

## **Bruce Springsteen**

### **"Black Cowboys"**

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Raney William's playground was among Haven's  
streets  
Where he ran past melted candles and flower wreaths  
Names and photos of the young black faces  
Whose death and blood consecrated these places

Raney's mother said Raney stay at my side  
For you are my blessing, you are my pride  
It's your love here that keeps my soul alive  
I want you to come home from school and stay inside

Raney'd do his work and put his books away  
There was a channel showed a Western movie  
everyday  
And that brought him home books on the black  
cowboys of the Oklahoma range  
The Seminole scouts that fought the tribes of the Great  
Plains

Summer come and the days grew long  
Raney always had his mother's smile to depend on  
Along the street of stray bullets he made his way  
To the warmth of her arms at the end of each day

Come the Fall, the rain flooded these homes  
In Ezekiel's valley of dry bones  
It fell hard and dark to the ground  
It fell without a sound

And they took up with a man whose business was the  
boulevard  
Whose smile was fixed in a face that was never off  
guard

In the pipes 'neath the kitchen sink his secrets are kept  
In the day, behind drawn curtains in the next bedroom  
he slept

And she got lost in the days  
The smile Raney depended on dusted away  
The arms that held him were no more his own  
He lay at night his head pressed to her chest listening

to the ghost in her bones

In the kitchen, Raney slipped his hand between the  
pipes  
From a brown bag pulled five hundred dollar bills and  
stuck it in his coat side  
Stood in the dark at his mother's bed  
Brushed her hair and kissed her eyes

In the twilight Raney walked to the station on streets of  
stone  
Through Pennsylvania and Ohio his train drifted on  
Through the small towns of Indiana the big train crept  
As he lay his head back on his seat and slept

He woke and the towns gave way to muddy fields of  
green  
Corn and cotton and endless nothing in between  
Over the rutted hills of Oklahoma the red sun slipped  
and was gone  
The moon rose and stripped the earth to its bone

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