

Leonard Cohen, The Captain

Now the Captain called me to his bed
He fumbled for my hand
"Take these silver bars," he said
"I'm giving you command."
"Command of what, there's no one here
There's only you and me --
All the rest are dead or in retreat
Or with the enemy."
"Complain, complain, that's all you've done
Ever since we lost
If it's not the Crucifixion
Then it's the Holocaust."
"May Christ have mercy on your soul
For making such a joke
Amid these hearts that burn like coal
And the flesh that rose like smoke."

"I know that you have suffered, lad,
But suffer this awhile:
Whatever makes a soldier sad
Will make a killer smile."
"I'm leaving, Captain, I must go
There's blood upon your hand
But tell me, Captain, if you know
Of a decent place to stand."

"There is no decent place to stand
In a massacre;
But if a woman take your hand
Go and stand with her."
"I left a wife in Tennessee
And a baby in Saigon --
I risked my life, but not to hear
Some country-western song."

"Ah but if you cannot raise your love
To a very high degree,
Then you're just the man I've been thinking of --
So come and stand with me."
"Your standing days are done," I cried,
"You'll rally me no more.
I don't even know what side
We fought on, or what for."

"I'm on the side that's always lost
Against the side of Heaven
I'm on the side of Snake-eyes tossed
Against the side of Seven.
And I've read the Bill of Human Rights
And some of it was true
But there wasn't any burden left
So I'm laying it on you."

Now the Captain he was dying
But the Captain wasn't hurt
The silver bars were in my hand
I pinned them to my shirt.