

The Ballad of Johnny Hooke

Barney Bentall

Johnny Hooke went ridin' in a cold and snowy land.
He looked up to the mountains, 'tis here I'll make my stand.
He cut some logs, and he built a cabin, tried to keep his horse alive,
But when the creeks had started flowin' again only Johnny did survive.

He had a girl to whom he was bethrothed, lived in Tilsonburg,
When the Dear John came in '44 Johnny didn't say a word.
His fellow soldiers gathered and they hung their heads in shame,
Johnny wasn't even sure he could recall her name.

Ohhh, dee oh, oh dee oh dee ay
oh dee oh dee oh dee oh dee ay

He didn't homestead where the farmers had, with the soul of a mountain man.
He'd seen too much killing and his veins were filled with sand.
The Cariboo was full of game, and folks leave you alone.
One more walking wounded with no place to call home.

A copper skinned Shuswap maiden by the name of Clarabelle,
moved into his 10 by 10, tanned the hides that he did sell.
She bore him four strong children that carried her piercing eyes,
But the fifth was born in a winter storm and Clarabelle up and died.

[chorus]

[instrumental]

Johnny Hooke, he carried on, for he knew this was his fate,
The five children took up the ranchin' work and stayed out of his way.
They came of age and moved away to cities across the land,
One became a per-fesser and one played in a band.

Busted up and broken down, livin' in a local motel.
The younger kids want to keep the ranch, but the others chose to sell.
Johnny died last winter in a veterans' nursing home,
Callin' out for Clarabelle, a crazy end I know.

[chorus]

[chorus]

This spring a pretty woman come up drivin' through the snow,
Said our old house was where she'd lived a life or two ago.
We saddled up two horses, spurred them up the Indian trail,
Lookin for the old homestead, her face was set and pale.

I never knew my mother, but her scant treasures I do now hold,
Took them out of a dumpster bin, round back of the old folks home.
There was a note inside sayin' if you read this, go and find the stones,
I fear I may not last the year, Johnny knows where to lay my bones.

[chorus]

[chorus]

[instr]

A faint path appeared to our left, and then faded in and out.
Sure enough we came upon the ruins, broken down by time.
Found the lichen covered rocks and a bleached-out leanin' plank.
The daughter lay down and beat it back and offered a prayer of thanks.

This land is filled with stories of the living and the dead.
It never hurts to listen to what you're hearing and what's been said.
If you take a look you see Johnny Hooke ridin' through an altered land,
Callin' out for Clarabelle and reachin' for her hand.

[instr]

[chorus]

[chorus]

[chorus, slowing down]

Uncertain of two phrases:

... a crazy end I know.
... then faded in and out.

Lyrics Submitted by Dale Hagglund

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