

12 O'clock Whistle

James McMurtry

The air raid siren at the high school blew
Every weekday, twelve o'clock noon
Dinner time, people as if we didn't know
I guess the city fathers liked to hear that thing blow

The boys were chasing the city truck, spraying DDT
It kept the mosquitoes down
And that stuff won't hurt you none the neighbor lady'd say
Encephalitis, now that can ruin your day

Granny was hanging out wash, talking across the fence
The neighbor lady nodded like it all made sense
She's just gonna stay with him 'til the kids are grown
Fetch me that clothes pin up off the ground would you hon'

Won't you stay with me 'til the sun goes down?
On that flat top mountain to the West of town
Won't you stay a while, I just don't see
Why you must be leaving? Won't you stay with me?

I had a cherry coke dripping on my cowboy clothes
Riding down Scott street in that big white Olds
We're going through nigger town, honey lock your doors
'Course that's not what we're supposed to call 'em anymore

We're going to the beauty shop, it's not too far
You can come inside or you can just set in the car
No you can't go with grandpa to the pasture today
They're shipping calves and you'd just get in the way

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We had fried okra and black eyed peas
Granny had her saccharin, she was putting it in her tea
Pull that screen door to hon' you're letting in flies
Don't you know nothing

Yonder comes the pickup, he's coming down the street
Run help him put the horses up so we can eat
He's always late for dinner, Lord, he moves so slow
12 o'clock whistle blew half an hour ago

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