Ode to Billy Joe

Joe Tex

It was the third of June, another sleepy, dusty Delta day
I was out choppin' cotton and my brother was balin' hay
And at dinner time we stopped and walked back to the house to eat
And Mama hollered out the back door "y'all remember to wipe your feet"
And then she said "I got some news this mornin' from Choctaw Ridge"
"This morning Billie Joe MacAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge"

And Papa said to Mama as he passed around the blackeyed peas
"Well, Billie Joe never had a lick of sense, woman, pass me the biscuits, please"
"There's five more acres in the lower forty I've got to plow"
And Mama said it was ashame about Billie Joe, anyhow
Seems like nothin' ever comes to no good up on Choctaw Ridge
And now this Billie Joe MacAllister's jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge

And Brother said he recollected when he and Tom and Billie Joe
Put a frog down my back at the Carroll County picture show
And wasn't I talkin' to him after church last Sunday night?
"I'll have another piece of apple pie, you know it don't seem right"
"I saw him yesterday at the sawmill standing up on Choctaw Ridge"
"And now you tell me he did act the fool and jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge"

And Mama said "Child, what's happened to your appetite?"
"I've been cookin' all morning and you haven't touched a single bite"
"That nice young preacher, Brother Taylor, dropped by today"
"Said he'd be pleased to have dinner on Sunday, oh, by the way"
"He said he saw a boy that looked a lot like you up on Choctaw Ridge"
"And he and Billie Joe was throwing somethin' off the Tallahatchie Bridge"

A year has come 'n' gone since we heard the news 'bout Billie Joe
And Brother married Becky Thompson, they bought a store in Tupelo
There was a virus going 'round, Papa caught it and he died last Spring
Now Mama sits around and doesn't seem to wanna do much of anything

Me, I spend a lot of time pickin' flowers up on Choctaw Ridge

And drop them into the muddy water off the Tallahatchie Bridge
Billy Joe, what did you do...