

Newspaper Pane

Elvis Costello

She looked at the pictures on a newspaper pane
That was taped to the window to keep out the wind
To keep out the rain

To keep out the nonsense
And block out the needing
To keep up her spirits
With improving reading

But the ink from the columns
Dissolved down into the stain
On the bare wood floor
That extended to the door

Pictures of bright futures somehow ignored
That offered her finery she could never afford
Tempting out savings she didn't have, or could never risk
Not a fashionable kindness, it was grotesque

The beaus with their fiddles played The Rascal's Release
We toasted to valor and wished there were peace
Six months later, in a newspaper margin
They were all cut down in a cavalry charge

Weeping Miss Imogen said to her priest
"I gave him my virtue, it was the least I could leave him
On the eve of departure
Though I will long for him now and hereafter"

"And the child I'll be raising may have his blue eyes
What if he grows up and dies
On some distant unnameable hillside or field
'Cause a king and a concubine put a mark on his shield?"

Thomas tomorrow, Thomas no more
Father and sunshine, beyond and before
William, who brought his drum home from the war
To beat it for young lads whose days didn't even add up to a score

I don't spend my time perfecting the past
I live for the future 'cause I know it won't last
A bent note on a horn I can't play
The ghosts in the window that I can't wish away

Freedom to be reckless, freedom to plunder
Freedom to dream, freedom to wonder
When you get where I am now, you may feel differently
The cliff drops away sharply, falls into the sea

No work today, no hope tomorrow
No bread for breaking, no wine for sorrow
Nobody is selling, no truth for telling

No work tomorrow, no work today
Look at that child bride and her ideal bouquet
Boys, pick up a rifle, that's too much to pay
Count out her teardrops, wipe them away