

Johnny Burnette

"The Talking Leaves"

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Sequoia's winters were sixteen silent tongue spirit
clean

He walked at his father's side

Across the smoking battle ground where red and white
men lay all around

So many here had died

The wind had scattered around snow white leaves upon
the ground

Not leaves like leaves from trees

Sequoia said what can this be what's the strange thing
here I see

From where come leaves like these

Sequoia turned to his father's eyes and he said father
you're wise

From where come such snow white leaves

With such strange marks upon these squares

Not even the wise owl could put them there

So strange these snow white leaves

His father shielding his concern resenting the
knowledge Sequoia yearned

Crumbled the snow white leaves

He said when I explain then it's done these are talking
leaves my son

The white men's talking leaves

The white man takes a berry of black and red

And an eagle's feather from the eagle's bed

And he makes bird track marks

And the marks on the leaves they say carry messages
to his brother far away

And his brother knows what's in his heart

They see these marks and they understand the truth in
the heart of the far off man

The enemies can't hear them

Said Sequoia's father son they weave bad medicine on
these talking leaves

Leave such things to them

Then Sequoia walking lightly followed his father quietly
but so amazed was he

If the white man talks on leaves why not the Cherokee

Vanished from his father's face Sequoia went from
place to place

But he could not forget

Year after year he worked on and on till finally he cut
into stone

The Cherokee alphabet

Sequoia's hair by now was white his eyes began to lose
their light

But he taught all who would believe

That the Indian's thoughts could be written down

Just as the white men's there on the ground and he left
us these talking leaves

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