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The Complicated Entertainer Travis Belfontaine Tells What Accounts for His Style

by James Whitehead

My mother says he had our pretty name
and was the brightest guy she'd ever met,
Like a shower of stars, and made her laugh.
Corey Belfontaine.

He worked refineries in Baton Rouge,
And so she married him,
Married how so sweetly he could sing
And play the guitar and the saxophone
He'd picked up growing up in Lafayette.

She says for years we were a family
A girl gets on her knees to ask God for.
For years he was a sweet lighthearted man,
And often I remember him that way,—
Playing—Momma smiling on the porch.
We're singing "All Around the Water Tank,"
"Power in the Blood," that type of thing.—
All this before he made the choice to drink,
Or chose to drink too much.

He made some strange decision in his mind
About the possibilities of life
That ruined everything,
Imagined for their marriage
Curious pleasures she found pitiful.
"I swear I loved him and was satisfied,
And thought he was," she said.
He cursed and hit her for her innocence,
Then left for Baton Rouge forever more.

He left the instruments
And never failed to send his money home,
And wrote us letters for about a year,
Friendly letters. He taught me how to pick.
He taught me how to think,—
And I have never touched a living soul
Who didn't want the touch,
And I know a sober night of ecstasy
Is good and not far from the best there is.



Illustration by Scott Cummins

