

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 potatoesAw 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
Holiday

The 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 holiday

Departing 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 1968

When he traveled with mom, first time on a plane
To visit some kin, he's forgotten their names
But he remembers the soldiers, still in their teens
In 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 he's got that same look, like his insides are black
He's in his mid forties and he has to go back
And he can't even smoke while he waits for his plane
The uniforms different, but the mission remains
To do like they tell you, don't make a fuss
Why's not an issue, so don't think too much
You just do what you have to, shut up and drive
If you come apart later, well at least you're alive
You can get you some help, you can deal with it then
And life will be better, til it happens again

Cause there's something inside us that won't let us be
In stalks through our days til it's too dark to see
And it's damn near as deadly as Texans on ice
Lord don't they beat all
Y'all have a nice holiday