Bonita And Bill Butler

Alison Krauss

I grew up in the scantling yards of Wheeling West Virginia
A wheelhouse cub looking for an open door
In the packet ways a Sweeney wed the keel of my Bonita
Just two months from her timbers til she moored
I paid the fare in billet on her maiden voyage to Vicksburg
And talked my way to hand the tiller on the course
In her planks I carved a notch and sealed the vow "Be my Bonita"
And her dowry was my life between the shores
I was born with rouging ways, and she steered me like a woman
From the port calls and the bawds that lead me stray
The calliope serenades, made the old towns come running
And the boys would gamble shards to pull her chains
The striker's boast would fain me loss, about the wrecks the shoals were keeping
And how the old girl's got poor Billy's ransom saved

On the lake at Bistineau, she set the wharf at Dixie
With a thousand bales of cotton on her main
As the great raft disappeared, the watermark went sinking
And she was stuck right hard, a listing on the bank
With the furnace still a blaze, I stood my last upon her
Then climbed the prow and took a landsman's trade
"A derelict now Milady" said the watch log I've concorded
"Have the bosun sound us eight bells for the change"
Cause I was born with rouging ways, and she steered me like a woman
From the port calls and the bawds that lead me stray
The calliope serenades, made the old towns come running
And the boys would gamble shards to pull her chains
And I would take to wider walks, so the gin I stopped a drinking
At three scores aloft this crooked frame
The striker's boast would fain me loss, about the wrecks the shoals were keeping
And how the old girl's got poor Billy's ransom saved

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