The Devil You Know

Todd Snider

Helicopters over the house again
We got the projects two or three blocks from here
They pull the kids over for driving while African
And the ones with the warrants always run in fearSo, I sit here, waiting for the coast to clear
Wishing once again I had a gun around here
Turn on the news and what do I hear
Some kid shot the bank up on Gallatin roadRan away from the cops while he was trying to reload
He beat them up to Eastland street on feet
Now, he's probably reloaded and running down my street
Better turn the alarm on and lock myself inHelicopters over the house againSometimes, you rise above it
Sometimes, you sneak below
Somewhere in between believing in Heaven
And facing the Devil you knowPoor kid probably never had a chance to give a fuck
Wouldn't know good luck from a debutant
He's gotta find a way to be Steve McNair or young buck
Or it's tough luck looking for a prison to hauntAnd you can fuck getting any kind of job you want
Unless you really want to work in a fast food restaurant
And who wants to do that? Do you want to do that?
I wouldn't trade that for my crooked hatOr my gang or my gun or my waist full of pagers
For a job deep frying shit, for richer teen agers
If that's where it's at and no one's gonna help
How you gonna blame a man for helping himself?
There's a war going on that the poor can't winHelicopters over the house againSometimes, you rise above it
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Somewhere in between believing in Heaven
And facing the Devil you knowBlack and white cops shining lights in the bushes
Can't see how this kid is gonna get very far
Unless he finds a way to make it back over to Barry street
And he can't do that unless he steals a carMan, the way things are, they just don't seem right
All the white people talking 'bout the hope and the light
There ain't no hope in Sam Levy just guns and drugs
We ain't building bridges, we're just training thugsThen I hear a terrifying kick at my back door
And in comes this kid, I say, Hey I've seen this kid before
I see him all the time at that bar on woodland street
Now, he's bleeding in my kitchen, tracking mud off his feetAnd he's looking at me like I'll either help him or die
Until he sees in my eyes that I'm on his side
I hand him my keys, I say, you better move fast
There's a J in the ashtray and plenty of gasHe throws me the cash and says I'll be back for this

I say, yeah, well, don't be surprised if there's a little bit of it missing
His gold teeth glistened with a big old grin
He said we'll talk about that when I see you againHe shook my hand, I shook his back
I felt like I was about to have a heart attack
Until he finally drove away, I thought Goddamn"Helicopters over the house againSometimes, you rise above it
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And facing the devil you knowFacing the devil you know

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