

Oh Sister

Dan Bern

They say you taught me how to talk
I bet you wish you taught me how to stop
You're far away now
I wish I could take a walk with you someplace
You explained me to our parents
English wasn't their first language
They spoke German
Hated Germans
Confusing times

Oh sister
Down midwest backseat bumpy streets
You sang my Beatles songs with me
I sang your Broadway melodies
Bad harmonies
And where would Willie Mays have been
without Jackie Robinson?
And who can say what I'd been
Without you to lead the way

After I showed some guys I could drink
You picked me off the lawn, I think
And led me to the kitchen sink
Where I got rid of it
Some nights I lay awake in awe
As squinting through the dark I saw
You peeling off your teenage bra
The door slightly ajar

Oh sister
You lived just across the hall
For eighteen summers
Eighteen falls
Until you went away to that
Weird college in Wisconsin
And where would Willie Mays have been
without Jackie Robinson?
And who can say what I'd been
Without you to lead the way

Trust yourself
And you can do anything
This I give to you

May your heart purr like a bumblebee
May all your backyards have a tree
May you always be HIV negative
I hope you meet a nice guy who
Treats women better than I do
I don't even care if he's a Jew or not

Oh sister
I remember in the temple hall
At our dear father's funeral
You sang like a nightingale
One of his own songs
And where would Willie Mays have been

Without Jackie Robinson?
And who can say what I'd been
Without you to lead the way