

Waits Tom

"Burma Shave"

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licorice tattoo turned a gun metal blue scrawled across
the shoulders
of a dying town the one eyed jacks across the railroad
tracks
and the scar on its belly pulled a stranger passing
through
he was a juvenile delinquent never learned how to
behave
but the cops would never think to look in
burma shave

and the road was like a ribbon and the moon was like a
bone
he didn't seem to be like any guy she'd ever known
he kinda looked like farley granger with his hair slicked
back
she says i'm a sucker for a fella in a cowboy hat
how far are you going he said depends on what you
mean
he says i'm going thataway just as long as it's paved
i guess you'd say i'm on my way to
burma shave

and her knees up on the glove compartment
took out her barrettes and her hair spilled out like
rootbeer
and she popped her gum and arched her back
hell marysville ain't nothing but a wide spot in the road
some night my heart pounds just like thunder
i don't know why it don't explode
cause everyone in this stinking town has got one foot in
the grave
and i'd rather take my chances out in
burma shave

presley's what i go by why don't you change the station
count the grain elevators in the rearview mirror
mister anywhere you point this thing
has got to beat the hell out of the sting
of going to bed with every dream that dies here every
mornin

and so drill me a hole with a barber pole
i'm jumping my parole just like a fugitive tonight
why don't you have another swig
and pass that car if you're so brave
i wanna get there before the sun comes up in
burma shave

and the spider web crack and the mustang screamed
smoke from the tires and the twisted machine
just a nickel's worth of dreams and every wishbone that
they saved
lie swindled from them on the way to
burma shave

and the sun hit the derrick and cast a bat wing shadow
up against the car door on the shot gun side
and when they pulled her from the wreck you know she
still had on her shades
they say that dreams are growing wild just this side of
burma shave

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