

Where Are You Now, My Son?

Joan Baez

It's walking to the battleground that always makes me cry
I've met so few folks in my time who weren't afraid to die
But dawn bleeds with the people here and morning skies are red
As young girls load up bicycles with flowers for the dead

An aging woman picks along the craters and the rubble
A piece of cloth, a bit of shoe, a whole lifetime of trouble
A sobbing chant comes from her throat and splits the morning air
The single son she had last night is buried under her

They say that the war is done
Where are you now, my son?

An old man with unsteady gait and beard of ancient white
Bent to the ground with arms outstretched faltering in his plight
I took his hand to steady him, he stood and did not turn
But smiled and wept and bowed and mumbled softly, "Danke shoen"

The children on the roadsides of the villages and towns
Would stand around us laughing as we stood like giant clowns
The mourning bands told whom they'd lost by last night's phantom messenger
And they spoke their only words in English, "Johnson, Nixon, Kissinger"

Now that the war's being won
Where are you now, my son?

The siren gives a running break to those who live in town
Take the children and the blankets to the concrete underground
Sometimes we'd sing and joke and paint bright pictures on the wall
And wonder if we would die well and if we'd loved at all

The helmetless defiant ones sit on the curb and stare
At tracers flashing through the sky and planes bursting in air
But way out in the villages no warning comes before a blast
That means a sleeping child will never make it to the door

The days of our youth were fun
Where are you now, my son?

From the distant cabins in the sky where no man hears the sound
Of death on earth from his own bombs, six pilots were shot down
Next day six hulking bandaged men were dazzled by a room
Of newsmen. Sally keep the faith, let's hope this war ends soon

In a damaged prison camp where they no longer had command
They shook their heads, what irony, we thought peace was at hand
The preacher read a Christmas prayer and the men kneeled on the ground
Then sheepishly asked me to sing "They Drove Old Dixie Down"

Yours was the righteous gun
Where are you now, my son?

We gathered in the lobby celebrating Christmas Eve
The French, the Poles, the Indians, Cubans and Vietnamese
The tiny tree our host had fixed sweetened familiar psalms
But the most sacred of Christmas prayers was shattered by the bombs

So back into the shelter where two lovely women rose
And with a brilliance and a fierceness and a gentleness which froze
The rest of us to silence as their voices soared with joy
Outshining every bomb that fell that night upon Hanoi

With bravery we have sun
But where are you now, my son?

Oh people of the shelters what a gift you've given me
To smile at me and quietly let me share your agony
And I can only bow in utter humbleness and ask
Forgiveness and forgiveness for the things we've brought to pass

The black pyjama'd culture that we tried to kill with pellet holes
And rows of tiny coffins we've paid for with our souls
Have built a spirit seldom seen in women and in men
And the white flower of Bac Mai will surely blossom once again

I've heard that the war is done
Then where are you now, my son?