

Dirt Gets Under the Fingernails

Harry Chapin

Now he was a man who worked with his hands
Only in a motor, he found peace
He could make an engine sing like a bird
He could find his only kind of release
When he was up to the elbows in the grease

She dreamed of a time for painting
As she was cleanin' up his stains from the rug
She'd play all day with their children
And try to meet him with a welcome and hug
As he came shufflin' through the house with a shrug

I tell you dirt gets under the fingernails
And hate gets under the skin
But a dream got a way of gettin' down to the bone
And the heart of a body that it's in

While he was makin' magic with his piston machines
She was cleanin' up the mess, he'd left behind
She was tryin' to make it through to the end of the day
With a little empty time
And do the paintin' that meant peace of mind

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Well one day she didn't bother 'bout makin' his bed
She hurried all the children out the door
And she let the bills and the marketing go
And she went and almost bought out an art supply store

It just so happened that day he got to thinkin'
Of the grease that always covered up his skin
So he left the garage a little early
He got a shave and a manicure and trim
Came out clean as a plaster mannequin

He came home in a hurry
But he almost didn't recognize the place
It looked like, it'd been hit by a hurricane
There was canvas fillin' every open space
And she had paint all over her face

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They both stood stunned into silence
Then their laughter exploded like a shout
And he went out to make some magic in the kitchen
The clean man learnin' what cookin' was about
And the dirty girl paintin', her messy heart out

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