

The Beat of Black Wings

Joni Mitchell

I met a young soldier
He said his name was Killer Kyle
He was shakin' all over
Like a night-frightened child
This is his story
It's a tough one for me to sing
Hard as the squawk and the flap
And the beat of--the beat of black wings

"They gave me a gun," he said
"They gave me a mission
For the power and the glory--
Propaganda--piss on 'em
There's a war zone inside me--
I can feel things exploding--
I can't even hear the fucking music playing
For the beat of--the beat of black wings."

He said, "I never had nothin'--
Nothin' I could believe in
My girl killed our unborn child
Without even grievin'!
I put my hands on her belly
To feel the kid kickin'--damn!
She'd been to some clinic
Oh--the beat of black wings."

"They want you--they need you--
They train you to kill--
To be a pin on some map--
Some vicarious thrill--
The old hate the young
That's the whole heartless thing
The old pick the wars
We die in 'em
To the beat of--the beat of black wings."

There's a man drawing pictures
On the sidewalk with chalk
Just as fast as he draws 'em
Rain come down and wash 'em off
"Keep the drinks comin' girl
'Til I can't feel anything
I'm just a chalk mark in a rainstorm
I'm just the beat of black wings."