

Tom Waits

"Potter's Field"

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Buy me a drink and I'll tell you what I seen
And I'll give you a bargain from the edge of a maniac's
dream
That buys a black widow spider with a riddle in his yarn
That's clinging to the furrow of a blind man's brow

I'll start talking from the brim of a thimble full of
whiskey
On a train through the Bronx that will take you just as
far
As the empty of a bottle to the highway of a scar
That stretched across the blacktop of my cheek like
that

And then ducks beneath the brim of a fugitive's hat
You'll learn why liquor makes a stool pigeon rat on
every face
That ever left his shadow down on Saint Marks place

Hell, I'd double cross my mother if it was whiskey that
they payed
And so an early bird says Nightstick's on the hit parade
He ain't got a prayer and his days are numbered
And you'll track him down like a dog

Well, it's a tough customer, you're getting in this trade
'Cause the Nightstick's heart pumps lemonade
And whiskey keeps a blind man talkin' alright
And I'm the only one who knows just where he stayed
last night

He was in a wreckin' yard in a switchblade storm
In a wheelbarrow with nothing but revenge to keep him
warm
And a half a million dollars in unmarked bills
Was the Nightstick's blanket in a February chill

And as the buzzard drove a crooked sky
Beneath a black wing halo
He was dealin' high Chicago in the mud
And stackin' the deck against a dragnet's eye

A shivering Nightstick in a miserable heap
With the siren for a lullaby singing him to sleep
He was bleeding from a buttonhole
Torn by a slug, fired from the barrel of a two dollar gun

That scorched a blister on the grip of a punk by now
Is learnin' what you have to pay to be a hero anyhow

He dressed the hole in his gut with a hundred dollar
bandage
A king's ransom for a bedspread that don't amount to
nuthin'
Just cobweb strings on a busted ukulele
And the Nightstick leaned on a black shillelagh
With the poison of a junkie's broken promise on his lip

He staggered in the shadows screaming I ain't never
been afraid
And he shot out every street light on the promenade
Past the frozen ham and eggerters at the penny arcade
And throwin' out handfuls of a blood stained salary
They were dead in their tracks at the shootin' gallery

And they fired off a twenty-one gun salute
And from the corner of his eye, he caught the alabaster
orbs
And from a dime a dance hall girl and stuffed a
thousand dollar bill
In her blouse and caught the cruel and unusual
punishment of her smile

And the Nightstick winked beneath a rainsoaked brim
Ain't no one seen hide nor hair of him see
No one but a spade on Riker's Island and me

And so if you're mad enough to listen to a full of
whiskey blind man
Then you're mad enough to look beyond where
bloodhounds dare to go
If you want to know just where the Nightstick's hidin'
out
You be down at the ferry landin', oh, let's say bout half
past a nightmare

When it's twisted on a clock you tell 'em Nickels
sentcha
Whiskey always makes him talk

You ask for Captain Charon with the mud on his kicks
He's the skipper of the deadline steamer
And she sails from the Bronx across the river Styx

And a riddle's just a ticket for a dreamer

'Cause when the weather vane's sleepin' and the moon
turns his back

You crawl on your belly 'long the railroad tracks
And cross your heart and hope to die and stick a
needle in your eye

'Cause he'd cut my bleedin' heart out if he found out
that I squealed

'Cause you see a scarecrow, it's just a hoodlum
Who marked the cards that he dealt
And pulled a gypsy switch
Out on the edge of Potter's Field

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