**Ghazal for Tennessee**

There is a sharp complexity with the state of Tennessee
Stark beauty and brutality coexist in Tennessee

This red clay land was settled by the Chickasaw and Cherokee
Before Bean, Jackson, or Crockett ever dreamed of Tennessee

Smoky Mountains once towered even more majestically
This stubborn soil was taken on tear-soaked trails in Tennessee

The daffodils and dogwoods declare spring triumphantly
Farm fields, tilled by stolen slaves, swallow their graves in Tennessee

We’ll bake casseroles to console you, share our Mam-maw’s recipe
When your loved ones pass from bullets carried here in Tennessee

Country music and Jack Daniel’s fill the bars with revelry
But sparkling queens creating scenes are shut down in Tennessee

There’s a distorted marriage of politics and Christianity
We love our neighbour if they’re white and straight in Tennessee

Dolly Parton started her Imagination Library
Now these free books help young readers beyond just Tennessee

But if you read suspicious books on critical race theory
History’s obscene realities get banned in Tennessee

I’ve never known more kindness nor a greater generosity
But I also know about the white cape and hood of Tennessee

This hatred of the other isn’t just past history

Recently Neo-Nazis waved swastikas in Tennessee

How can we stand this deep hypocrisy of Tennessee?
How can we heal our blood-soaked land and stay in Tennessee?