

# Civilians

Joe Henry

The carriage horses stamp and fume  
Until all color's gone  
They leave the street in black and white  
And bring the evening coming on  
Lovers tug their way out of gloves  
Out of shoes, and gray chiffon  
The driver pulls his blanket high  
And pretends to look beyond  
Oh, pray for you, pray for me  
Sing it like a song  
Life is sort but by the grace of God  
This night is long  
Girls crowd into bathroom stalls  
The boys smoke in their cars  
The general, he's in civilian clothes  
Standing at the bar  
He waves at the deaf flower lady  
"Come sit by me, sweetheart"  
He draws a napkin battle plan  
Says, "This is where we start"  
Oh, pray for you, pray for me  
Sing it like a song  
Life is sort but by the grace of God  
This night is long  
There are no more hummingbirds  
Like there used to be  
They're fat and slow and careless now  
They've turned blue and mean  
And the parrots sound like monkeys  
Screamin' from the trees  
As the decent people  
Fumble for their keys  
We used to spend the night in town  
Down by City Hall  
And the water works of Irish Beach  
Just below the falls  
We'd walk down to the Park Hotel  
Past the Baptist Veteran's Mall  
Back then, a man in uniform  
Might mean anything at all  
Oh, pray for you, pray for me  
Sing it like a song  
Life is short but by the grace or cruel  
Heart of God, the night is long

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