. The composition hasn't changed. The emotional point of view has.

- John Cecca Jr.

From the Poem

Amaranthine Eyes

Amaranthine Eyes,

*Hauntingly staring from your eternal pose.
Whispering your timeless history.
Mesmerizing mortality.*

*Transfixed by your aura, life force,
Captures the essence,
The spirit we share.*

*Scents of yesterday
Taste like today
Infinity,
An age,
A moment.*

*Recorded in a shutter!
Flash!
Time frozen.*

Amaranthine Eyes.

*In times fraction,
All dreams lie ahead,
Future penned
In fools disappearing ink.*

*Amaranthine Eyes
Where have you gone?*

Ghosts on the Page

Lyrics

Love penned in disappearing ink -
It slipped through the cracks before I could think.
You shattered my reason, rewrote what I knew,
Even the dark side of the moon bows to you.

Your gaze still lingers, infinite, deep,
A mark on my soul I still ache to keep.
The closer we came, the quicker you'd turn,
Binoculars backwards, a lesson to learn.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
Erased from the page, but not from the brink.
Your breath still haunts like a ghost in the rain,
Your touch is a whisper that still knows my name.
The story is gone, but the echoes remain -
A love that was fleeting still sings through the pain.**

The pieces fell scattered, blown by the wind,
We started too early to ever begin.
I swore we had power to weather the storm,
But half of a heartbeat can't keep a soul warm.

The closer we got, the further you'd drift,
A shadow unanchored, too fragile to lift.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
Erased from the page, but not from the brink.
Your breath still haunts like a ghost in the rain,
Your touch is a whisper that still knows my name.
The story is gone, but the echoes remain -
A love that was fleeting still sings through the pain.**

We were a flame too wild to contain,
A comet that burned through the heart of my vein.
You vanished like smoke, but I still see the spark -
A ghost of forever still lighting the dark.

**Love penned in disappearing ink -
A trace on my soul that won't let me sink.
Faded and distant, but somehow still near,
A love that once vanished still whispers right here.**

And if ink disappears, let the memory stay -
Written in silence where words fade away.
For some loves don't end, they just change what they mean...
Like a ghost on the page of a half-finished dream.

LISTEN TO GHOSTS ON THE PAGE



The Victims - Sad to Say

Male Country Version

Track 12 - Ashes and Shooting Stars

John Cecca Jr.

About the Song

The Victims - Sad to Say is about the people whose lives end suddenly through violence - people who had plans, families, ordinary days and futures that disappear in an instant.

The song looks not only at the victims themselves, but at those of us watching from a distance. We see the news, hear the sirens, read another name and quietly feel relief that this time it wasn't us or someone we love. That relief carries its own discomfort, because we also understand how random the line between observer and victim can be.

There is an endless-cycle quality to violence. Another event happens, people grieve, people pray, and yet too often nothing seems to change. The song doesn't pretend to have an answer. Its final words deliberately return to that helplessness: *Sad to say, there's no answer today. All we can do is pray.*

The lyric developed from my poem *In Memoriam*, published in *Byron Corner: Crosswalks and Cross Roads*. The poem is harsher and more graphic than the song. When I adapted the idea into music, I kept its central images of sudden loss, horrified witnesses and the terrible ordinariness with which another act of violence becomes another news story.

This is the male country interpretation. The song also exists with a female voice and, in one of its most unexpected transformations, as an operatic interpretation. The musical language changes dramatically, but the victims - and the question left behind - remain the same.

- John Cecca Jr.

From the Poem

In Memoriam

*To temples cracked,
Crushed under pestles of violence.
Victims of the day.
Vanish like dreams.
Sudden, sudden, so sudden ending.*

*No final good-bye,
No last kiss.
“I love you,” lost in the dripping madness,
Oozing to the gutter.*

*The husband, wife, child, mother, father, or friends,
Vacant from these eyes for eternity.*

*The Victims!
The Victims!
The victims of violence.*

*Sprawled on a cold, damp, lonely cement sidewalk,
Life’s last breath clogged
In blood’s metallic flavor,
Whispering eyes of sympathetic, horrified onlookers,
Thanking God, it wasn’t them.*

*A rumbling ambulance
Sirenning to a Save Center.
Strange faces of body mechanics,
Whose love belongs elsewhere,
The last worldly contact.*

*All too much like a dream.
All too real.*

*To those who had nothing to say
To madness and insanity,
Not quite martyrs,
Just victims,
Sad it is to say
There are no answers
Today.*

The Victims - Sad to Say

Lyrics

(Verse 1)

I watched the news today,
Lord, I should've stayed away.
Seems every season brings its reasons,
But none make sense anyway.
It bends my mind how it happens day to day -
Innocent hearts just blown away.

(Chorus)

The victims,
The victims of violence,
All they held,
Gone in a flash.
The victims,
The victims of silence,
Futures still,
Reduced to ash.

(Verse 2)

Oh, the world don't stop to grieve,
Just another name that leaves.
And strangers stand around,
While sirens fill the town.
No comfort there, no peace to be found.

(Chorus)

The victims,
The victims of violence,
All they held,
Gone in a flash.
The victims,
The victims of silence,
Dreams gone cold,
Turned to ash.

(Bridge)

Life's a fragile kind of dream,
Reality cuts clean.
And though we thank the stars it wasn't me,

That shame still burns unseen.
We all pay a price for what we see.

(Final Chorus)

The victims,
The victims of violence,
All they held,
Gone in a flash.
The victims,
The victims remind us -
Love's the only thing that lasts.

(Soft outro)

Sad to say,
There's no answer today.
All we can do...
Is pray.

LISTEN TO THE VICTIMS - SAD TO SAY