

June Tabor

"Joseph Cross"

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There's word from the café
That the old man's ailing
His eyes are pailin'
And the weather took his hands
They say the ring on his finger
Was shaped from a bone
From some white man in Missouri
That spilled whiskey on his wife

[Chorus]

He has traveled in a sacred circle
And he has traveled on a white man's train
He's killed for hunger his buffalo brother
He's killed for anger and a white man's name

His name was Joseph Cross
And he was raised by the mission
Just one of a hundred Indian boys
That wouldn't tie his shoes
He cried the night his grandpa died
And told him in a vision
"Stay close to the ways of the rattlesnake
Stay close to the ways of the grizzly."

[Repeat chorus]

In the 1919
Chill of December
The bear and the rattler
Coil sleepin' hardly breathin'
It's a penny to the kitchen boy
To run get sister Lydia
"Now you tell her that old Indian
Is sleepin', hardly breathin'."

[Repeat chorus]

Someone said it just weren't right
To give him a white man's funeral.
Someone said they'd just as soon as not
Float him on down the river

But no one touched the ring
And no one said a thing about his chest
Where it looked like a bear had ripped him
And a rattler kissed his cheek.

[Repeat chorus]

Because... [repeat second verse]

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