

The Bluegrass Widow

Robert Earl Keen

It's been five years come this autumn, she remembers well the day
The day the fever got him, and took him far away
Far away from always knowing that the love they shared was true
Far away the fiddler's bowing, the grass forever blue

It was in the dead of winter when her man first caught the chill
And he said he heard the angels singing "Cabin on the Hill"
Through the springtime he was groaning "The good times are past and gone"
By the summer she was moaning "Old lover please come home"

Now she stands out in the midnight in the moonlight all aglow
She prays to Carter Stanley "Won't you please tell Bill Monroe
Rather be in some dark hollow or some dark deep shady grove
Than to be a bluegrass widow"

I started listening to bluegrass music in Bryan Duckworth's rust red 1970 Ford Maverick.

Had an eight track tape deck and an eight track tape of Bill Monroe's Greatest Hits.

We used to skip second period chemistry and go over to the Shamrock station across the street from the high school and get a case of Texas Pride beer. Charge it on my dad's credit card and get 'em to write it up as oil so dad never knew the difference.

Then we'd ride around and drink Texas Pride, listen to Bill Monroe.

Soon we got to be bluegrass experts.

And we'd stop in another Shamrock station and get another Texas Pride case, drink that and listen to the Stanley Brothers and then we'd go get a tape of

Jim and Jesse and it was on to the Kentucky Colonels and Mack Wiseman and the New Grass Revival, Peter Rowan, and finally I got the brilliant idea one day to take all the greatest bluegrass song titles in the world and string 'em together to make this song right here,

The Bluegrass Widow.

Quite possibly the worst bluegrass song ever written.

I did this in tribute to the Front Porch Boys, which was a bluegrass band I was in in College Station, Texas.

We were a little four piece band, we played weddings and parties and out on the porch and beer joints and one weekend on a handful of cheap amphetamines, we decided to go to Crockett, Texas.

We entered the International Bluegrass Band Competition and took second place.

We could play faster than anybody in the competition.

The other two bands took first and third, respectively.

I met some friends and went off into the night separated from the Front Porch Boys and met back up with them in the cold, gray light of dawn, as the bluegrass songs say.

They were standing underneath a giant pine tree there in Crockett singing the rudest, most grotesque, nastiest bluegrass songs you've ever heard in your life.

I'm talking about the kind of song where not only is the character in the song dead by the end of the song, but he's been dismembered as well.

And the Front Porch Boys stopped and looked up at me just long enough to say, "We're taking bluegrass music where it's never been before.

And we're not taking you with us 'cause you don't have that high and lonesome sound that bluegrass music requires." Well, I'm not one to fight failure.

I packed up my stuff and left.

The Front Porch Boys broke up three days later when they realized I owned th

e PA system.

"Will you miss me when I'm gone?" were his final words to her
"Darlin' think of what you've done," then replied his Knoxville girl
And the leaves had started turning when his mind began to fail
Then he broke down in a breakdown, now she wears a long black veil.

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