

Holiday

James McMurtry

The in-laws are waiting the games have begun
The cell phone keeps ringing dont answer it hon
The whole things arranged just to aggravate Dad
And its amateur day on the old super slab
The kids are strapped down like a half load of pipe
All safe in their car seats they fuss and they gripe
Well you cant hardly blame em it must be a bitch
Counting the crosses off down in the ditch
This ones got flowers, this ones got a wreath
This ones got a name painted down underneath
Was the road all iced up, were they going too fast
Heres five in a circle left from the last holiday
Holiday Theres a three-trailer rig just a throwin up spray
Not legal to run on this kind of a day
But god damn the smokies and the four wheelers too
Stay offa my bumpers or the same goes for you
Therell be none for him
He that wants it the most
As he hauls it on out to the Oregon coast
No turkey no gravy no Zinfandel wine
You just stay over right and well get along fine
Hes missing the football, missing the fun
Hed play with the grandkids but hes off on a run
And some hats on the radio singing his song
But it dont make a damn
Hes in for a long holiday
Holiday Now granny shes yelling
Shes ready to eat
Shes havin conniptions
Cause they wont take their seats
But shes got em all gathered now under one roof
With her camcorder loaded
Shes gonna get proof
But do you have to wear that
Well I just dont see why
Please pass the potatoes Aw eat shit and die
Did you hear about Ellen, shes leaving, you know
How bout those Packers, think itll snow?
And the minute its over theyll scatter like quail
Off down the freeway in the teeth of a gale

Silent and shattered And numb to the core

They count themselves lucky

They got through one more holiday

HolidayThe highway patrolman

He stands in the rain

He just lets it run down to soften the stain

Of the blood on his pant leg

From working that wreck

And he wont forget it

In time for the next holidayDeparting Chicago at 9:52

In clean desert camo all baggy and loose

Sits an Iowa Guardsman alone by the gate

The place sure looked different, in 1968When he traveled with mom, first time on a plane

To visit some kin, hes forgotten their names

But he remembers the soldiers, still in their teensIn their spit polished boots and their pressed army greens

With the creases so sharp, and their faces so smooth

But their eyes looked so heavy, he wondered how they could move

Now hes got that same look, like his insides are black

Hes in his mid forties and he has to go backAnd he cant even smoke while he waits for his plane

The uniforms different, but the mission remains

To do like they tell you, dont make a fuss

Whys not an issue, so dont think too much

You just do what you have to, shut up and drive

If you come apart later, well at least youre alive

You can get you some help, you can deal with it then

And life will be better, til it happens againCause theres something inside us that wont let us beIn stalks through

our days til its too dark to see

And its damn near as deadly as Texans on ice

Lord dont they beat all

Yall have a nice holiday

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