

The Crib in the Creche (A Prayer From Me) *Words and Music by Bill Pere*
A Complete Analysis of the Lyrical Anatomy of the Song

Verse 1

Their freezer is filled with a fine festive feast

While outside the church window I stare

This Christmas Eve chill is pushing twenty below

My legs just can't carry me there...

rhyme

Been an hour or two since I last felt my feet

climb

I won't last this night if I don't get inside

Three days with nothing to eat, and I don't know how long

how long

rhyme

Since I swallowed my pride

Verse 2

I hear someone say they feel warmth in their soul,

Makes me think about the hole in my shoe

If I fall on my knees, the rips in my clothes

Let the winter wind weave its way through...

rhyme

Freezing winds disorient me

climb

I search through my mind to recall how to pray

God, give me a hand or a light to lead me along

along

rhyme

Please help me find your way

Chorus 1

Doesn't anybody care for me?

Isn't anybody there to see?

Isn't there an answer somewhere for a prayer from me?

- Five-fold alliteration on "f".
- Establishes that there is a group of people ("Their")
- Establishes point of view ("I") and voice (thinking, not speaking)
- Establishes the setting i.e. "where"
- Establishes the "When" and the sensory information of cold
- 4-fold assonance on the short "i" sound
- Alliteration on "c".
- Alliteration on "f".
- Establishes time-frame movement, and a conflict needing resolution
- Assonance, and set up next rhyme
- Repeat "last" with an alternate meaning (verb vs. adverb)
- "Long" is a musical high point, and this point rhymes across all five verses
- Repeat "last" with an alternate meaning (verb vs. adverb)
- Alliteration on "s".
- "Swallowed" is a semantic pivot, simultaneously having the literal (eat) and figurative (pride) meanings
- Overall, by the end of Verse 1, we have all the necessary information about the people, time, place, and situation to picture the scene.
- 3-fold Alliteration on "s".
- "Warmth", to contrast with the cold of Verse 1 and "Soul" as a semantic pivot (soul vs. sole of a shoe in next line)
- "Fall on my knees" evokes the line from "O Holy Night", "Fall on your Knees"
- 4-fold alliteration on "w".
- The verb "weave" to go with the reference of clothes.
- The melody of this line is the melody of "We three kings of Orient are...". "Freezing winds" is assonant with "We Three kings", and the syllables "orient" in "disorient" fall in exactly the same place as in "We Three Kings"
- Show, don't tell -- The line shows through an action (trying to remember how to pray), that the man has turned away from God some time ago.
- 3-fold alliteration on "l", and 2 on "g"
- The background choir here sings a line from "We Three Kings", i.e., "Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to Thy perfect light", re-referencing the "freezing winds" line and the "light to lead me along"
- If the chorus were preceded with "And that's why I say..." it would be logical.
- The chorus raises the key question of the song, and raises the listener's anticipation that an answer might be forthcoming.
- Musically, the chorus is totally different from the verse, with a different tonal center, and contains a rhythmic half-measure (3 beats rather than 6). The verses are lyrically complex and musically simple - The chorus is musically complex and lyrically simple.

Verse 3

I'm tired of wasting this life that I have

I pray for a new chance to live

I never thought much 'bout what angels did say

I'm told if I ask, you'll forgive

A swill from a bottle can't drown out my pain

Like the swell from that choir now drowns out my yell

I just can't compete with the sound of sopranos **in song**

On that high note Noel

Verse 4

I see as they sing how their spirits just soar

But the spirits I've poured into me

Have made me so sore and so weak and so cold

That its opened my eyes wide to see

With my last ounce of strength I cast up a stone

But they can't hear the knock of the rock that I hurled

My arms are so weak and their voices just sing out **so strong**

About joy to the world

Chorus 2

Doesn't anybody care for me?

Isn't anybody there to see?

Isn't there an answer somewhere for a prayer from me?

• Developing the idea from verse 2 that the man is trying to remember how to pray, it now is shown that he is trying

• This evokes the line from "The First Noel, the angels did say...."

• Show, don't tell -- It is shown that the man is asking God to forgive him

• "Swell" does double-duty, as a para-rhyme with "swill", and as a perfect rhyme with "yell".

• "Drown" is a semantic pivot, referring to drinking liquid, and also to drowning out pain and sound

• 3-fold alliteration on "s", 2 on "c", 2 on "n", 2 on "p"

• Assonance with now, drown, and out; Repetition with no(te) and No(el).

• The background choir here sings the first part of the refrain from "The First Noel".

• 5-fold alliteration on "s"; Rhyme with pour/sore/soar; Semantic pivot with soar/sore

• A semantic pivot with "spirits", used here literally as in alcohol, but it is also in the semantic field of soul, God, angels, prayer, and that group of references.

• Parallel construction in group of 3, usually effective for emphasizing a point, as in so sore; so weak; so cold.

• "Ounce" used here with "strength", is also in the semantic field of liquid which has been established through bottle pour, spirits, and swill.

• "Cast a stone" is a biblical reference i.e. "let he who is without sin cast the first stone"

• internal rhyme

• parallel opposite construction: so weak, so strong.

• 3-fold alliteration on "s"

• The background choir here sings the first line of "Joy to the World."

• Overall, the story moves forward we now know that the man is succumbing to the cold and is trying unsuccessfully to get the attention of the people inside the church.

• The chorus is repeated, same as the first time, still logically following a mental insertion of "And that's why I say...."

climb

rhyme

rhyme

rhyme

rhyme

Verse 5

Through the haze on the glass I see someone pass by

But the silent night swallows my shout

I see plates piled with pastry and pies passed around

Just about then I pass out

God rest this lonely gentleman,

Let something ease this pain

If I am truly forsaken then please don't prolong

This final refrain

Verse 6

I dream Mother Mary is smiling at me,

Then the sights and the sounds start to mesh

I hear someone say how they found this poor soul

Collapsed on the crib in the creche...

Been an hour or two since I first felt the love

That you share with Your children, and they've shared with me

They've taken me in, make me feel like I belong

Now finally I see

Chorus 3

Someone really cares for me.

Someone's always there to see.

You've given me an answer right here for a prayer from me.

- 6-fold alliteration on "s".
- "Pass" is used in three different phrases, i.e. "pass by", "pass out", and "pass around", providing parallel constructions.
- The images maintain the contrast between warm and cold; between having food and being hungry.
- 5-fold alliteration on "p"
- This line evokes the first line of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" but with opposite meaning.

- "If I am truly forsaken" evokes the Biblical reference "Why have you forsaken me ? "
- The background choir here sings "Good tidings of comfort and joy", from "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

- Alliteration on "m" and 4-fold on "s"

- 3-fold alliteration on the hard "c"

- Recaps the line from verse 1, "Been an hour or two since I last felt my feet"

- Parallel construction

- The background choir here sings the line from "Good King Wenceslas" : "He who now will help the poor shall himself find blessing"

- The chorus, maintaining the same music, is now lyrically different, to reflect the turnaround in the situation. The insertion of "and that's why I say" is now logical for the new chorus. The listener's anticipation of wanting an answer to the questions of the prior choruses is now fulfilled.

climb

climb

rhyme

rhyme

rhyme

rhyme