

## Holiday

James McMurtry

The in-laws are waiting the games have begun  
The cell phone keeps ringing dont answer it hon  
The whole things arranged just to aggravate Dad  
And its amateur day on the old super slab  
The kids are strapped down like a half load of pipe  
All safe in their car seats they fuss and they gripe  
Well you cant hardly blame em it must be a bitch  
Counting the crosses off down in the ditch  
This ones got flowers, this ones got a wreath  
This ones got a name painted down underneath  
Was the road all iced up, were they going too fast  
Heres five in a circle left from the last holiday  
Holiday

Theres a three-trailer rig just a throwin up spray  
Not legal to run on this kind of a day  
But god damn the smokies and the four wheelers too  
Stay offa my bumpers or the same goes for you  
Therell be none for him  
He that wants it the most  
As he hauls it on out to the Oregon coast  
No turkey no gravy no Zinfandel wine  
You just stay over right and well get along fine  
Hes missing the football, missing the fun  
Hed play with the grandkids but hes off on a run  
And some hats on the radio singing his song  
But it dont make a damn  
Hes in for a long holiday  
Holiday

Now granny shes yelling  
Shes ready to eat  
Shes havin conniptions  
Cause they wont take their seats  
But shes got em all gathered now under one roof  
With her camcorder loaded  
Shes gonna get proof  
But do you have to wear that  
Well I just dont see why  
Please pass the potatoesAw eat shit and die  
Did you hear about Ellen, shes leaving, you know  
How bout those Packers, think itll snow?  
And the minute its over theyll scatter like quail  
Off down the freeway in the teeth of a gale  
Silent and shattered And numb to the core  
They count themselves lucky  
They got through one more holiday  
Holiday

The highway patrolman  
He stands in the rain  
He just lets it run down to soften the stain  
Of the blood on his pant leg  
From working that wreck  
And he wont forget it  
In time for the next holiday

Departing Chicago at 9:52  
In clean desert camo all baggy and loose  
Sits an Iowa Guardsman alone by the gate  
The place sure looked different, in 1968

When he traveled with mom, first time on a plane  
To visit some kin, hes forgotten their names  
But he remembers the soldiers, still in their teens  
In their spit polished boots and their pressed army greens  
With the creases so sharp, and their faces so smooth  
But their eyes looked so heavy, he wondered how they could move  
Now hes got that same look, like his insides are black  
Hes in his mid forties and he has to go back  
And he cant even smoke while he waits for his plane  
The uniforms different, but the mission remains  
To do like they tell you, dont make a fuss  
Whys not an issue, so dont think too much  
You just do what you have to, shut up and drive  
If you come apart later, well at least youre alive  
You can get you some help, you can deal with it then  
And life will be better, til it happens again

Cause theres something inside us that wont let us be  
In stalks through our days til its too dark to see  
And its damn near as deadly as Texans on ice  
Lord dont they beat all  
Yall have a nice holiday