

## **Steve Earle**

### **"Billy Austin"**

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My name is Billy Austin  
I'm twenty-nine years old  
I was born in Oklahoma  
Quarter Cherokee I'm told

Don't remember Oklahoma  
It's been so long since I left home  
Seems like I've always been in prison  
Like I've always been alone

Didn't mean to hurt nobody  
Never thought I'd cross that line  
I held up a filling station  
Like I'd done a hundred times

The kid done like I told him  
He lay face down on the floor  
Guess I'll never know what made me  
Turn and walk back through that door

The shot rang out like thunder  
My ears rang like a bell  
No one came runnin'  
And so I called the cops myself

Took their time to get there  
And I guess I could'a run  
I knew I should be feeling something  
But I never shed tear one

I didn't even make the papers  
'Cause I only killed one man  
But my trial was over quickly  
And then the long hard wait began

Court appointed lawyer  
Couldn't look me in the eye  
He just stood up and closed his briefcase  
When they sentenced me to die

And now my waitin's over  
As the final hour drags by

I ain't about to tell you  
That I don't deserve to die

There's twenty-seven men here  
Mostly black and brown and poor  
And most of 'em are guilty  
And who are you to say for sure?

So when the preacher comes to get me  
And they shave off all my hair  
Could you take that long walk with me  
Knowing Hell's waitin' there?

Could you pull that switch yourself, sir  
With a sure and steady hand?  
Could you still tell yourself, sir  
That you're better than I am?

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