

# Ode to Billy Joe

Patricia Barber

It was the third of June  
Another sleepy, dusty Delta day  
I was out choppin' cotton  
And my brother was balin' hay  
At dinner time we stopped  
Walked back to the house to eat  
Mama hollered out the back door  
"Y'all remember to wipe your feet"  
Then she said, "I got some news  
This mornin' from Choctaw Ridge"  
"Today Billy Joe Mac Allister  
Jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge"  
Papa said to Mama as he passed  
Around the black eyed peas  
"Well, Billy Joe never had a lick of sense  
Pass the biscuits, please"  
"There's five more acres  
In the lower forty I've got to plow"  
Mama said it was shame  
About Billy Joe, anyhow  
Seems like nothin' ever comes  
To no good up on Choctaw Ridge  
And now Billy Joe Mac Allister's  
Jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge  
Mama said to me  
"Child, what's happened to your appetite?  
I've been cookin' all mornin'  
And you haven't touched a single bite"  
"That nice young preacher  
Brother Taylor, dropped by today  
Said he'd be pleased to have a dinner  
On Sunday, oh, by the way"  
"He said he saw a girl that looked a lot  
Like you up on Choctaw Ridge"  
"And she and Billy Joe were throwing  
Somethin' off the Tallahatchie Bridge"  
Well, a year has come 'n' gone  
Since we heard the news about Billy Joe  
Brother married Becky Thompson  
Bought a store in Tupelo  
There was a virus going 'round  
Papa caught it and he died last Spring  
Now Mama doesn't seem  
To wanna do much of anything  
And me, I spend a lot of time  
Pickin' flowers up on Choctaw Ridge  
And drop them into the muddy water  
Off the Tallahatchie Bridge

Songwriters

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