



Bob Dylan

"Blind Willie McTell"

*The Bootleg Series,
Volumes 1-3*

03/1991

Columbia

Stars above the barren trees

Sam Rasnake

"When I'm gone, and you're on the winter path above the river –
You know the one I mean – box in hand, ready to finish the promise
– You'll have your doubts, I know... And me? I never knew anything,

never laughed, or if I did, my face would go into shock – A relaxed,
steady blank has always been my way – Never learned enough, never
suffered enough – not nearly so – no slave ship rubbed my skin raw,

no single thread of smoke above the Badlands, no corn whiskey cooking
by an icy creek along the Blue Ridge – no way out – no woman at her desk,
head down, hands empty, everything a cracked mirror that's not her own...

It's all my curse – I'm left with all the things I can't unsay, unsee, undo...
There are words you must say – Say it all – Leave nothing out – then listen"

*I'm gazing out the window
of the St. James Hotel
and I know no one can sing the blues
like Blind Willie McTell*

The snow finishes its quilting – No one on the roads, all the houses, dark –
A mist of voice dusts the tree line, the hoot owl watches from her limb
and like an almost remembered story, the long river finds its sea

– after "Blind Willie McTell," Bob Dylan, *The Bootleg Series, vols. 1-3*