

Tom T. Hall, More About John Henry

(The Storytellers and I were doin' a show down in Meridian, Mississippi
And these friends of mine came up
And brought me this real old book about John Henry
And they told me if they let me read this old book I'd probably write a song about it
And they did and I did and I called it More About John Henry)

First of all John Henry was a black man he was born where the sun don't ever shine
He was six feet tall he didn't know his own strength
But he did not swing the hammer all the time
Of course he didn't John Henry had some women on his mind
There was a woman cross the street named Poor Selma
Loved John Henry like a natural man
John Henry quit Poor Selma just like he was quittin' work
He loved that stinger-ree of Julie Anne
And what is it a stinger-ree is somethin' else you understand
There was a man named Stacker Lee in Argenta a little man with a big 44
You know he shot his woman down and took a shot at Poor Selma
But ol' Stacker won't be shootin' anymore
He had to quit it John Henry laid him dead on the floor
John Henry threw Stacker Lee in the river then he said I've got a say so to say
He broke out in a song that was wrote by Blind Leonard
He said Julie Anne I'm singing my say
He said I love you but I do not like your lowdown ways
Well John Henry went to a conjurin' woman said this misery ain't no way to live
Somebody's back door creeping on my pretty Julie Anne
Conjure woman had a say so to give
She said John Henry she said that's just the way things is
Well John Henry went to a hell bustin' man said I'm tormented deep in my soul
Well that hell buster prayed John Henry's sins away
And they tell me that the thunder did roll
Sweet Jesus what a frightenin' sight to behold
From that day on John Henry was a changed man all he did was just work all the time
Well he worked till the muscles in his body gave out
Then he kept right on a workin' in his mind
Don't do it cause a man ain't supposed to work all the time
Julie Anne said John Henry I love you Poor Selma said John Henry you're my man
Ruby said I'm gonna cook ye up some greens and some lean meat
With corn bread in a four foot pan
With lotsa cracklins but John Henry was a diff'rent kinda man
Well they allow that hard work killed John Henry hmm
I'm gonna leave that allowin' up to you hmm
Well was he killed by hard work or was he killed by bad women
Be sure that this ain't happenin' to you
Quit working when your day's work work is through
Cause a man ain't supposed to work all the time
And ain't that just the way the things is
A stinger-ree is somethin' else you understand
Quit working when your your day's work is through God bless you