

Cherokee Bend

His father was a man who could never understand
the shame on the red man's face
so they lived in the hills and they never came down
but to trade in the white man's place

Early in the spring when the snow had disappeared
they came down with a bag of skins
in the fall of the year of nineteen-ten
daddy died by the rope down in Cherokee Bend

Daddy didn't like what the white man said
'bout the dirty little kid at his side
Daddy didn't like what the white man did
nor the deal or the way that he lied

there was blood on the floor of the government store
when the men took his daddy away
and the boy stayed back when he came to his end
then he ran like the wind from Cherokee Bend

Now the mother was alone and the winter was at hand
and she prayed to her spirit kin
it was warm in the lodge in the Kentucky hills
on the day when the boy came in

then a blizzard came down and it covered up the door
'til they thought that it never would end
and he told her the tale of the terrible affair
in the government store down in Cherokee Bend

Daddy didn't like what the white man said
'bout the dirty little kid at his side
Daddy didn't like what the white man did
nor the deal or the way that he lied

for three long days and three long nights
they wept and they mourned and then
the returned to her work and her weaving
and they tried to forget about Cherokee Bend

now the boy wasn't big but he hunted what he could
and they lived for a time that way
but the food ran low and the meat went bad
and she said to the boy one day

"I'm leavin' tonight and I never will return
from the land of my spirit kin
you must take what you need and trade what you can
for a red man's grave down in Cherokee Bend"

it wasn't very long 'til she closed her eyes
and he wrapped her in a robe
he found her a place on the side of the hill
and he buried her in the snow

early in the spring he was seen coming down
with his load lookin' ragged and thin
not a year'd gone by when he stood again
in the government store down in Cherokee Bend

He was ten years tall and a redskin too
so he hadn't much face to save
and the men sat around and they laughed and they clowned
at the talk of a criminal's grave

the a man from the east didn't smile when he said
"you're the son of that indian scum
if you value you hide then you'd better abide
by the white man's rules here in Cherokee Bend"

Daddy didn't like what the white man said
'bout the dirty little kid at his side
Daddy didn't like what the white man did
nor the deal or the way that he lied

Then he spit on the floor of the government store
and it served him to no good end
at the close of the day they had taken him away
to the white man's school down in Cherokee Bend

'bin twenty-one years since the boy disappeared
wher he ran to nobody knows
but they say he fell in with a man named Jim
and he rides in the rodeo

they say he returns all alone to a place
hidden deep in a Kentucky glen
and it's pretty well known who hauled up the stone
to the grave on the hill above Cherokee Bend

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there was blood on the floor of the government store
when the men took his daddy away
it was nineteen-ten and they never had a friend
when he died by the rope down at Cherokee Bend

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