

Johnny Cash

"The Ballad Of The Harpweaver"

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Once my mother told me when I was knee-high
Son, you'll need clothes this winter and not a rag have I
There's not a thing in this house to make a boy's
breeches
I don't even have scissors for the cloth or thread for the
stitches

There's nothing in this house but a half a loaf of rye
And that old family harp of our's that no one will buy
And she started to cry
I guess it's lucky for me that your daddy's in the
ground
And can't see the way I let his baby go around

Well that was in the late fall and when winter-time came
I didn't have a pair of breeches or a shirt to my name
But my mother said Son come climb on my lap
And I'll warm those skinny little legs while you take a
nap
And we'd rock back and forth to a Mother Goose rhyme
And boy we were happy for about an hour's time

I've heard it said that that year the winter was very bad
I know we sat on the floor because we burned what
chairs we had
Except for one chair that Mother couldn't break
And that old family harp of our's that no one would take
We couldn't give it away for pity's sake

Well one night I was sick with a cold and my mother
sang me to sleep
And we she laid me on the floor I thought I heard her
weep
But then I saw her sitting in that one good chair
And the light shinning on her from, I couldn't tell where
But she looked eighteen years old and not a day older
And there was that old harp leaning on her shoulder

Well she began to play that harp and her hands moved
rapidly
Then threads ran thru the harp strings from

somewhere I couldn't see
Then all colored threads began to glide right thru my
mother's hands
I saw the thread turn into cloth and I watched the cloth
expand

And she wove a boy's jacket and when it was done
She laid it on the floor and wove another one
She wove a long red coat and what a sight to see
That coat's for a king I said it couldn't be for me

She wove a pair of breeches and quicker than that
She wove a pair of boots and a little woolen hat
She wove a pair of mittens she wove a little blouse
She wove all night long in that cold baren house

And she sang while 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 that harp
against her shoulder
Lookin' eighteen years old and not a day older
A smile on her lips and a light around her head
But her hands were on the harp stings...frozen dead

But on the floor beside her, piled six feet high
Were clothes good enough for a king, just my size

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