

"A Boy Named Sue"

Johnny Cash 1969

Well, my daddy left home when I was three
And he didn't leave much to ma and me
Just this old guitar and an empty bottle of booze.
Now, I don't blame him cause he run and hid
But the meanest thing that he ever did
Was before he left, he went and named me "Sue."

Well, he must o' thought that it was quite a joke
And it got a lot a laughs from a' lots of folk,
It seems I had to fight my whole life through.
Some gal would giggle and I'd get red
And some guy'd laugh and I'd bust his head,
I tell ya, life ain't easy for a boy named "Sue."

Well, I grew up quick and I grew up mean,
My fist got hard and my wits got keen,
I'd roam from town to town to hide my shame.
But I made me a vow to the moon and stars
That I'd search the honky-tonks and bars
And kill that man who give me that awful name.

Well, it was Gatlinburg in mid-July
And I'd just hit town and my throat was dry,
I thought I'd stop and have myself a brew.
At an old saloon on a street of mud,
There at a table, dealin' stud,
Sat the dirty, mangy dog that named me "Sue."

Well, I knew that snake was my own sweet dad
From a worn-out picture that my mother'd had,
And I knew that scar on his cheek and his evil eye.
He was big and bent and gray and old,
And I looked at him and my blood ran cold
And I said: "My name is 'Sue!' How do you do!
Now you gonna die!!"

Well, I hit him hard right between the eyes
And he went down, but to my surprise,
He come up with a knife and cut off a piece of my ear.
But I busted a chair right across his teeth
And we crashed through the wall and into the street
Kickin' and a' gouging in the mud and the blood and the beer.

I tell ya, I've fought tougher men
But I really can't remember when,
He kicked like a mule and he bit like a crocodile.
I heard him laugh and then I heard him cuss,
He went for his gun and I pulled mine first,
He stood there lookin' at me and I saw him smile.

And he said: "Son, this world is rough
And if a man's gonna make it, he's gotta be tough
And I know I wouldn't be there to help you along.
So I give ya that name and I said goodbye
I knew you'd have to get tough or die
And it's the name that helped to make you strong."

He said: "Now you just fought one hell of a fight
And I know you hate me, and you got the right
To kill me now, and I wouldn't blame ya if you do.
But ya oughta thank me, before I die,
For the gravel in ya guts and the spit in ya eye
Cause I'm the son-of-a-bitch that named you "Sue.""

I got all choked up and I threw down my gun
And I called him my pa, and he called me his son,
And I come away with a different point of view.
And I think about him, now and then,
Every time I try and every time I win,
And if I ever have a son, I think I'm gonna name him
Bill or George! Anything damn thing but Sue!