

Tom Russell, The Sky Above, The Mud Below

Two men rode in from the South, a rainy autumn night
(The sky above and the mud below)
They walked into the Deacon's bar, they were Mexican by sight
(The sky above and the mud below)
They threw a horse hair bridle down - "we trade this for whiskey round"
The Deacon slams a bottle down - two men start to drinkin'

Their hair was long and black, tied up behind their ears
(The sky above and the mud below)
Their faces were identical - like one man beside a mirror
(The sky above and the mud below)
Then someone whispers "that beats all... their wanted poster's on the wall
Twin brothers name of Sandoval - horse thieves from Boquillas..."

Now the bridle and the belts they wore were braided gray and black
(The sky above and the mud below)
The color of a roan horse once belonged to Deacon Black
(The sky above and the mud below)
The fastest horse for miles around - He'd been stolen from the old fairgrounds
A month ago outside of town - We tracked but never found him

Now the Deacon was a preacher who had fallen hard from grace
(The sky above and the mud below)
He owned the bar and a string of quarter horses that he'd race
(The sky above and the mud below)
Yet Deacon he could drink and curse, though he still quoted sacred verse
He was sheriff, judge, he owned the hearse - a man you do not anger

The sky above, the mud below, the wind and rain, the sleet and snow
Two horse thieves from Mexico, drinkin' hard and singin'

One brother he spoke English - Deacon inquires as to their work
(The sky above and the mud below)
The man says, "Mister, we braid horsehair: bridles, ropes and quirts..."
(The sky above and the mud below)
"Yah, that fine bridle we did make - a roan horse killed by leg-bone break...
He's horsehair rope now, horse meat steak... we cleaned him to the bone."

Well these gentlemen they were ignorant, or didn't know just where they were
(The sky above and the mud below)
The Deacon's face grew darker as he measured every word
(The sky above and the mud below)
"You horsehair braidin' sons of bitches, stole my claim to earthly riches
Someone go and dig a ditch - there may well be a hangin'."

One brother reached inside his shirt - a-searching for his gun
(The sky above and the mud below)
Too late... for Deak had whipped around his sawed-off Remington
(The sky above and the mud below)
The twins they raised their hands and sneered. Deak was grinnin' ear to ear
He says: "Courts in session... hear ye, hear - yer's truly is presidin'..."

Well the trial commenced and ended quick, they didn't have a hope
(The sky above and the mud below)
Deak says, "We'll cut your hair now boys - then you can braid yourselves a rope...
(The sky above and the mud below)
The Old Testament it says somewhere - "eye for eye and hair for hair
Covet not thy neighbor's mare' - I believe that's Revelations."

Now that fancy horsehair bridle it hangs on Deacon's wall
(The sky above and the mud below)
Next to that wanted poster of the brothers Sandoval
(The sky above and the mud below)
And the twisted rope, so shiny black; the artifact that broke their necks

Their craftsmanship he did respect - they shoulda struck to braidin'

The sky above, the mud below, the wind and rain, the sleet and snow
The Deacon's hearse is rollin' slow, in the first blue light of morning