Jessel Town (traditional Virginia)

Collected from Texas Gladden in 1932 for Arthur K. Davis. I found it in his **More Traditional Ballads from Virginia**. *I particularly like the way the tomahawk has been added to the song since it came to this country. British versions of this song, (The Two Brothers, Child #49) often have the bow and arrow - but no tomahawk!*

O brother, O brother can you play ball, or roll the marble stone?
No brother, no brother, I can't play ball, nor roll the marble stone.
No brother, no brother, I can't play ball, nor roll the marble stone.

He took his tomahawk from him, hacked him across the breast
Saying, "Now, brother, I reckon you can't play ball nor roll the marble stone."
"Now, brother, I reckon you can't play ball nor roll the marble stone."

Oh take my hunting shirt from me, Tear it from gore to gore,
And wrap it around my bleeding breast, that it might bleed no more.
And wrap it around my bleeding breast, that it might bleed no more.

He took his hunting shirt from him, Tore it from gore to gore,
And wrapped it around his bleeding breast, But it still bled the more.
And wrapped it around his bleeding breast, But it still bled the more.

O brother, when you go home tonight, My mother will ask for me.
Please tell her I'm gone with some little school boys,
Tomorrow night I'll be at home.
Please tell her I'm gone with some little school boys,
Tomorrow night I'll be at home.

My dear little sister will ask for me, The truth to her you must tell.
Please tell her I'm dead, and in grave laid, And buried at Jessel town.
Please tell her I'm dead, and in grave laid, And buried at Jessel town.

O take me up upon your back; Carry me to Jessel town,
And dig a hole, and lay me in, That I might sleep so sound.
And dig a hole, and lay me in, That I might sleep so sound.

And lay my Bible under my head, My tomahawk at my feet,
My bow and arrow across my chest, That I might sweetly sleep.
My bow and arrow across my chest, That I might sweetly sleep.

He laid his Bible under his head, His tomahawk at his feet,
His bow and arrow across his chest, That he might sweetly sleep.
His bow and arrow across his chest, That he might sweetly sleep.

From Judy Cook's CD *"If You Sing Songs…"*
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