

Barbed Wire Boys

Claire Lynch

Well I come from the rural Midwest
It's the land I love more than all the rest
It's the place I know and understand
 Like a false-front building
 Like the back of my hand
And the men I knew when I was coming up
 Were sober as coffee in a Styrofoam cup
There were Earls and Rays, Harlans and Roys
 They were full-grown men
They were barbed wire boysThey raised grain and cattle on the treeless fields
 Sat at the head of the table and prayed before meals
 Prayed an Our Father and that was enough
 Pray more than that and you couldn't stay tough
Tough as the busted thumbnails on the weathered hands
 They worked the gold plate off their wedding bands
 And they never complained, no they never made noise
 And they never left home
These barbed wire boys'Cos their wildest dreams were all fenced in
 By the weight of family, by the feeling of sin
 That'll prick your skin at the slightest touch
 If you reach too far, if you feel too much
 So their deepest hopes never were expressed
Just beat like bird's wings in the cage of their chest
 All the restless longings, all the secret joys
 That never were set free
In the barbed wire boysAnd now one by one they're departing this earth
 And it's clear to me now 'xactly what they're worth
 Oh they were just like Atlas holding up the sky
 You never heard him speak, you never saw him cry
 But where do the tears go, that you never shed
 Where do the words go, that you never said
Well there's a blink of the eye, there's a catch in the voice
 That is the unsung song
 Of the barbed wire boys