

A Train Robbery

Levon Helm

The foreman touched the cold steel lines
The rail bed was frozen with ice
In the distance an engine was keeping good time
The steam whistle moaned just twice

Down in the cut past the old Tressel bridge
Twelve fine horses stood
Masked men shivered in the cold on the ridge
Not far from the Glendale woods

The brass lamp shone from the swaying train
When the driver saw the red light
Her iron brakes sparked like silver rain
And the metals screamed through the night

The baggage man peered out to look for the fault
When fear froze up his heart
He was staring down the barrel of an army colt
That threatened to tear him apart

We will burn your train to cinders
So throw the money on down
Open up your damned express car
And jump down to the ground

But we won't touch that old pullman
She's southern and they claim
They ain't offer no reward
For Frank and Jesse James
Frank and Jesse James

In long soldier's coats frayed with the years
Quickly they scrambled aboard
Men were a sweatin' and the women shed tears
And a preacher prayed to the Lord

When they opened the safe there was nothing for them
So they strode down through the train
What a miserable sight these desperate men
Robbin' old folks for their gold watch chains

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Now some say the devil had taken his soul
Some say his spirit survived
But we all know he was nothin' but a Missouri farm boy
Just fighting to stay alive

High above that railroad bed
On a ridge where the pines grow tall
If you listen to the wind, there's a ghost of a chance
You can still hear ol' Jesse call

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