

The Big Parade

10,000 Maniacs

Detroit to D.C. night train, Capitol, parts East.
Lone young man takes a seat.
And by the rhythm of the rails,
Reading all his mother's mail from a city boy in a jungle town
postmarked Saigon.
He'll go live his mother's dream, join the slowest parade he'll
ever see.
Her weight of sorrows carried long and carried far.
"Take these, Tommy, to The Wall."

Metro line to the Mall site with a tour of Japanese.
He's wandering and lost until a vet in worn fatigues takes him
down to where they belong.
Near a soldier, an ex-
Marine with a tattooed dagger and eagle trembling,
He bites his lip beside a widow breaking down.
She takes her Purple Heart, makes a fist, strikes The Wall.
All come to live a dream, to join the slowest parade they'll ev
er see.
Their weight of sorrows carried long and carried far, taken to
The Wall.

It's 40 paces to the year that he was slain.
His hand's slipping down The Wall for it's slick with rain.
How would life have ever been the same if this wall had carved
in it one less name?
But for Christ's sake, he's been dead over 20 years.
He leaves the letters asking, "Who caused my mother's tears, wa
s it Washington or the Viet Cong?"
Slow deliberate steps are involved.
He takes them away from the black granite wall toward the other
monuments so white and clean.

O, Potomac, what you've seen.
Abraham had his war too, but an honest war.
Or so it's taught in school.