

# Ballad of the Harp Weaver

Johnny Cash

Son said my mother when I was knee high  
You need of clothes to cover you and not a rag have I  
There's nothing in the house to make a boy's britches  
Nor shears to cut a cloth with nor thread to take stitches  
There's nothing in the house but a leaf end of rye  
And the harp with a with the woman's head nobody will by and she began to cry  
That was in the early fall and when came the late fall  
Son she said the sight of you makes your mother's blood crawl  
Little skinny shoulder blades stickin' through your clothes  
And where you get a jacket from God above knows  
It's lucky for me lad your daddy's in the ground  
And can't see the way I let his son go around and she made a queer sound  
That was in the late fall when the winter came  
I'd not a pair of bridges nor a shirt to my name  
I couldn't go to school or out of doors to play  
And all the other little boys passed our way  
Son said my mother come climb into my lap  
And I'll chafe your little knees while you take a nap  
And oh but we were silly for half an hour or more  
Me with my long legs draggin' on the floor  
I rocked rocked rocked to a mother goose rhyme  
Oh but we were happy for half an hour's time  
But there was I a great boy and what would folks say  
To hear my mother singin' me to sleep all day in such a daft way  
Men say the winter was bad that year fuel was scarce and food was dear  
A wind with a wolf's head howled about our door  
And we burned up the chairs and sat upon the floor  
All that was left us was a chair we couldn't break  
And the harp with the woman's head nobody would take for song or pity sake  
The night before Christmas I cried with the cold  
I cried myself to sleep like a two year old  
And in the deep night I felt my mother rise  
And stare down upon me with love in her eyes  
I saw my mother sitting on the one good chair  
A light falling on her face from I couldn't tell where  
Looking nineteen and not a day older  
And the harp with the woman's head leaned against her shoulder  
Her thin fingers moving in the thin tall strings  
Were weave weave weaving wonderful things  
Many bright threads from where I couldn't see  
Were running through the harp strings rapidly  
And gold threads whistlin' through my mother's hands  
I saw the web grow and the pattern expand  
She wove a child's jacket and when it was done  
She laid it on the floor and wove another one  
She wove a red cloak so regal to see  
She's made it for a king's son I said and not for me but I knew it was for me  
She wove a pair of bridges and quicker than that  
She wove a pair of boots a little cocked hat  
She wove a pair of mittens she wove a little blouse  
She wove all night in the still cold house  
She sang as she worked and the harp strings spoke  
But her voice never faltered and the thread never broke  
But when I awoke there sat my mother  
With the harp against her shoulder lookin' nineteen and not a day older

A smile about her lips and a light about her head  
And her hands in the harp strings frozen dead  
And piled up beside her toppling to the skies  
Were the clothes of a king's son just my size