

Black Heart

For Eddie

June 6, 2010/ June 23, 2010
Somerset-Austin

Down in Brouward County about 1983
Playing in a little redneck dive
Rebel yells and Red Man and Nascar on TV
Down there where the Cause was still alive

This good old boy takes the mike, bottle in his hand
Says let me set y'all straight on how it goes
He sings a song of dreams denied, of fury on the land
Of white knights fighting off the crows

Where's *my* amber waves of grain, where's *my* shining sea?
I worked half my life paying other people's dues
I say throw 'em all in a leaky boat, send it out to sea
When it goes down, I won't sing the blues

And then he turns and takes a breath and his voice gets low,
He says today my little girl turned three
And he sings a lullaby brings a tear to every eye
For one small moment we are free

He had a black heart, a black black heart
Scars as deep and gloomy as a cave
He would gladly cut you down in the dead of night
Set a burning cross on your grave

He had a black heart, a black black heart
His last best chances were long gone
But he loved his child, yes he loved his child
With the warm ancient tenderness of dawn

*My brother Eddie was playing in a "little redneck dive" in Florida when he witnessed this shift
from racist fury to paternal tenderness. It took me a quarter century to turn it into a song.*