We Can't Make It Here

Vietnam Vet with a cardboard sign
Sitting there by the left turn line
Flag on his wheelchair flapping in the breeze
One leg missing and both hands free
No one's paying much mind to him
The VA budget's just stretched so thin
And there's more comin' home from the Mideast war
We can't make it here anymore

That big ol' building was the textile mill
That fed our kids and it paid our bills
But they turned us out and they closed the doors
We can't make it here anymore

See all those pallets piled up on the loading dock
They're just gonna set there 'til they rot
'Cause there's nothing to ship, nothing to pack
Just busted concrete and rusted tracks
Empty storefronts around the square
There's a needle in the gutter and glass everywhere
You don't come down here 'less you're looking to score
We can't make it here anymore

The bar's still open but man it's slow
The tip jar's light and the register's low
The bartender don't have much to say
The regular crowd gets thinner each day

Some have maxed out all their credit cards
Some are working two jobs and living in cars
Minimum wage won't pay for a roof, won't pay for a drink
If you gotta have proof just try it yourself Mr. CEO
See how far $5.15 an hour will go
Take a part time job at one of your stores
Bet you can't make it here anymore

High school girl with a bourgeois dream
Just like the pictures in the magazine
She found on the floor of the laundromat
A woman with kids can forget all that
If she comes up pregnant what'll she do
Forget the career, forget about school
Can she live on faith? live on hope?
High on Jesus or hooked on dope
When it's way too late to just say no
You can't make here anymore

Now I'm stocking shirts in the Wal-Mart store
Just like the ones we made before

'Cept this one came from Singapore
I guess we can't make it here anymore

Should I hate a people for the shade of their skin
Or the shape of their eyes or the shape I'm in
Should I hate 'em for having our jobs today
No I hate the men who sent the jobs away
I can see them all now, they haunt my dreams
All lily white and squeaky clean
They've never known want, they'll never know need
Their shit don't stink and their kids won't bleed
Their kids won't bleed in their damn little war
And we can't make it here anymore

Will work for food
Will die for oil
Will kill for power and to us the spoils
The billionaires get to pay less tax
The working poor get to fall through the cracks
So let 'em eat jellybeans let 'em eat cake
Let 'em eat shit, whatever it takes
They can join the Air Force, or join the Corps
If they can't make it here anymore

So that's how it is
That's what we got
If the president wants to admit it or not
You can read it in the paper
Read it on the wall
Hear it on the wind
If you're listening at all
Get out of that limo
Look us in the eye
Call us on the cell phone
Tell us all why

In Dayton Ohio
Or Portland Maine
Or a cotton gin out on the great high plains
That's done closed down along with the school
And the hospital and the swimming pool
Dust devils dance in the noonday heat
There's rats in the alley and trash in the street
Gang graffiti on a boxcar door
We can't make it here anymore.

Music and lyrics © 2004 by James McMurtry