A Place Called England

June Tabor

I rode out on a bright May morning
Like a hero in a song
Looking for a place called England
Trying to find where I belong
Couldn't find the old flood meadow
Or the house that I once knew
No trace of the little river
Or the garden where I grew
I saw town and I saw country
Motorway and sink estate
Rich man in his rolling acres
Poor man still outside the gate
Retail park and burger kingdom
Prairie field and factory farm
Run by men who think that England's
Only a place to park their car
But as the train pulled from the station
Through the wastelands of despair
From the corner of my eye
A brightness filled the filthy air
Someone's grown a patch of sunflowers
Though the soil is sooty black
Marigolds and a few tomatoes
Right beside the railway track
Down behind the terraced houses
In between the concrete towers
Compost heaps and scarlet runners
Secret gardens full of flowers
Meeta grows her scented roses
Right beneath the big jet's path
Bid a fortune for her garden
Eileen turns away and laughs
So rise up George and wake up Arthur
Time to rouse out from your sleep
Deck the horse in the sea-green ribbons
Drag the old sword from the deep
Hold the line for Dave and Daniel
As they tunnel through the clay
While the oak in all its glory
Soaks up sun for one more day
And come all you at home with freedom
Whatever the land that gave you birth
There's room for you both root and branch
As long as you love the English earth
Room for vole and room for orchid
Room for all to grow and thrive
Just less room for the fat landowner
On his arse in his four-wheel drive
England is not flag or Empire
It is not money it is not blood
It's limestone gorge and granite fell
It's Weald and clay and Severn mud
It's blackbird singing from the may-tree
Lark ascending through the scales
Robin watching from your spade
And English earth beneath your nails
So here's two cheers for a place called England

Sore abused but not yet dead
A Mr. Harding sort of England
Hanging in there by a thread
Here's two cheers for the crazy Diggers
Now their hour shall come around
We can plant the seed they saved us
Common wealth and common ground

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