

Steve Earle, Warrior

This is the best time of the day the dawn
The final cleansing breath unsullied yet
By acrid fume or death's cacophony
The rank refuse of unchained ambition
And pray, deny me not but know me now,
Your faithful retainer stands resolute
To serve his liege lord without recompense
Perchance to fall and perish namelessly
No flag-draped bier or muffled drum to set
The cadence for a final dress parade
But it was not always thus remember?
Once you worshipped me and named me a god
In many tongues and made offering lest
I exact too terrible a tribute

Take heed for I am weary, ancient
And decrepit now and my time grows short
There are no honorable frays to join

Only mean death dealt out in dibs and dabs
Or horror unleashed from across oceans
Assail me not with noble policy
For I care not at all for platitude
And surrender such tedious detail
To greater minds than mine and nimbler tongues
Singular in their purpose and resolve
And presuming to speak for everyman

Oh, for another time, a distant field
And there a mortal warrior's lonely grave
But duty charges me remain until
The end the last battle of the last war
Until that morrow render unto me
That which is mine my stipend well deserved
The fairest flower of your progeny
Your sons, your daughters your hopes and your dreams
The cruel consequence of your conceit