

Mark King

"5:15 Am"

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5.15 a.m.
Snow laying all around
A collier cycles home
From his night shift underground
Past the silent pub
Primary school, workingmens club
On the road from the pithead
The churchyard packed
With mining dead

Then beneath the bridge
He comes to a giant car
A shroud of snow upon the roof
A mark ten jaguar
He thought the man was fast asleep
Silent, still and deep
Both dead and cold
Shot through
With bullet holes

The one armed bandit man
Came north to fill his boots
Came up from cockneyland
E-type jags and flashy suits
Put your money in
Pull the levers
Watch them spin
Cash cows in all the pubs
But he preferred the new nightclubs

Nineteen sixty-seven
Bandit men in birdcage heaven
La dolce vita, sixty-nine
All new to people of the tyne

Who knows who did what
Somebody made a call
They said his hands
Were in the pot
That he'd been skimming hauls
He picks up the swag

They gaily gave away
Drives his giant jag
Off to his big pay day

The bandit man
Came north to fill his boots
Came up from cockneyland
E-type jags and flashy suits
The bandit man
Came up the great north road
Up to geordieland
To mine
The mother lode

Seams blew up or cracked
Black diamonds came hard won
Generations toiled and hacked
For a pittance and black lung
Crushed by tub or stone
Together
And alone
How the young and old
Paid the price of coal

Eighteen sixty-seven
My angel's gone to heaven
He'll be happy there
Sunlight and sweet clean air

They gather round the glass
Tough hewers and crutters
Child trappers and putters
The little foals and half-marrows
Who pushed
And pulled the barrows
The hod boys
And the rolleywaymen
5.15 a.m.

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