

Bobbie Gentry

"Ode to Billie Joe"

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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"
"Today Billy Joe MacAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie
Bridge"

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

'n' 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-a apple pie, you know it don't
seem right"

"I saw him at the sawmill yesterday on Choctaw Ridge"
"And now ya tell me Billie Joe's jumped off the
Tallahatchie Bridge"

'n' Mama said to me "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 girl that looked a lot like you up on Choctaw Ridge"

"And she and Billy Joe was throwing somethin' off the Tallahatchie Bridge"

A year has come 'n' gone since we heard the news 'bout Billy Joe

'n' Brother married Becky Thompson, they bought a store in Tupelo

There was a virus going 'round, Papa caught it and he died last Spring

And now Mama doesn't seem to wanna do much of anything

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

And drop them into the muddy water off the Tallahatchie Bridge

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