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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