

Decemberists, The

"My Mother Was a Chinese Trapeze Artist"

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My mother was a Chinese trapeze artist
In pre-war Paris
Smuggling bombs for the underground.
And she met my father
At a fete in Aix-en-Provence.
He was disguised as a Russian cadet
in the employ of the Axis.
And there in the half-light
Of the provincial midnight
To a lone concertina
They drank in cantinas
And toasted to Edith Piaf
And the fall of the Reich.

My sister was born in a hovel in Burgundy
And left for the cattle
But later was found by a communist
Who'd deserted his ranks
To follow his dream
To start up a punk rock band in South Carolina.
I get letters sometimes.
They bought a plantation
She weeds the tobacco
He offends the nation
And they write, "Don't be a stranger, y'hear."
"Sincerely, your sister."

So my parents had me
To the disgust of the prostitutes
On a bed in a brothel.
Surprisingly raised with tender care
'Til the money got tight
And they bet me away
To a blind brigadier in a game
Of high stakes canasta.
But he made me a sailor
On his brigadier ship fleet.
I know every yardarm
From main mast to jib sheet.
But sometimes I long to be landlocked
And to work in a bakery.

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