

Woody Guthrie, East Texas Red

Down in the scrub oak timber of the Southeast Texas Gulf
There used to ride a brakeman and a brakeman double tough
He worked the town of Kilgore and Longview nine miles down
Us trav'lers called him East Texas Red the meanest bull around.

I rode by night and by broad daylight in wind and snow and sun
I always seen little East Texas Red sporting his smooth running gun
The tale got switched down the stems and main and everybody said
The meanest man on the shiny rails was little East Texas Red.

It was early in the morning and along towards nine or ten
A couple of boys on the hunt of a job stood in the blizzard wind
Hungry and cold they knocked on the doors of the working folks around
For a piece of meat and a spud or two to boil a stew around.

Red he come down the cinder dump and he flagged the number two
He kicked their bucket over a bush and he dumped out all their stew
A traveler said, Mister East Texas Red you better get everything fixed
'Cause you're gonna ride your little train just one year from today.

Red he laughed as he clumb the bank and swung aside of a wheeler
The boys caught a tanker to Seminole and west to Amarillo
They struck them a job of oil field work and followed a pipe line down
It took them lots of places till the year had rolled around.

On one cold and wintery day they hooked them a Gulf bound train
They shivered and shook with dough in their clothes to see Kilgore again
Over hills of sand and hard froze roads where the cotton wagons roll
On past the town of Kilgore and on to old Longview.

With their warm suits of clothes and overcoats they walk into a store
They pay the man for some meat and stuff to fix a stew once more
The ties they walk back past the yards till they come to the same old spot
Where East Texas Red just a year ago had dumped their last stew pot.

The smoke of their fire went higher and higher a man come down the line
He ducked his head in the blizzard wind and waved old number nine
He walked off down the cinder dump till he come to the same old spot
And there was the same three men again around that same little pot.

Red went to his knees and he hollered,
Please don't pull that trigger on me.
I did not get my business fixed but he did not get his say
A gun wheeled out of an overcoat and it played the old one two
And Red was dead when the other two men set down to eat their stew.