

We Can't Make It Here

James McMurtry

Theres a Vietnam Vet with a cardboard sign
Sitting there by the left turn line
The flag on his wheelchair flapping in the breeze
One leg missing and both hands free
No ones paying much mind to him
The V.A. budgets just stretched so thin
And now theres more coming back from the Mideast war
We cant make it here anymore
And that big ol building was the textile mill
That fed our kids and it paid our bills
But they turned us out and they closed the doors
'Cause we cant make it here anymore
You see those pallets piled up on the loading dock
Theyre just gonna sit there til they rot
Cause theres nothing to ship, nothing to pack
Just busted concrete and rusted tracks
Empty storefronts around the square
Theres a needle in the gutter and glass everywhere
You dont come down here unless youre looking to score
We cant make it here anymore
The bars still open but man its slow
The tip jars light and the registers low
The bartender dont have much to say
The regular crowd gets thinner each day
Some have maxed out all their credit cards
Some are working two jobs and living in cars
Minimum wage wont pay for a roof, wont pay for a drink
If you gotta have proof just try it yourself Mr. C.E.O.
See how far 5.15 an hour will go
Take a part time job at one your stores
I bet you cant make it here anymore
And theres a high school girl with a bourgeois dream
Just like the pictures in the magazine
She found on the floor of the laundromat
A woman with kids can forget all that
If she comes up pregnant whatll she do
Forget the career and forget about school
Can she live on faith? Live on hope?
High on Jesus or hooked on dope
When its way too late to just say no
You cant make it here anymore
Now Im stocking shirts in the Wal-Mart store
Just like the ones we made before
Cept this one came from Singapore
I guess we cant make it here anymore
Should I hate a people for the shade of their skin
Or the shape of their eyes or the shape Im in
Should I hate em for having our jobs today
No I hate the men sent the jobs away
I can see them all now, they haunt my dreams

All lily white and squeaky clean
Theyve never known want, theyll never know need
Their shit dont stink and their kids wont bleed
Their kids wont bleed in their damn little war
And we cant make it here anymoreWill I work for food, will I die for oil
Will kill for power and to us the spoils
The billionaires get to pay less tax
The working poor get to fall through the cracksSo let em eat jellybeans let em eat cake
Let em eat shit, whatever it takes
They can join the Air Force or join the Corps
If they cant make it here anymoreSo thats how it is, thats what we got
If the president wants to admit it or not
You can read it in the paper, read it on the wall
Hear it on the wind if youre listening at all
Get out of that limo, look us in the eye
Call us on the cell phone tell us all whyIn Dayton Ohio or Portland Maine
Or a cotton gin out on the great high plains
Thats done closed down along with the school
And the hospital and the swimming poolDust devils dance in the noonday heat
Theres rats in the alley and trash in the street
Gang graffiti on a boxcar door
We cant make it here anymore

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