

## **THIS CAN'T KEEP**

*Collected Original Songs by Jake Weld*

All original lyrics by Jake Weld

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### **Track List:**

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6. Song of the Sixth Girl
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### **Twenty Seven Knives**

Daddy went to work every day  
Came home black-faced and quiet  
Mama kept supper warm on the stove  
Nobody asked if it was right

When I turned ten my father  
Took me out onto the porch  
Handed me a Case Double X  
And pressed it hard into my hand

Son, this knife is special  
And that's because it's yours  
The blade's as sharp as you are  
You keep it, and you keep your word

Twenty seven knives later  
Each one donated to the TSA  
Never remember it 'til the buzzer  
Goes off and gives me away

I still can't leave the house without one  
And still can't take it when I go home  
Twenty seven replaced knives  
Between the boy I was  
And the man New York knows

College went down like water  
Gulped it like I was dying of thirst  
A few letters after my name  
Poverty reversed

First time the buzzer went off in New York  
It was like a punch to my gut  
Handed my Case Double X over  
They had no idea what it was worth

Twenty seven knives later  
Each one donated to the TSA  
Never remember it 'til the buzzer  
Goes off and gives me away  
I still can't leave the house without one  
And still can't take it when I go home  
Twenty seven replaced knives  
Between the boy I was  
And the man New York knows

Now I read the law for a living  
In my corner office suite  
But still keep a Case knife in my suit pants  
Its weight against my thigh  
Clients see the degrees upon the wall  
They see a man in a coat and tie  
They don't see the knife in my pocket  
They don't see a miner's son

Twenty seven knives later  
Each one donated to the TSA  
Never remember it 'til the buzzer  
Goes off and gives me away  
I still can't leave the house without one  
And still can't take it when I go home  
Twenty seven replaced knives

Between the boy I was  
And the man New York knows

I stop at the store in Harlan  
Every time I make it home  
Pick out another Double X  
Weighs just right in my hand  
The girl behind the counter smiles  
That will be eighty-five dollars please  
I smile back and think  
That's number twenty eight  
And slide her a crisp hundred  
And tell her I don't need the change

### **Paper Cup Abuse**

I tell the barista every day  
It's Katherine with a K  
Like kiss or kite or kind  
But she writes a C anyway

Close enough to get my coffee  
Close enough to get me to pay  
Close enough for everybody else  
Trying to move me on my way

My mother named me Katherine  
It's an old family name  
My sister calls me Kitty  
When she's got something mean to say

The mail says Current Resident  
The hotel says Valued Guest  
Everybody's got a name for me  
And every one's a guess

Close enough isn't close  
It's a paper cup abuse  
This isn't horseshoes or hand grenades  
Close enough is no excuse

You can laugh like I'm particular  
You can smile and look away  
But you don't get to spell me smaller  
One little letter every day

My boss says hey there, sunshine  
When he wants something from me  
Some guys call me sweetheart  
When they don't know what to say

I've been honey, babe, and darling  
And I have answered anyway  
Sometimes I just can't fight the fight  
I still have to get through my day

But close enough isn't close  
It's a paper cup abuse  
This isn't horseshoes or hand grenades  
Close enough is no excuse

You can laugh like I'm particular  
You can smile and look away  
But you don't get to spell me smaller  
One little letter every day

So allow me to reintroduce  
My name is Katherine. With a K  
Like keep or kick or kill  
Like I told you yesterday

I am done being grateful  
For "almost" my name  
I am done making it easy  
For you to get me wrong again

Because close enough isn't close  
It's a paper cup abuse  
This isn't horseshoes or hand grenades  
Close enough is no excuse

You can laugh like I'm particular  
You can smile and look away

But you don't get to spell me smaller  
One little letter every day

Sure, fine, that's close enough  
Is what I used to say  
But my name is Katherine  
Spell it with a K

### **The Ocean of the Plains**

It was cold and gray and blowing  
On the ocean of the Plains  
Where the wind sweeps 'cross the landscape  
Piling tears in drifts of pain

The baby had come too early  
And the storm had come in late  
So they sent young Jim out for help  
While the wind tore at the gate

Jim pulled his hat down low  
And he turned his collar high  
Just a boy riding into a storm  
Or else they all would die

October of eighteen eighty  
Brought on cold that never left  
An early storm stole the crops  
And winter took the rest

He gave his horse her head  
And trusted her legs to hold  
While the wind's teeth tore at them both  
Dark night and stinging cold

The family prayed for God to guide him  
Then they prayed He'd take them fast  
Then they prayed for Hell's warm fires  
Where they wished they would be cast

Then they gave up praying altogether

When the baby started to show  
Because what's the use in prayin'  
When you're giving birth at twenty below

Jim pushed his horse on through the night  
And the storm's teeth let him loose at dawn  
He found a wooden gate at last  
Unsure of how far he'd gone

He saw a smoldering chimney  
Then a sod house rose into view  
Snow piled on its eastern side  
The front door he stumbled through

His ma and pa were on the floor  
His sister and her husband too  
All four frozen stiff around a child  
Who cried quietly through lips of blue

It was cold and bright and blowing  
On the ocean of the Plains  
Where the wind sweeps 'cross the landscape  
Piling tears in drifts of pain

Jim wrapped the baby close  
In blankets from the bed  
Then saddled up the old mare  
And bowed his frozen head

With the sun full shining  
And the blizzard finally gone  
A boy, a horse, a newborn child  
Rode eastward toward the dawn

### **Time Savers**

My car can drive itself  
My doorbell comes with eyes  
Coffee's on a timer now  
Starts before the sun can rise

Dishwasher's done by bedtime  
Robot mows the lawn  
My phone says sleep at 10 o'clock  
Then keeps buzzing all night long

All of these time savers  
Don't seem to be saving anyone  
Even when everything is working  
Ain't nothing getting done

All this time saving  
With its wires and gears and springs  
Just means less time for people  
While I manage all the things

I meant to call my mother  
I meant to take a walk  
I meant to just sit with Molly  
Hold her hand and let her talk

But dinner still needs solving  
And the inbox chimed again  
So I stood there in the kitchen  
Ordering overpriced ramen

All of these time savers  
Don't seem to be saving anyone  
Even when everything is working  
Ain't nothing getting done

All this time saving  
With its wires and gears and springs  
Just means less time for people  
While I manage all the things

My calendar keeps color-coding  
Every hour I meant to save  
I got shortcuts to my shortcuts  
Just faster ways to lose my day

There's a sunset in the window  
There's a jacket by the door

There's a life I keep improving  
Till I can't live it anymore

All of these time savers  
Don't seem to be saving anyone  
Even when everything is working  
Ain't nothing getting done

All this time saving  
With its wires and gears and springs  
Just means less time for people  
While I manage all the things

### **Bergen St. or Borough Hall**

Fall comes down on Henry Street  
Summer already gone  
Wet leaves on the brownstone steps  
Bodega bell rings on

Old woman with her flowers  
Medicine and grocery twine  
Diesel coughing at the corner  
A dog barks down the line

Bergen Street or Borough Hall  
Same walk either way  
One train keeps you local  
One takes you clean away

A woman goes by in a yellow cab  
Face turned toward the glass  
She's not the one that I remember  
Not the one that didn't last

But the light around her shoulder  
And the way she holds her morning brew  
A memory of a future  
Coming close enough to view

And I felt it on my fingers

Like a thing I almost knew  
Warm sun, sweet tea, laughter  
Somebody else's déjà vu

Bergen Street or Borough Hall  
Same walk either way  
One road keeps its promise  
One forgets what it would say

I have left before the band  
I have stayed for one more song  
I have gone left instead of right  
When neither choice was wrong

I have stood on empty platforms  
Watched the doors close on the train  
Did I really miss it  
Or just let that one go again

And I felt it on my fingers  
Like a thing I almost knew  
Warm sun, sweet tea, laughter  
Somebody else's déjà vu

Bergen Street or Borough Hall  
Same walk either way  
Every yes has got a shadow  
Every no still has a name

There are stoops we never sat on  
There are tables never shared  
There are rooms above the sidewalk  
Where I almost climbed the stairs

Not a sorrow, not a warning  
Not a debt I failed to pay  
Just the other side still living  
Brushing past me on its way

And I felt it on my fingers  
Like a thing I almost knew  
Warm sun, sweet tea, laughter

Somebody else's déjà vu

Bergen Street or Borough Hall  
Same walk either way  
One train keeps you local  
One takes you clean away

Same walk either way  
Same walk either way  
Late fall light on Henry Street  
Same walk either way

Somebody else's déjà vu  
Somebody else's déjà vu  
A memory of a future  
Just close enough to view

### **Song of the Sixth Girl**

The first girl was a lady  
Which is probably why she left  
The second girl was her sister  
As you might have guessed

The third girl was their mother  
What else can I say  
You asked me why I'm on this boat  
It's because I had to get away

I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm getting out of town  
I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm finally  
Bahamas... bound

The fourth girl was from the north  
She got sick of ice and snow  
The fifth girl was a case of wine  
Just headaches and spilled merlot

But the Sixth Girl, she's the one

Her hull of white and blue  
Masts with main and mizzen sails  
She's gonna change my worldview

I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm getting out of town  
I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm finally  
Bahamas... bound

I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm getting out of town  
I'm going to sea a'sailing  
I'm finally  
Bahamas... bound

### **Cathy's Seat**

One neighbor's a cop with wife and a kid  
One works at the college, his lawn mowed in a grid  
Some are retired and keep the neighborhood neat  
While Cathy and her crew try to keep it discreet

Cathy's a mark, but maybe also a con  
Three bald tires stacked on her sometimes mowed lawn  
Says she's trying to stay sober, trying to stay clean  
Collecting junkies and exes since she was fifteen

She says she's a magnet for just one kind of luck  
And try as she might, she just can't get unstuck  
From the people just stopping by all night and all day  
From the pills or the dope or the guys she lets stay

She didn't ask for any of this, but neither did I  
Her dad bought her the place before the market got high  
Or maybe in trade for taking her kids  
Who used to live there, but now they are his

She's not unkind or a bother most of the time  
If it's behind closed doors, is it really a crime

But every few months it spills into our street  
2 a.m. blue lights, bathrobes and bare feet

But here's what I know from across the street  
We're all just one bad year from Cathy's seat  
So here we all are, as close as it gets  
Everybody's just somebody else's vignette

### **This Can't Keep**

Winter rains in the canyon, days upon days  
Walls steal sunrise, lunch dusk, dinner dark

Wood in piles, smoky heat  
Stove flex pop grinds iron teeth  
Chimney rush, wet wood sings  
Heat rises faster than out in rings

Coat chair, coat wall  
Not enough places to put it all  
One hook empty, staring back

This can't keep  
It's raining again  
Gyre widens  
Silence closes in

Haunted haunting  
Hunting down  
The things that moved  
When I'm not around

Coffee grind counter, press is black  
Mug shards half glass, bare bulb blinks back  
Bookshelves bent under weight  
Ash and dust, debate estate

This can't keep  
It's raining again  
Gyre widens

Silence closes in

Book spine crackle, dart wall thud  
Gravel driveway, running mud  
Bats scratching in the wall  
Tin roof clatters, tree limb falls

This can't keep  
It's raining again  
Gyre widens  
Silence closes in

Summer spark ran up the draw  
Freight train rumble without tracks  
Blowtorch whistle, popping cracks  
Candlesticking took it all back

The gyre widened  
Silence closed in  
It didn't keep  
It's raining again

### **Call Down the Moon**

Singing alone is isolation  
My voice, my voice, my voice  
Singing along is communication  
Our voices, our voices, our voices

Singing along means meaning the words  
Real feelings, real feelings, real feelings  
Singing along means keeping in time  
Your feelings, your feelings, your feelings

It takes a full room to raise the roof  
It takes a full chorus to change the tune  
It takes all our courage to show up at all  
It takes all of you to call down the moon

I was the one not singing

My voice, my voice, my voice  
I was the one there listening  
Your voices, your voices, your voices

I knew the shape of silence  
Real feelings, real feelings, real feelings  
I knew the sound of hiding  
My feelings, my feelings, my feelings

It takes a full room to raise the roof  
It takes a full chorus to change the tune  
It takes all our courage to show up at all  
It takes all of you to call down the moon

Somebody starts the singing  
One voice, one voice, one voice  
Somebody else comes with them  
Two voices, two voices, two voices

Everybody's waiting  
Real people, real people, real people  
Everybody's waiting  
Real people, real people, real people

It takes a full room to raise the roof  
It takes a full chorus to change the tune  
It takes all our courage to show up at all  
It takes all of you to call down the moon

My voice is not the only one  
Our voices, our voices, our voices  
Your voice is not the only one  
Our voices, our voices, our voices

It takes a full room to raise the roof  
It takes a full chorus to change the tune  
It takes all our courage to show up at all  
It takes all of you to call down the moon

It takes a full room to raise the roof  
It takes a full chorus to change the tune  
It takes all our courage to show up at all

It takes all of us to call down the moon