

# Jail

Dan Bern

I wish you well on your travels  
My friends I wish you well along the way  
This is the story of how I came to be  
In jail for a night and a day

Well I'm driving my '88 Olds Cutlass  
It's raining and it's dark  
My wipers are beating slow and steady  
Like the thump, thump, thumping of my heart  
I'm rolling down from up in Colorado  
Some little town in Texas tonight  
When my rear view flashes blue, blue, blue  
It's a cop; my license plate's missing a light  
He smells sweet green Colorado  
Hidden in the lining 'bove my head  
Next thing I know there's four cop cars flashing  
And around my wrists are bracelets of lead  
Well, take my license, take my fingerprints  
Take my wallet that I'll no longer need  
Take my belt in case I want to hang myself  
For a nickel bag of weed  
Then put me in a cell on an old mattress pad  
To measure out in minutes this night  
One cup of water in styrofoam  
Four walls and one fluorescent light  
And this is my one phone call  
And baby I'm calling you  
You tell me, "stay strong boy"  
I say "well, I'll do the best I do"

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Now at first I'm thinking, man, I'm such a fuck-up  
My head is lonesome and bowed  
Figure I'll join some program, get religious  
My abstinence will make my mother proud  
And I stare at the stone cold floor  
I guess that's what you do in the pen  
Then I get to thinking what I'd really like to do  
Is to come back here and fight this to the end

Your honor, think of Johnny Cash  
And Elvis and Hank Williams too  
Whatever it took to go get those songs  
Those good old boys would do  
If it's illegal, then throw out Blonde on Blonde  
And every Beatles song since Hard Day's Night  
Go ahead and burn Walt Whitman  
Unpaint Starry Night  
Coltrane, Louis Armstrong, let 'em burn  
Kerouac, Thelonious Monk  
Alice in Wonderland, Picasso  
Burroughs, Blake, Ginsberg, throw it out, it's junk  
Then throw out all your favorite records

Throw your books of poetry away  
Close the museums, burn the paintings  
Restore us to Galileo's Day  
Then to the drug store we will go  
For Vicodin and Chloraseptic spray  
Scarf a couple Darvocets and Xanax  
And then we'll go floating away  
Dear Governor, dear Governor, dear Governor  
The ultimate enforcer of my fate  
Did I interrupt your three-martini lunch?  
Are you off on your cigarette break?

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Next day, my buddies bail me out  
Toward late afternoon  
And the grass, it never smelled greener  
Sun drips honey like from a golden spoon  
I jump in the car and drive on out of there  
Soon I'm miles away  
And I get to thinking what awaits me  
When I come back some not-so-distant day  
Will I stand before the judge  
And say, "Your Honor, this law, it is wrong"  
Or do I just do the time and pay my fine  
Shake this town from my boots and be gone

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