

## National Ransom

Elvis Costello

Running pell-mell and harum-scarum  
Running as hot as they do or dare  
Stick out your tongue  
And drink down all the venom  
From Cut-Throat Cuthbert  
And Millicent St. Cyr

From the real old Macau  
To the new False Americas  
In the liberated territories

Unusual suspects shake down, shake down, shake down various dubious characters

Mother's in the kitchen picking bones for breakfast  
Boiling them down by the bushel and the score  
Pull out your thumb and count what's left of your fist  
There's a wolf at the window with ravening maw

Did you find how to lie?  
Did you find out just how to cheat?  
The elite bleat, their obsolete  
But are your prospects?  
Exact, perfect object  
Now, if you'd only genuflect

They're running wild  
Just like some childish tantrum  
Meanwhile we're working every day  
Paying off the National Ransom

Woe betide all this hocus-pocus  
They're running us ragged at their first attempt  
Around the time the killing stopped on Wall St.  
You couldn't hold me, baby with anything but contempt

Letters peel slowly from our speech  
The claxton attempts to preach  
Stretching for stars still out of reach

Drowning  
Flailing  
Outside someone's wailing

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Just like some childish tantrum  
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