Cherokee Bend

Gordon Lightfoot

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

It was early in the spring when the snow had disappeared They came down with a bag of skins
In the fall of the year of 1910
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
But the boy stayed back till he come to his end
And he run 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 Till 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

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For three long days and three long nights
They wept and they mourned and then
She returned to her work and her weavin'
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 run low and the meat went bad And she said to the boy one day

I'm leaving 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 till 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 in the town With his load looking ragged and thin

Not a year had gone by till he stood once 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

Then the man from the east didn't smile when he said You're the son of that Indian scum If you value your hide then you 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

And 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 at Cherokee Bend

It's been 21 years since the boy disappeared Where he run to, nobody knows
But they say he fell in with a man named Jim
And he rides in the rodeos

And they say he returns all alone to a place Hidden deep in the 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 1910 and they never had a friend
When he died by the rope down at Cherokee Bend

It was 1910 and they never had a friend When he died by the rope down at Cherokee Bend