

Reverend Mr. Black

Johnny Cash

He rode easy in the saddle. He was tall and lean, and at first you'd a-thought nothing but a streak of mean could make a man look so down right strong, but one look in his eyes and you knowed you was wrong. He was a mountain of a man, and I want you to know. He could preach hot hell or freezin' snow. He carried a Bible in a canvas sack and folks just called him The Reverend Mr. Black. He was poor as a beggar, but he rode like a king. Sometimes in the evening, I'd hear him sing:

[Chorus:]

I gotta walk that lonesome valley. I got to walk it by myself.
Oh nobody else can walk it for me. I got to walk it by myself.
You got to walk that lonesome valley. You got to walk it by yourself.
Oh nobody else can walk it for you. You got to walk it by yourself.

If ever I could have thought this man in black was soft and had any yellow up his back, I gave that notion up the day a lumberjack came in and it wasn't to pray. Yeah, he kicked open the meeting house door and he cussed everybody up and down the floor!

Then, when things got quiet in the place, he walked up and cusses in the preacher's face! He hit that Reverend like a kick of a mule and to my way of thinkin' it took a real fool to turn the other face to that lumberjack, but that's what he did, The Reverend Mr. Black. He stood like a rock, a man among men and he let that lumberjack hit him again, and then with a voice as quiet as could be, he cut him down like a big oak tree when he said:

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It's been many years since we had to part and I guess I learned his ways by heart. I can still hear his sermon's ring, down in the valley where he used to sing. I followed him, yes, sir, and I don't regret it and I hope I will always be a credit to his memory 'cause I want you to understand. The Reverend Mr. Black was my old man!

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