

Man Who Picked the Wildwood Flower

Merle Haggard

Let me tell you about a song
That was brought to me by a good friend of mine who's a good songwriter
And everytime he brings me a song I'm always willing to listen
But the story and the reasons for writing this song
Were even more interesting to me than the song
The old friend and fella I'm speaking of is Tommy Collins
Tommy told me about an experience he had when he was a minister
Where he was called to preach a funeral for a man with no identity
Tommy said he never forgot the way he felt
Like here is a human being who someone must have loved at some time
And yet there was no one present to pay respect
Just a couple of grave diggers a funeral man and Tommy
Then the story switched to another thought about during his last visit to Nashville
He went down to listen to an ole street singer
That he always made a point to go hear each time he was in town
And it was then that Tommy discovered
That Jack Dupree the ole street singer had passed away
And Tommy said he wondered how many were present at Jack's funeral
And it was these two true to life incidents that inspired this song

I only saw five people when they buried Jack Dupree
Two diggers and the preacher the funeral man and me
The pray was said and the hole was filled in less than half an hour
And I said goodbye to the little man who picked the wildwood flower.

For twenty years I'd seen him on the lower Nashville streets
They said he always earned enough to buy his clothes and eats
He'd stop awhile and check his watch with the big clock on the tower
That's when I asked him once if he could pick the wildwood flower.

He always drew a crowd because he put on such a show
He'd dance and sing and play and smile just like a polished pro
And everytime he saw me standin' in the crowd
I knew the tune that he'd play next would be the wildwood flower.

I told him once that he could be what people call a star
And he said why boy I'm happy how many of them folks are

I'd hate to have to force a smile and feel myself turn sour
There ain't no put on in my face when I pick the wildwood flower.

Then I saw a thousand people as they begin to come
Business men and opry stars party girls and bums
And on that little mound of clay bouquets begin to shower
As they paid respect to the little man who picked the wildwood
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