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 th e 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 sti ll 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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Best friend I ever had
When you're shooting at a coffee can
A thirty eight don't kick that bad

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