

The Randall Knife

Guy Clark

My father had a Randall knife
My mother gave it to him
When he went off to WWII
To save us all from ruin
If you've ever held a Randall knife
Then you know my father well
If a better blade was ever made
It was probably forged in hell

My father was a good man
A lawyer by his trade
And only once did I ever see
Him misuse the blade
It almost cut his thumb off
When he took it for a tool
The knife was made for darker things
And you could not bend the rules

He let me take it camping once
On a Boy Scout jamboree
And I broke a half an inch off
Trying to stick it in a tree
I hid it from him for a while
But the knife and he were one
He put it in his bottom drawer
Without a hard word one

There it slept and there it stayed
For twenty some odd years
Sort of like Excalibur
Except waiting for a tear

My father died when I was forty
And I couldn't find a way to cry
Not because I didn't love him
Not because he didn't try
I'd cried for every lesser thing
Whiskey, pain and beauty
But he deserved a better tear
And I was not quite ready

So we took his ashed out to sea
And poured 'em off the stern
And threw the roses in the wake
Of everything we'd learned
When we got back to the house
They asked me what I wanted
Not the lawbooks not the watch
I need the things he's haunted

My hand burned for the Randall knife
There in the bottom drawer
And I found a tear for my father's life
And all that it stood for