

The Ballad of Almighty Voice

Am G Am C Am

Come all of you Ca-na-di-ans that live both wild and free, that

Am C G Em

fear no man's au-thor-i-ty, come lis-ten un-to me; I'll

Am G Em

sing you of a red-skin brave, Al-might-y Voice by name, Who

F C G Am

shot and killed five moun-ted police up-on the lone-some plains.

Come all of you Canadians that live both wild and free,
That fear no man's authority, come listen unto me;
I'll sing you of a redskin brave, Almighty Voice by name,
Who shot and killed five mounted police upon the lonesome plains.

In the cattle town of Duck Lake, the year of 'ninety eight,
Almighty Voice arrested was for killing of a stray,
And though he was fast manacled and in a guardroom placed
No chains could hold his spirit bold, that night he did escape.

He headed for the tribal lands, nearby Fort-a-la-Corne,
Across the wind-stripped prairie, through the first snows of the Fall;
He left an easy trail for Serjeant Colebrook in pursuit:
"Surrender now, Almighty Voice, surrender or I'll shoot!"

"I never will surrender", Almighty Voice did cry,
"But you must turn around your mount or else prepare to die!"
Yet clutching a revolver the serjeant he pressed forward
'Til a bullet cut him through the neck and blew him from his horse.

The charge was now cold murder, and a manhunt was begun.
They searched him high, they searched him low throughout Saskatchewan;
And though five thousand in reward was posted for his hide,
Almighty Voice could not be traced no matter how they tried.

Through eighteen weary months of search, the mounties knew it well,
Beneath their very noses the outlaw was concealed;
He never parted from his tribe nor left their hunting ground,
And despite all threats and bribery, no Judas could be found.

Until one day he dropped his guard, when with a trusty friend
In search of the buffalo he rode upon the plain;
A Metis rancher passed him by and recognised the face,
And soon the Duck Lake countryside was swarming with police.

The outlaw was pursued into the Minichinas hills,
And the order it was given: "No mercy, shoot to kill."
Almighty Voice took cover in a little grove of trees
When a dozen men closed in on him and cut off all retreat.

The Mounties they were hungry for glory and for fame;
 Instead of playing a waiting game, the battle cry was raised;
 And as they started to attack, Almighty Voice took aim;
 Before the charge had moved one yard, four mounted police lay slain.

From Prince Albert they brought cannons overnight by special train.
 From barracks in Regina came a further hundred men.
 Inspector John B. Allan swore there'd be no more mistakes;
 The Mounties' reputation for success was now at stake.

By dawn a crowd had gathered 'round to witness the events;
 When trained upon that copse of trees the cannonade commenced.
 For half an hour and more the shells they screamed and guns they roared,
 Till at last it all fell silent and the smoke began to clear.

The Mounties cautiously advanced towards the blighted trees;
 Fearing further sniper fire they crawled on hands and knees.
 But everything was stillness, from the grove came not a sound;
 The redskin's mighty body lay all shattered on the ground.

So come all of you Canadians and listen while I sing,
 The justice that you meet will match the colour of your skin.
 There's one law for the white man, another for the red;
 Now on the cold Saskatchewan plain there's six men lying dead.

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There is an unfortunate lack of out-law ballads from the Canadian west. Unable to find any, I ended up writing one. The story of "Almighty Voice" came from T.W. Paterson's paperback *Outlaws of Western Canada*—a fascinating collection, composed in a bold and naive style, itself a western tradition. I have taken the liberty of simplifying a few minor details and set the account to a 'come-all-ye' tune of my own.

Tony Montague



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