When In Rome

Phil Ochs

Pre>
A
In the fire blue forests, faded and forgottenI crawled through the cotton fields, picking for cotton
D
The overseer sneered, his whipping was rotten
A
With ecstasy.
F#m
Im child-like terror I tore out the tap roots
Bm
Cards of the lash were calling to follow suit
E7
I dashed for the swamps, the hounds in hot pursuit
D a
Jealously.
C#7 f#m
All through the night a figure of fright, as I hid my head
C#7 f#m
And the buried their nose in a cut of my cloths, now torn in shreds
C#7 b
And they never would leave until they believed that I was dead
E a
But I'd never curse their names
E a
Oh, who am I to blame
E a
I know I'd do the same
B
Endlessly.
C#m
And all the high-born ladies
F#m
So lovely and so true,
B
Have been handed to the soldiers
E
When in rome do as the romans do.Frail and afraid in the mists of the morning
The snakes and the spiders were sadly performing
The bark of the dogs kept up the warning

Inside the wood.
Sweating and swearing I crawled from the manger
The highway appeared to take me from danger
Is there anyone here who would pick up a stranger?
Oh I wish you could.
Then someone replied "would you like a ride? "
"come in" he said.
We drove for a while, he gave me a smile and a piece of bread
The hammer was hard in the chrome of the car as I cracked his head
Then we took off in a spin
Oh I smashed his skull again
Oh thank you my good friend,
I feel so good.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.Late in the evening I came to the city
I fell to the sidewalks sighing for pity
A diamond was dropped from the hands of the pretty
To be so kind.
Cowards and corpses were busy competing
The rhymes of the riots were busy repeating
I raced to the corner and sped(?) from the speeding
To save my mind.
Latches and locks, companies of cops ran from the rain
There was silk in the stores for the whims of the whores
That shone with shame.
I asked for a light from a priest in the night
Then I fanned the flames.
And the traffic all stood still
To see if someone had been killed
I was glad to leave a thrill
So far behind.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.A monk and his mother were dancing so dandy
A topless nun was handing out candy
The beautiful bishop broke out the brandy
The kiss we crave.
They stuttered and stammered, would I feel like staying
We fell to our knees, feverishly praying
The salt in the salt-peter seemed to be saying
Be brave, be brave.
I reached reached for a robe, I preached and I probed

And I taught the tune.
And the greed for the gills was played to the hilt
As I promised doom
I toyed with their fears, until coins and tears filled the room
Then I took off down the road
Laughing madly like a toad
God bless every soulless soul
That would be saved.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.A chorus of children were passing the hours
I joined in their fun and gave them my flowers
Covered with kisses and showered with showers
That they repaid.
Taken and trusting, would I be their teacher?
She looked so appealing, I wanted to touch her
Just out of reach, unable to reach her
Their hands were raised.
Charmed by the chalk, the lessons were taught, inside the class
They studied the rules of the samurai schools, they had to pass
The room was adjourned, the lessons were learned,
I turned on the gas
And I watched them make their pleas
They passed the test with ease
I gave them their degrees,
They made the grade.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.Feeling my weakness, a coward for company
I joined the ranks of the hot and hungry
To teach what it means to have love for your country
We marched away.
We lowered our lives for the lines of a border
We danced with the mothers, played with the daughters
We followed our fantasies, following orders
It was child's play.
After the war the bullets were bored so we capped the game
With cynical smiles we put them on trial to place the blame
Now what kind of beast would love such a feast
Have you no shame?
So we hung the by the feet
Oh, we shot them in the street
Oh, the victory was sweet

On victory day.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.The bread and the circuses came to be nearing
The saviour or somebody must be appearing
Pagans and pageants were all disappearing
Inside my head.
The stones on the statues were staring and stalling
Caesar and cassius were cursing and calling
The empire had risen and now it was falling
Or so it seemed.
The crown and the cross seemed empty and lost in dark despair
And luminous lies, death in disguise were everywhere
The canvas was cold, the story was old, I said my prayers
Then I crowned him on the head
Oh, I blessed him as he bled
Oh at last, the king is dead
God save the queen.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do.Now nothing remained for building or burning
The losing of lovers was all I was learning
A time for escape and a time for returning had come to me
Back through the ashes and back through the embers
Back through the roads and the ruins I remembered
My hands at my side I sadly surrendered
Do as you please.
The hero was home, proven and grown, I fell on the floor
Mad with romance they started to dance, their star was born
I bled like the rain, exploded in pain, then I screamed for more
Oh, make me feel sublime
Release me from my mind
Oh, kill me one more time
And set me free.
And all the high-born ladies
So lovely and so true,
Have been handed to the soldiers
When in rome do as the romans do./pre>

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