

The Big Rock Candy Mountain

Harry McClintock

Intro

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Verse

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Chorus

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Introduction:

One evening as the sun went down
And the jungle fires were burning,
Down the track came a hobo hiking,
He said, "Boys, I'm not turning
I'm heading for a land that's far away
Beside the crystal fountain.
I'll see you all this coming fall
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

Verses:

1. In the Big Rock Candy Mountain,
It's a land that's fair and bright.
The handouts grow on bushes
And you sleep out every night.
The boxcars all are empty
And the sun shines every day.
I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow
Where the sleet don't fall and the winds don't
 blow
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
Chorus:
 Oh, the buzzing of the bees in the
 cigarette trees,
By the soda water fountain,
Near the lemonade springs where the
 bluebird sings,
On the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
2. In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
You never change your socks
And little streams of alky-hol
Come trickling down the rocks.
O the shacks all have to tip their hats
And the railway bulls are blind.
There's a lake of stew and gingerale too
And you can paddle all around it in a big
 canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
Chorus
3. In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
The cops have wooden legs.
The bulldogs all have rubber teeth
And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.
The box-cars all are empty
And the sun shines every day,
I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow,
Where the sleet don't fall and the winds
don't blow,
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
Chorus
4. In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
The jails are made of tin.
You can slip right out again
As soon as they put you in.
There ain't no short-handled shovels,
No axes, saws nor picks.
I'm bound to stay where you sleep all day,
Where they hung the jerk that invented work,
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
Chorus

"Big Rock Candy Mountain", first recorded by Harry McClintock in 1928, also known by his "hobo" name of Haywire Mac. McClintock claimed credit for writing the song, though it was likely partially based on other ballads, including "An Invitation to Lubberland" and "The Appleknocker's Lament". Other popular itinerant songs of the day such as "Hobo's Paradise", "Hobo Heaven", "Sweet Potato Mountains" and "Little Streams of Whiskey" likely served as inspiration, as they mention concepts similar to those in "Big Rock Candy Mountain".

Before recording the song, McClintock cleaned it up considerably from the version he sang as a street busker in the 1890s. Originally the song described a child being recruited into hobo life by tales of the "big rock candy mountain". In later years, when McClintock appeared in court as part of a copyright dispute, he cited the original words of the song, the last stanza of which was:

The punk rolled up his big blue eyes
And said to the jocker, "Sandy,
I've hiked and hiked and wandered too,
But I ain't seen any candy.
I've hiked and hiked till my feet are sore
And I'll be damned if I hike any more
To be buggered sore like a hobo's whore
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains."

In the released version this verse did not appear.

The song was not popularized until 1939, when it peaked at #1 on Billboard magazine's country music charts, but it achieved more widespread popularity in 1949 when a sanitized version intended for children was recorded by Burl Ives.

This version comes from Pete Seeger's **American Favorite Ballads**.