

Harry Chapin, Dirt Gets Under The Fingernails

Now he was a man who worked with his hands
Only in a motor he found peace
He could make an engine sing like a bird
He could find his only kind of release
When he was up to the elbows in the grease.

She dreamed of a time for painting
As she was cleaning up his stains from the rug
She'd play all day with their children
And try to meet him with a welcome and hug
As he came shuffling through the house with a shrug

I tell you dirt gets under the fingernails
And hate gets under the skin
But a dream got a way of getting down to the bone
and the heart of a body that it's in.

While he was making magic with his piston machines
She was cleaning up the mess he'd left behind.
She was trying to make it through to the end of the day
With a little empty time
And do the painting that meant peace of mind.

I tell you dirt gets under the fingernails
And hate gets under the skin
But a dream got a way of getting down to the bone
and the heart of a body that it's in.

Well one day she didn't bother 'bout making his bed.
She hurried all the children out the door.
And she let the bills and the marketing go.
And she went and almost bought out an art supply store.

It just so happened that day he got to thinking.
Of the grease that always covered up his skin.
So he left the garage a little early
He got a shave and a manicure and trim
Came out clean as a plaster maniquin.

He came home in a hurry
But he almost didn't recognize the place.
It looked like it'd been hit by a hurricane.
There was canvas filling every open space.
And she had paint all over her face.

I tell you dirt gets under the fingernails
And hate gets under the skin
But a dream got a way of getting down to the bone
and the heart of a body that it's in.

They both stood stunned into silence
Then their laughter exploded like a shout
And he went out to make some magic in the kitchen
The clean man learning what cooking was about.
And the dirty girl painting her messy heart out.

I tell you dirt gets under the fingernails
And hate gets under the skin
But a dream got a way of getting down to the bone
and the heart of a body that it's in.