

Waiting on Release

March 22, 1977

When a fiver is the difference between a flushing and a fade C D C / G C G
And a ten'll get you trampled in the rushing at the gate
Twenty'll turn a tomboy to a blushing little maid D Am C G
You know that you're all waiting on release Am C G

This year the Easter Bunny's about a half a year behind
Them that thinks it's funny, you can touch them for a dime
Them that has the money never seem to have the time
For the people who are waiting on release

And you think you're heard this all before G Em G Em
I guarantee you'll be hearing it again Am G D
When the knuckles that are rapping at your door
Say, Come out now, we can all be friends
 Will you still be sipping wine Am
 And cackling like geese C G
 When there's half a million people F Am
 Waiting on release? C G

The mentholated doctor says it'll all be all right
As the lawyer piles papers up a tall as a kite
They don't take no personal checks or calls in the night
From the people who are waiting on release

The architect of misery in his tilted tower
Says, Let us not be hasty, nothing's builded in an hour
And, Why are they all shouting, from his gilded shower
You can tell he's never been out on release

And he thinks he's heard it all before
Doesn't want to hear it once again
With the fists of fury pounding at his door
He turns around and scans the room for friends
 Will you still be sipping wine
 And yelling for police
 When there's two hundred million
 Waiting on release?

Written in 1977, this was a young man's rant about class, inequality, and unemployment. "Release" was meant as a play on the English term relief, known in Great Britain as "the dole." I had no one particular in mind as the architect of misery, although in today's America the references to towers, building, and gold sound weirdly prophetic.