

Sparrows Point

Richard Shindell

My name is William Taylor
I was born in '24
Too late to know the Great Fallen
In time to know the Great Fall
When my father died of money
My mother lived in spite
We laughed when nothing was funny
And how we wept when nothing was left

So I left there in boomtown
When I reached fifteen years
I travelled mostly northeast
With my head held mostly down

'Cause they said there was more in Baltimore
Where those shipyards never close
You can sell the man your labor
And send the money home

Broadway found me penniless
The mission found me last
They gave me a coat and three days rest
And when I awoke and left
A shroud of steam surrounded me
And I was borne away
I found myself at Sparrows Point
With a slingshot in my hand.

Standing there around me
Two thousand idle hands
Their heads bowed low, their hopes not high
Their hearts weaned of their homes
Their pockets full of photographs
Their eyes full of goodbyes
I took my place among my kind
And I held my place in line

Now I'm twenty one and well-employed
I send home most of my pay
Which leaves plenty left for cigarettes

To help me pass the days
With beloved friends surrounding me
The cold streets so far away
Three days west of Normandy
A rifle in my hand.

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