

The Dying Miner

Written by Woody Guthrie, 1947

It happened an hour ago
Way down in this tunnel of coal
Gas caught fire from somebody's lamp
And the miners are choking in smoke.

Goodbye to Dickie and Honey,
Goodbye to the wife that I love.
Lot of these men not coming home,
Tonight when the work whistle blows.

Dear sisters and brothers goodbye,
Dear mother and father goodbye,
My fingers are weak and I cannot write,
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye.

It looks like the end for me
And all of my buddies I see.
We're all writing letters to children we love,
Please carry our word to our wives.

We found a little place in the air,
Crawled and dug ourselves here.
But the smoke is bad and the fumes coming in,
And the gas is burning my eyes.

Dear sisters and brothers goodbye,
Dear mother and father goodbye,
My fingers are weak and I cannot write,
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye.

Forgive me for the things I done wrong,
I love you lots more than you know.
When the night whistle blows and I don't come home,
Do all that you can to help mom.

Continued, next page...

I can hear the moans and groans,
More than a hundred good men.
Just work and fight and try to see,
That this never happens again.

Dear sisters and brothers goodbye,
Dear mother and father goodbye,
My fingers are weak and I cannot write,
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye.

My eyes are blinded with fumes,
But it sounds like the men are all gone,
'Cept Joe Valentini, Fred Gussler and George,
Trapped down in this hell hole of fire.

Please name our new baby Joe,
So he'll grow up like big Joe.
He'll work and he'll fight and he'll fix up the mines,
So fire can't kill daddy no more.

Dear sisters and brothers goodbye,
Dear mother and father goodbye,
My fingers are weak and I cannot write,
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye.

Note: This song was written (words and music) by Woody Guthrie in 1947, following the Centralia No. 5 mine disaster of March 25, 1947. Based on reports by the Mine Safety and Health Administration of the United States Department of Labor, the explosion was caused by ignited coal dust. At the time of the explosion, 142 men were in the mine. The death toll was 111 men, 65 killed by burns and other injuries; 45 killed by afterdamp, which is a toxic mixture of gases left in a mine following an explosion. Eight men were rescued, but one died later. Only 24 miners escaped the disaster.