

Red Wing

(a.k.a. "Redwing" or "Indian Maid")

Words & Music:
Traditional

Per Oscar Brand, this was originally a Canadian tune that dates from ca. 1878. It became a square dance tune. Words were added, then revised in both bawdy and non-bawdy ways. When Brand taught his version of "Red Wing" to Woody Guthrie in 1941 and Woody used the tune to pen "Union Maid". Thurland Chattaway (words) & Kerry Mills (music) laid claim to it in 1907, but, chances are, they were just the first to copyright it.

1. Thurland Chattaway's "original" "Redwing" version:

A D A
There once was an Indian maid, a shy little prairie maid.
D A B7 E
Who sang away, a love song gay while on the prairie she whiled away the day.
[alt: Who sang a lay, a love song gay, as o'er the plains she'd while away the day.]
A D A
She loved a warrior bold, this shy, little maid of old.
D A E A
But, brave & gay, he rode one day to a battle far away.

CHORUS:

D A
Now, the moon shines tonight on pretty Redwing.
E A
The breeze is sighing, the night bird's crying
D A
For a far, far away her brave is dying,
[alt: For afar, 'neath his star, her brave is sleeping,]
E A
And Red Wings's crying her heart away.
[alt: "While Redwing's weeping her heart away."]

She watched for him day and night, she kept all the campfires bright.
And under the sky each night she would lie & dream about his coming by & by.
But, when all the braves returned, the heart of Redwing yearned.
For far, far away, her warrior gay, fell bravely in the fray.

CHORUS:

During or After World War I, this chorus was sometimes appended to it:

Oh, the moon shines down tonight on Charlie Chaplin.
[alt: Oh, the sun shines bright on Charlie Chaplin.]
His boots are crackling from want of blackening
And his long baggy trousers they need mending,
Before they send him to the Dardanelles.

2. Oscar Brand's "Red Wing" version:

There once was an Indian maid who always was afraid
That some buckaroo would make it up her cou *[alt: flue]*
As she lay sleeping in the [Indian] shade.
She had an idea grand: she filled it up with sand.
And no buckaroo would get into her cou
And reach the promised land.

CHORUS:

Oh, the Moon shines down on pretty Red Wing
As she lay sleeping, a cowboy creeping
With his one good eye he was a-peeping
He hoped to reach the promised land.

Now, he was a cowboy wise and got upon her thighs;
With an old rubber boot on the end of his toot
He made poor Red Wing open up her eyes.
But, once she came to life, she grabbed her Bowie knife.
With one quick pass, this Indian lass shortened his love life.

CHORUS:

Oh, the Moon shines down on pretty Red Wing
As she lay sleeping, her trophy keeping.
[alt: As she lay snoring, her catch adoring.]
And, no more do the boys come whoring.
[alt: And no longer do the boys try scoring.]
And Red Wing's happy all her life!

3. Not Oscar Brand, but sadly attributed to him:

There once was an Indian maid who always was afraid
That some buckaroo would fly around and fool
While she lay sleeping in the shade.
She had an idea grand: she filled it up with sand.
To keep the boys from forbidden joys
In Red Wing's promised land.

CHORUS:

Oh, the Moon shines down on pretty Red Wing
As she lay sleeping, this buck come creeping
With his one good eye he was a-peeping
He hoped to reach the promised land.

He was an Indian wise, he reached for Red Wing's thighs;
With an old rubber boot on the end of his toot
He made poor Red Wing open up her eyes.
When she came to life, she grabbed her Bowie knife.
It flashed in the sky as she let it fly & shortened his love life.

CHORUS: *[new words]*

Oh, the clouds go floating over Red Wing
As she lays snoring; her life is boring.
Why, she'd even welcome Hermann Goering
Into the pleasure of her promised land.

ALT. FINAL CHORUS:

Oh, the clouds go floating over Red Wing
As she lays snoring, her knife adoring.
For, no longer do the braves come whoring.
They won't pay the price for the promised land.

This one often has this dated, guy-centric, "lie back & enjoy it" final verse tacked on:

So, girls if you wanna be wise, put away those knives.
Boys like to pay for a fling in the hay
But they don't wanna pay for the rest of their lives.
Mind what your mamma said, if you're lying in your bed
If you can't obey, don't reach for a blade
Have a hell of a time instead.

4. Another bawdy version:

There once was an Indian maid who always was afraid
Of anyone who might stick it up her flue as she lay in the shade.
She had an idea so grand, she filled her flue with sand.
So, that anyone who might stick it up her flue
Would never reach the promised land.

CHORUS:

And the moon shone bright on little Red Wing.
As she lay sleeping, there came a-creeping
A handsome cowboy with eyes a-peeping
Around the flip-flap of Red Wing's tepee.

Red Wing sprang to life, she grabbed a Bowie knife.
With a backhand flick she severed his (*wonder what rhymes with 'flick'?*)
And blighted his sexual life.

CHORUS:

And the moon shines bright on little Red Wing.
And in the morning, there hung a warning.
A pair of cowboy's balls adorning
The flip-flap of Red Wing's tepee.

5. The '50s "Rock & Roll version: Oy...

There once was an Indian maid, a pretty little Indian maid
Who heard one day her radio play & the rock & roll just stole her heart away.
So, now every single night, all around her campfire bright,
All the braves, they yearn to take their turn & dance to their heart's delight.

CHORUS:

Rock, rock tonight with rockin' Red Wing.
While the tom tom's wailing, her feet are sailing
Rock, rock tonight with rockin' Red Wing.
Little Indian maiden, loves to rock and roll.

Her father, Chief Standing Bear, stands with a feather in his hair
And he taps his feet to the rock & roll beat
And he says: "Redwing's sure dancing mighty neat."
She danced up a prairie storm, just to keep her wigwam warm.
And her little brother Max bought a new tenor sax & man, can he blow that horn!

CHORUS: