

Tom Waits, Potter's Field

Well you can 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
And you'll learn why liquor makes a stool pigeon rat on every face
That ever left his shadow down on Saint Mark's place
Hell, I'd double cross my mother if it was whiskey that they payed
And so an early bird says nightsticks on the hit parade
And 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
Well whiskey keeps a blind man talking alright
And I'm the only one who knows just where he stayed last night

He was in a wrecking 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
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 a 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 learning 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 nuttin
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 egggers at the penny arcade
Throwing out handfuls of a blood stained salary
They were dead in their tracks at the shooting 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 diamond 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 since
No one but a spade out 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
So if you want to know just where the nightstick's hidin out
You be down at the ferry landing, 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
And you ask for Captain Ccharon 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 weathervane'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's just a hoodlum
Who marked the cards that he dealt
And pulled a gypsy switch
Out on the edge of Potter's Field