

There Were Roses

Kathy Mattea

A song for you this evening, and it's not to make you sad,
Or for adding to the sorrow of a troubled Northern land.
But lately I've been thinking, and it just won't leave my mind.
I'll tell you now of two good friends. They were both good friends of
Mine.

Isaac Scott from Derry, he lived just across the fields.
A great man for the music and the dancing and the reels.
MacDonald came from South Armagh to court young Agnes fair.
It was then we'd meet on Ryan Road, and laughter filled the air.
Now, Isaac, he was Protestant and Sean was Catholic born.
But it never made a difference, for their friendship it was strong.
And sometimes in the evening when we heard the sound of drums,
We said "War won't divide us, we will always be as one.
For the land our fathers plow in, the soil it is the same.
And the places where we say our prayers have just got different
Names."

We talked about our friends who'd died, we hoped there'd be no more.
It was little then we realized the tragedy in store.
There were roses, roses, there were roses.
And the tears of the people ran together.

It was on a Sunday morning when the awful news came around.
There'd been another killing outside of Caplan town.
We knew that Isaac danced up there, we knew he liked the band.
We heard that he was dead, and we just could not understand.
We gathered at his graveside on a cold and rainy day.
The minister just closed his eyes, and for no revenge he prayed.
And those of us who knew him from along the Ryan Road,
Just bowed our heads and said a prayer for the resting of his soul.

There were roses, roses, there were roses.
And the tears of the people ran together.
Now fear it filled the countryside, and fear filled every home.
And late one night, a car came prowling round the Ryan Road.
A Catholic would be killed tonight to even up the score.
Oh Christ, it's young MacDonald that they've taken from the door.

"Isaac was my friend!" he cried, he begged them with his fear.
But centuries of hatred have ears that cannot hear.
"An eye for an eye" was all that filled their minds.
And another eye for another eye, til everyone is blind.

There were roses, roses, there were roses.
And the tears of the people ran together.
Now I don't know where the moral is, or how this song should end.
But I wonder just how many wars are fought between good friends.
And the men who give the orders, well, they're not the ones who die.
It's Scott and MacDonald and the likes of you and I.
There were roses, roses, there were roses.
And the tears of the people ran together.