

POP WORLD

Text of Arlo Guthrie's new song

This is the text of *The Pause of Mr. Claus*, by Arlo Guthrie. It runs on his second album much like *Alice's Restaurant* did on his first.

This is a song dedicated to a great American organization, to our boys in the FBI...

Now, wait a minute, it's hard to be an FBI man.

I mean, first of all, to be an FBI man, you have to be over 40 years old. And the reason that it takes at least 25 years with the organization is that it takes that long to be that much of a bastard...

Now, it's true... you can't just join. You know, it needs an atmosphere where your natural bastardness can grow and develop and take a meaningful shape in today's complex society...

But that's not why I want to dedicate this song to the FBI.

I mean, the job they have to do is a drag. I mean, they have to follow people around. You know, it's part of their job to follow me around.

I'm out on the highway and I'm driving down the road and I run out of gasoline. I pull over to the side of the road. They got to pull over too, make believe that they ran out. You know, I got to get some gasoline, they have to figure out whether they should stick with the car or follow me.

Suppose I don't come back, and they stayed with the car.

Or if I fly on the airplane. I could fly half fare because I'm 12 to 22, and they gotta pay the full fare... The thing is that when you pay the full fare, you have to get on the airplane first, so that they know how many seats are left over for the half fare kids. And sometimes there aren't any seats left over and sometimes there are, but that doesn't mean you have to go... Well, suppose that he gets on and it fills up the last seat, so you can't get on, so he gets off, so then you can get on... And what's he going to do?... And well, it's a drag for him.

But that's not why I want to dedicate the song to the FBI.

During these hard days, hard weeks, everybody always has it bad once in a while. You know, you have a bad time of it and you always have a friend who says "Hey, man, you ain't got it that bad, look at that guy." And you look at that guy, and he's got it worse than you. And it makes you feel better that there's somebody got it worse than you.

But think of the last guy... for one minute, think of the last guy. Nobody's got it worse than that guy... nobody in the whole world. That guy, he's so low in the world, that he doesn't even have a street to lay in for a truck to run him over...

He's out there, nothin's happenin' for that cat, and all he's gotta do to create a little excitement in his own life, is to bum a dime from somewhere, call up the FBI, say, "FBI (they'll say, "yes"), I dig Uncle Ho and Chairman Mao, and their friends are coming over for dinner"... Hang up the phone, and within two minutes — and not two minutes from the time when he hangs up the phone, but two minutes from when he put the dime in, — they've got 3,000 feet of tape rolling: files of tape, pictures, movies, dramas, actions on tape; and then they send out half a million people all over the entire world — the globe — they find out all they can about this guy, 'cause there's a number of questions involved in this guy.

I mean, if he was the last guy in the world, how'd he get a dime to call the FBI? There are plenty of people that aren't the last guys that can't get dimes. He comes along and he gets a dime.

I mean, if he had to bum a dime, to call the FBI, how was he going to serve dinner to all those people? How could the last guy make dinner for all those people? And if he could make dinner, and was going to make dinner, then why did he call the FBI?

And they find out all these questions within two minutes.

And that's the great thing about America.

I mean, this is the only country in the world — while it's not the only country in the world that could find stuff out in two minutes — but it's the only country in the world that would take two minutes for that guy.

Other countries would say, "He's the last guy — screw him."

You know, but in America there is no discrimination, and there is no hypocrisy because we'll get anybody.

And that's the wonderful thing about America and that's why tonight I'd like to dedicate it to every FBI man in the audience.

I know you can't say nothin', you know, you can't get up and say "hi", 'cause then everybody knows that you're an FBI man.

It's a drag for you and your friends: they're not really your friends are they?

So you can't get up and say nothing 'cause otherwise you gotta get sent back to the factory, and that's a drag for you and that's an expense for the government, and that's a drag for you.

We're gonna sing you this Christmas Carol, for all you bastards out there in the audience, called "The Pause of Mr. Claus".

telephoto photo by J. Edgar Hoover



The FBI

The pause of Mr. Claus

Why do you sit there so strange?
Is it because you are beautiful?
You must think you are deranged.
Why do police guys beat on these guys?

You must think Santa Claus wierd.
He has long hair and a beard,
Giving his presents for free.
Why do police guys mess with these guys?

Let's get Santa Claus 'cause...
Santa Claus has a red suit:
He's a communist,
And a beard and long hair:
must be a pacifist.
What's in the pipe that he's smoking?

Mr. Claus sneaks in your house at night.
He must be a dope fiend:
put your head tight.
Why do police guys beat on these guys?

Dear Mother,

Dear Mother

I've been at York for five months now, so I thought I'd give you a few words of news just to let you know I'm still alive. Sort of.

Residence living is nice, mother. The rooms are all cosy and neat and the windows are fixed so you can't jump out. The walls are cracked and the ceiling too, but they say the building shouldn't topple over for a while yet, even though it is sinking into the ground.

The food is wonderful. All sorts of yummy things like grade-C meat in the hamburgers, soggy French Fries and stale doughnuts. All the good things I used to eat when you were cooking for me. I just remembered something; your cooking was lousy...

The people here are really friendly. The first night of orientation a boy asked me to marry him. But don't worry, I didn't take him seriously. He was drunk.

I have a professor who's very nice too. He's even offered to help me after hours with any problems I may have in my Humanities course. He's very sympathetic. He's my Natural Science professor.

I have to go now mother. There's a party tonight in the residence common room. I have to put on my dress and fix my hair. Remember my green satin dress with the big bow in the front? Well some of the girls saw it last week and helped me redesign it. Wasn't that nice of them?

They took the bow off. But I won't catch cold, mother. The heating is very well regulated. Except when the janitor and the house maid get together in the basement and he forgets to watch the boiler gauges. Almost blew up once.

Well, goodbye again mother. Say hello to daddy. Is he still mad at me for taking his golf clubs with me when I left? I've put them to good use here. Besides putting a few balls into the Humanities building while teeing-off from Bog Hill at the entrance to the campus, I've also used them to pacify the boys who break into my room now and then. I've got a great slice.

Like I said before, bye-bye. I'll write again next week. There's nothing to do here in the winter anyways. Except maybe reading. I guess I could ask that Natural Science professor to help me nights. That might break the boredom.

Goodbye mother, and don't worry about me; I'm in good hands. The RCMP is always coming in here looking for dope fiends and sex deviates. Think about me now and then.

Luv,
Prudence