

Decent Man

James McMurtry

He was more than just a decent man, best friend I ever had
When you're shooting at a coffee can, a thirty eight don't kick that
bad

But it kicks right through my bones every second of every day
Clacking by like cobblestones under broken wheels

If the truth be known, I wasn't doing that well
I wasn't paying attention, I brought it on myself
And I blamed it on the gods that seemed to smile on everybody else
I got so inside out, I didn't know what was real

My fields are empty now
My ground won't take the plow
It's washed down to gravel and stones
It's only good for burying bones

I took the pistol off the wall, somebody hollered, "Put it back,
Sit down Dad before you fall down, you got no earthly use for that."
But I slipped out the kitchen door, saddled up the sway backed mule
Cinched her tight and swung on board, rode off like a drunken fool
I rode right on off the world, just like it never mattered none
There wasn't nothing but me and the hurt, and the biting cold, and the
heft of that gun
In the pocket of a sheepskin coat, moonlight in a madman's eye
For the unfairness of it all, surely something had to die

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He came out in the lantern light
His face in the flash was the last I saw of the world when it was still
right
I didn't watch him fall, I knew I'd hit him good, twice in the chest
without a thought
Turned the mule towards the county seat, like I knew I ought

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Lola comes to visit, there's just nothing I can say
We sit here of an afternoon 'til it's time for her to go away
She rides home on that same mule that brought me to this place
I don't know how she even stands to look upon her Daddy's face

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