

PESTER FLATT AND THE RARELY PAID



September 7, 2005

Dear Katie,

The events of the past week-and-a-half make it kindly difficult to "keep on the sunny side." I wonder if you could play that beautiful Doc Watson record and dedicate it to all those lost souls we've yet to find as the flood waters recede.

Oh -- I almost forgot -- Walleve Stevens sent along this piece by his lesser-known cousin, Wallace (the insurance salesman). It seemed appropriate.

It is equal to living in a tragic land
To live in a tragic time.
Regard now the sloping, mountainous rocks
And the river that batters its way over the stones,
Regard the hovels of those that live in this land.

That was what I painted behind the loaf,
The rocks not even touched by snow,
The pines along the river and the dry men blown
Brown as the bread, thinking of birds
Flying from burning countries and brown sand shores,

Birds that came like dirty water in waves
Flowing above the rocks, flowing over the sky,
As if the sky was a current that bore them along,
Spreading them as waves spread flat on the shore,
One after another washing the mountains bare.

It was the battering of drums I heard
It was hunger, It was the hungry that cried
And the waves, the waves were soldiers moving,
Marching and marching in a tragic time
Below me, on the asphalt, under the trees.

It was soldiers went marching over the rocks
And still the birds came, came in watery flocks,
Because it was spring and the birds had to come.
No doubt that soldiers had to be marching
And that drums had to be rolling, rolling, rolling.