

Railroad Bill

Trad.

As sung by Bob Dylan on the "Minnesota Party Tape" (May 1961),
and during the recording sessions for Self Portrait (1970), Album:
Bootleg Series 10: Another Self Portrait (2013)

C

Railroad Bill, he ain't so bad,

E

killed his mommy, shot a [round] in his dad [around with?]

C G C

Ride old Railroad Bill.

Bridge:

[2 instr. verses, 2nd with harp]

Railroad Bill took my wife.

If I'd said a word, he'd have taken my life

Ride old Railroad Bill.

Bridge:

[harp verse]

Railroad Bill he was comin' down the hill

Lightin' cigars with a ten-dollar bill

Ride old Railroad Bill

Bridge:

[guitar verse + harp verse]

Ten policemen, all dressed in black,
coming out of nowhere, walking down the tracks,
and they're looking for Railroad Bill

Bridge:

[guitar verse]

Railroad Bill, [comin' round the bend][fence?]

Robbin' a passenger train for 16 cents

I'm gonna ride old Railroad Bill

Bridge:

[guitar verse]

Railroad Bill got in a gamblin' game
shot a man down, though he was to blame
when you lose your mind, let it [turn?] loose

Bridge:

[harp verse]

He's down in a jailhouse singin' railer's blues
Same old pants on your passenger shoes
When you lose your mind, let it loose

Bridge:

[wicked harp verse + guitar verse]

Railroad Bill he's a mighty bad man
Shot the lantern from a brakeman's hand
Just to see that man suffer pain.

Bridge:

[two lines of instrumental, then:]

ride, ride, ride, ride.

Additional verses from other versions

Early one morning, standing in the rain
'round the curb come a long freight train

Railroad Bill, a-comin' on soon
Killed McMillen by the light of the moon

Kill me a chicken, send me the wing,
They think I'm working, lord, I ain't doin' a thing

Kill me a chicken, send me the hip
Think I'm workin', Lord, I'm laying in [deep]

Got a great long pistol, 'bout as long as your arm,
I'm gonna shoot everybody ever done me harm

Got a .38 special on a .45 frame.
How can I miss when I got dead aim

Gonna drink my whisky, gonna drink it in the wind
the doctor said it'd cure me, but he didn't say when

Going up on the mountain, going out west.
Thirty eight special sticking out of my vest.

Honey honey, think I'm a fool.
Think I would quit you when the weather is cool.