





Let's join Buddy Red Cat, Lefty Mouse, and Reverend Tom Toad as they journey through time and space in the days of labor, big bosses, farm failures, strikes, company cops, sundown towns, hobos, and trains . . .
the America of yesteryear.

1. Suitcase in My Hand

BUDDY IS SPEAKING: "I left my old home to ramble this country. See, nobody in our family had ever been off the farm where we lived. Never even thought about it. But Pa knew farm life was running down, and no future for me. 'Course, he and Ma had never been off the farm either, so they really didn't know what was out there even a mile away, let alone in the big country. 'Son, don't go astray,' was what they both told me. 'Remember that love for God can be found.' The railroad ran right by the farm. I just got my suitcase in my hand, walked across the tracks, caught me the end of an old freight train, and never did look back. If only I could write, I could send a message back there, if only they could read."



2. Cat and Mouse

LEFTY, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT IN THE SNOW: "A shocking moment rising up! Five minutes more and I'd have been a goner out there, the worst snowstorm in years. Then, all of a sudden, here's this red cat in a suitcase. I looks at him and he looks at me, and I says to myself, 'Lefty, it's a chance you gotta take.' We've been traveling together ever since."

Buddy: "Stay amongst your own kind, was all I ever heard back home. But I was hungry, cold, and scared. How much worse could a little mouse be? About one-third worse, to say the most. Possible friend, to say the least."

"I never knew anything about unions and solidarity before I met Lefty. Back home, you just worked all your life and died poor. My Uncle Charley was a cat like that. Not bad, just poor. All he knew was, it's us against them. If somebody said the unions were down on Jesus, he'd fight over it. It was you and Jesus, the dusters, and the hoppers. And then the bankers took your land."

"Lefty showed me we have to work together in this world if we want to get something done and make things better for everybody. Lefty is a little mouse, but he's big minded. And he can read!"



3. Strike!

“THAT WAS NO BIRTHDAY PARTY,” Buddy is saying. “Those zinc miners had been to hell and back several times. But they sang out, and that’s what they did best. When you sing out, you get strength and power. If you stay quiet and scared, you end up getting pushed around, in worse shape than before. You ever see a strikebreaker or a mining-boss cop sing? No, you ain’t, because when you sing, you do it for the next fellow, and that’s something the bosses and the cops can never understand. All they know is, beat up somebody and get paid doing it. That’s a pretty bad way to live and pretty stupid.

But when those miners started singing, they could bring all kinds of folks in with them, including me: ‘Union miners stand together’ . . . made you feel good just to sing it, like you had friends you could count on. One of the miners in the jail that night had two little kids of his own the cops had dragged in along with me and everyone. He had some dried-up sausage in his pocket that he gave his kids, and they gave me some too. It tasted real good, in jail there, and that’s something you just can’t forget.”

4. J. Edgar

BUDDY, REMEMBERING THE FARM WHERE HE SPENT HIS YOUTH: "Understand, now, no offense meant to pigs. I like 'em, have good friends among 'em, and find 'em to be good-natured and thoughtful. But J. Edgar was definitely something else and a problem. He wasn't satisfied with the way things were, and being a pig, he did the only thing he knew, which was to try and eat the whole world. He might have succeeded too, but that was a poor place, and he ran out of things to eat up. By that time, the family that owned him had lit out for California looking for a better life, but they always feared J. Edgar would root them up and start all over again.

"FDR said there's only fear itself to worry about, but he never knew J. Edgar personally, I don't think. Didn't know what damage he was liable to do. That poor family used to pray over it in the dark, whispering to Jesus and begging for help. No help ever came, so they figured even Jesus Himself didn't know what to do about J. Edgar the pig.

"Years later, I saw them coming down the sidewalk in Oildale, California. The dad recognized me and hustled the family across the street and acted like he didn't know me. Me, Buddy, who had lived with them on the farm all those years. So that shows you what fear itself will do."



5. Footprints in the Snow

BUDDY IS SINGING:

I got a gal in the union, that gal is mighty fine
When she gets done striking, we'll jolly-up our time

Lefty shakes his head. "Now, that's just how you got in trouble with the union back there. You need to concentrate more, Brother Buddy. RMA equals right mental attitude."

"I was only singing," protests Buddy. "Who cares what about?"

Reverend Tom says, "In our church, we sang all the time. To lift Him up. Then we felt lifted up. I think that's just what the Klan boys hated the most about us, that it did some good for ourselves, our singing. Something they couldn't scare out of us."

"Singing is always risky," says Lefty. "Ask Joe Hill, executed for singing 'Pie in the Sky.' Ask Brother Paul Robeson, Brother Pete, and Aunt Mollie Jackson."

"Bravery far greater than mine," Buddy agrees. "Let's try this one:

If you get downhearted, sing a little song again
It will lift your spirits up, you'll feel like you got friends
Hum a simple melody, it'll come to you
Let your troubled mind go free on three chords and the truth.

"The Truth is writing all the time," says Reverend Tom.



6. Sundown Town (The Reverend Tom Toad)

“BLACK MAN, DON’T LET THE SUN SET ON YOU IN THIS TOWN,” read the sign. Sitting in his little camp hidden under a train trestle, the Reverend Tom Toad explained this way: “Hear me, friends. This was a good place for us. Then the Ku Klux Klan came in from the next county and started up their engine of hate. Then the white people of the town quickly forgot we had all been living together in harmony. They ran us off our land, and we were scattered like the Children of Israel. I’m the only one left, blind now, and no place to go. What use in the world is a blind preacher with no one to hear the Word? Sometimes I seem to disremember what the Word is supposed to be.”

“Hatred is powerful and hypnotic, the new opiate of the masses,” says Lefty. “Let Solidarity be the new Word.”

“Let the Midnight Special shine the ever-loving light on me,” says Buddy, thinking of the dread white-hooded fiends prowling around in the Mississippi night.

“But we had some wonderful times, my friends, wonderful times,” continues the Reverend. “News might arrive that one of the traveling singing groups was in the neighborhood. We would invite them for Sunday service, and they would sing a sacred program for us.

“Sometimes there would be preaching by a group member. Who can forget the great Jimmy Bryant, of the Heavenly Gospel Singers, striding up and down the aisle, a big man, his deep voice tolling out the Word in spellbinding rhythm?

Afterward, the menfolks would gather amongst themselves so as to talk

over local news and farm matters and such. That’s how word of the reborn Klan was brought, a grave and serious matter for which no answer could be found. But we believed that by the Hand of God, we would go on. Was their hatred and bigotry stronger than our faith and righteousness? Why was the lawlessness of a few stronger than the law itself?”





7. Green Dog

IT IS NIGHT IN THE GREAT MOJAVE DESERT, stretching out for endless miles in all directions. The three travelers have never seen anything like it before.

"Bones in the valley." The Reverend is scared.

"It's the only way out," Lefty reminds him. "Back there is the Klan, the sheriff, and a bunch more of those sundown towns. Out here, nothing."

Buddy is scared too. "If it's so free and easy in the desert, why am I carrying all this spare cheese?"

"Well, there is the little matter of coyotes," Lefty admits. "I haven't seen 'em so far, but they're out there just the same, watching us."

"Coyotes aren't going to want any stinking cheese!" says Buddy fearfully.

The desert at night is so still, you can hear the air rustling and moaning. Suddenly a new sound is heard. It seems to come from above.

"Now what!" Buddy cries.

"Jesus said He'd meet me in the air! Lord, I'm going home"—but the Reverend isn't too sure.

A pulsating greenish light appears, hovering and then descending, and finally coming to rest on the ground about twenty feet away. In the shadows the dark shapes of coyotes flit away and are gone. Saved.

8. The Dying Truck Driver

THE AMERICAN WORKER-CITIZEN is fed a daily diet of garbage and lies that make him sick. Lefty Mouse likes to think of the power elites as a bunch of garbage collectors in reverse:

“Our society is now a giant cafeteria of shiny junk, and the President is the head waiter.”

“Poison under the gravy,” says Buddy.

“Don’t let the liars ride. If you let ’em ride, they’ll want to drive,” says Reverend Tom.

It’s hard to imagine what the early days of truck driving must have been like, especially in California. Produce truckers were carrying fragile and perishable cargo, and had to drive fast and late. Drivers often fell asleep from driving long hours, truck brakes were always burning out, and a fiery crash on a steep grade was something you didn’t walk away from.

Buddy can remember hitching a ride on a truck with a load of lettuce, southbound on Highway 99. The driver had to back up the notorious Grapevine mountain route, in reverse, in the rain, to get traction.

“A very tough guy,” Buddy says, “but he shared his onion sandwich with me.”



9. Christmas in Southgate

BUDDY IS SPEAKING: “Man, I like beer. And I like accordions. When you drink your beer, and they play their accordions, it’s just alright. Like everything is o.k.”

Lefty Mouse: “But it wasn’t o.k., Buddy. We got laid off. They were busting unions down there, and Southgate was a very tough town to have no money in, brother.”

“Yeah, but when the Mexicans started coming in, it loosened up. Can’t be so uptight around accordions. Plus, those Mexican girls didn’t mind at-tall you and me hanging around in the accordion joint, if you recollect. Over on Firestone Boulevard it was, right next to Stanley Chevrolet. One-one-nine-eight-oh East Firestone, Stanley Chevrolet. You know how I know that?”

“Just more weird stuff you know, I guess,” says Lefty.

“Nossir, it’s on account of that car dealer song they use to play on the hillbilly radio station. Imagine a car jingle that swings good.”

“Car dealers are among the worst bottom feeders of our society. They prey on poor families who can’t nearly afford those cars. Then they take their meager belongings as forfeit.”

“That’s why they like accordions and beer.”



10. Hank Williams

RIDING ON A WESTBOUND FREIGHT TRAIN, speeding through the night . . .
“Hank always looked like he could have used some extra cheese,” Buddy says, shaking his head sadly. “Wisht I had done something more . . . maybe been a better friend.”

“Not your fault!” Lefty says emphatically. “Who killed Hank Williams? The Church of the Next Dollar, that’s who! The church needs heroes and stars to get you in and take your money! A dead hero is the best salesman! They die, you buy! Fame isolates people from the rest of society, robs them out of their lives. Then they die or get thrown away. Nothing more pitiful in this world than the loss of great fame.”

“Poet dies in Cadillac,” the newspaper headline ran—
Must be talking ’bout old Hank, he was a real good poetry man

Buddy sings softly to the rhythm of the train, speeding through the darkness, with a raging storm outside.



11. Red Cat till I Die

"THIS HAPPENED UP IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA. We heard that Carlos Bulosan himself was going to give a talk to some fruit pickers over at the Filipino dance hall after the dancing got through. It was Saturday night, and they had Little Joe and his Pinoy Pea Pickers, rocking on bandstand. People started showing up to hear Carlos around midnight, figuring that the regular cops had gone home by then and wouldn't be bothering. I fell asleep in the alley behind the place and didn't hear the word that a bunch of deputies had been seen sneaking inside the joint while the dance was going on. All of a sudden, all hell broke lose. The deputies claimed one Filipino was a known Communist and a wanted man, so they just started shooting. I went looking around for Carlos so as to warn him, but a deputy grabbed me and threw me in the police wagon and ran me in with some other Filipino guys. They locked us up and said we were all gonna be deported right back where we came from, including me, who the cops said they had evidence I was a known Communist spy from Manila. How about that, those damn dumb son-of-a-bitch trigger-happy cops!

"They tried to get me to snitch out Reverend Tom and Lefty, who they said were known agitators, and how it would go better for me if I cooperated and all that stuff. I said they could deport me off to Manila all right, how could it be any worse than Stockton, and screw them. But right then, the police chief got a phone call saying that his wife had been seen leaving the dance with the Fratelli brothers, both known Italians, and he'd better get over there and straighten it out. So the chief and the other cops grabbed their riot guns and tore out of the police station with their

sirens blasting, and just forgot about me.

"I lit out in the direction of the railroad tracks, where Tom and Lefty were hiding.

I told them I had been a known Filipino for the last hour and a half, and it sure was a dangerous thing to be."



12. Three Chords and the Truth

SCENE—HARLAND'S, a very lowdown workingman's bar in Bakersfield, California. Crowd is a rough mix of cowboys and oil-field roustabouts. At one end is a tiny stage where a scrawny-looking three-piece band is trying to get ready: Kash Buk and the Klowns. Atmosphere is drunk and rowdy.

Bartender, standing by the stage: "Hey."

Kash Buk, on stage, tuning up: "Hey what?"

Bartender: "See the cat? Over at the bar?"

Kash Buk: "The red one."

Bartender: "He says he wants to sit in with you guys."

Kash Buk, angry: "I said we'd play here two nights a week for tips, and you were going to quit horseshitting around."

Bartender: "He's got a song he wants to sing. Go on, let him sing it, it won't hurt you."

Kash, resigned and disgusted: "Oh sure, what's the difference, a red cat or those damn drunk girlfriends of yours. I don't know why I even bother to try anymore. They offered me rhythm guitar in Ray Price's touring band, but I was too smart for that. Had to be a front man and a star. Look at me now, playing in the likes of this place for the likes of you. Just send him right up."

A song honoring Joe Hill, Paul Robeson, and Pete Seeger, three well-noted victims of government persecution in the name of anti-Communism? In a Bakersfield honky-tonk?

"Why not," Buddy says. "Those type of folks don't like the FBI any better than I do."

If Joe Hill walked into that bar right today, they'd understand him. Just a workingman trying to do the right thing. Besides, they liked my song. Kash Buk even made a little extra money, but the truth is, he should have gone with Ray Price when he had the chance. Guess those shoes were just too big to fill that year.



13. My Name Is Buddy

A COOL AUTUMN DAY ALONG CALIFORNIA 395. The Manzanar concentration camp site, a ruin now, and empty. Buddy, Lefty, and Reverend Tom are sitting around a big old tree.

“What a day for a ham sandwich.” Buddy is thinking about food, as usual.

“Pickles on the side, boys, pickles on the side.”

“I heard the voice of a pork chop saying, ‘Come unto me and rest,’” says Reverend.

“Cheese is what we got,” says Lefty.

“Make mine cheese. I’m worried now, and I’m gonna be worried long,” says Buddy, looking worried.

“What about now?”

“I’m getting worried about trees. Seems like every time you turn around, there’s one less big old tree. Some joker thinks it’s in the way of some crooked scheme of his, so he chops the tree down. There goes another 150-year tree. Now, the way I see it, that tree makes that particular place interesting. Take away the tree and you start to have no-place in that place. What you get instead is junk, like a mall or a parking lot. Wish folks could see that a big tree is just like their neighborhood, only up on one side. Home to critters, birds, bugs, and all. Good for shade like right now, holding the land together, food and flowers maybe, and just for knowing something.”

“What do trees know?”

“I bet plenty, only not in our way.”

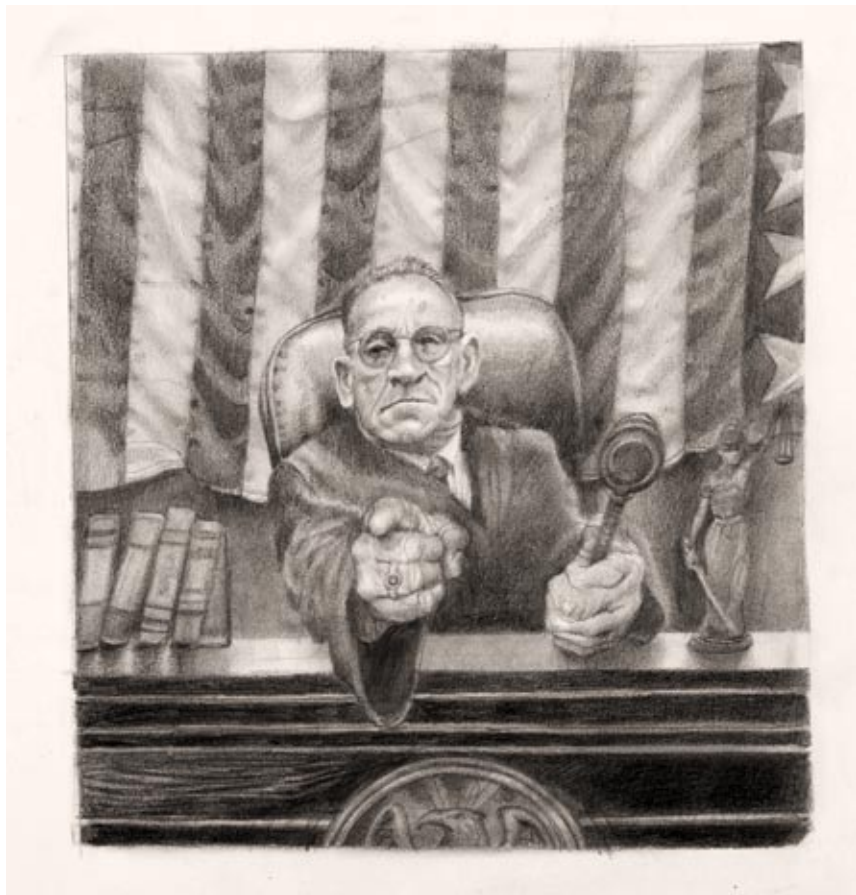
“Loss of respect for nature is the first sign of an ignorant society, a selfish people. Ask any Native brother and sister.”

“Ask the folks who were put right here in the war. They thought they were Americans just like everybody else, and then they lost it all.”

“Ask the dust,” says Reverend, sadly.

“See, ol’ Reverend is thinking about the place he used to call home. Well, it can happen fast. First, you lose your tree. Next thing, it’s where you live, because some outfit like Wal-Mart or the Government wants your land. Then one day, you wake up, and the clowns in Washington have gone and hijacked the whole country while you were asleep. Better watch out for your tree.”





14. One Cat, One Vote, One Beer

LEFTY MOUSE: "Making people think they got a say in things is the biggest trick ever been worked on the citizen man. You sure wouldn't put up with all their well-known greasy numbers if you didn't set store by your little vote. It goes to show how the plain folks of the world will believe and trust, just because they been raised to think someone's smarter than they are."

"Lefty gets hopping mad round election time," says Buddy. "I say, take a drink. Let's realize we ain't going to be counted, and that's the flat truth."

"Us folks couldn't even vote at-tall, back South, in the old days. The Klan ran the voting, backed up by police and government and everybody," says Reverend Tom. "Now, elsewhere, is another sort of a Klan running things, only they look regular—no white sheets."

"They're called RepubliKlan," says Buddy. "Hey Mac, three more over here."

15. Cardboard Avenue

BUDDY IS STANDING on a windy street corner in the late afternoon, singing. His suitcase lies open, but he hasn't been doing very well, and there's no money inside. This is a poor district and nobody has any spare change for a singing cat:

Cats like me are close to the earth
We spend our whole lifetime down here on the ground
And we see little things you humans pass by
Walking around with your head in the clouds

A casually but expensively dressed woman carrying a large camera stops to listen. She seems quite out of place on this run-down street behind the train station.

"That's a nice song," she says. "Is it a little sad?"

"No offense meant," says Buddy.

"Can you help me? I'm here to photograph the homeless. Where are they?"

"Follow me."

They walk. The woman asks, "Where are we going? Should I think of you as homeless?"

"You should think of me as Buddy."

They come upon a very narrow alleyway between two ancient brick buildings near the railroad tracks. It is a jumble of improvised shelters made of cardboard and other junk.

"Here you go. Cardboard Avenue, Lefty calls it."

"Is Lefty also a cat? Is he homeless? Could I interview him?"

"Here's our box. He'll be back soon and you can ask him anything. Talk to anybody you like. We're all Americans down here, just one big happy family. But right now, I'm tired."

The sun is setting. It's a quiet evening on Cardboard Avenue. Buddy hums his little song:

Don't get above your raising so far
We're all just creatures, down here, can't you see
Maybe you'll find you can just be a friend



16. Farm Girl

THE THREE FRIENDS WALK ALONG THE COAST HIGHWAY, north of Santa Barbara. It's a breezy California afternoon.

Buddy shakes his head. "If I had shoes, I'd a wore out ninety-nine pair by now. Gotta stop rambling, stop gambling, quit staying out late at night."

"I wish I was in Heaven, sitting down," mumbles Reverend Tom.

"Then let us sit right down!" says Lefty, "because this about the sweetest little spot I seen yet. It says "Goleta, California," on the side of this lemon crate here. Now, maybe folks could use a singing cat, a out-of-work preacher toad, and a itinerant labor organizer, all for the price of one."

Buddy looks up with a start. "Cops, coming this way."

A black-and-white cruiser pulls up alongside the oak tree where Buddy, Tom, and Lefty are resting, "Goleta Police Dept." written on the door.

"Afternoon," says the uniformed officer through the open window. "Who are you boys?"

"We're just about to head along north. No trouble," says Buddy.

"Trouble," the officer says, "is something we just don't have too much of, here in Goleta. When I look to my left, I see the Pacific Ocean. No trouble out there. When I look to my right, I see some of the nicest orchard farms in this part of the state. There's no trouble there either, and I aim to see that it stays that way. You boys have a real nice trip north, now." The car pulls away in a cloud of dust.

The dust settles and quiet returns. Meadowlarks on the right, low surf breaking on the left. Out on the highway, an occasional car.

Singing is heard. A young girl, ten or twelve years old, comes walking along

the farm road singing to herself. Looking up, she sees Lefty, Buddy, and Reverend Tom under the oak tree, watching her. "A citizen from the Land of No Trouble?" whispers Lefty.

"Howdy there, I'm Buddy. This here is Lefty Mouse and Reverend Tom Toad. We were just passing through, but we're mighty tired and hungry, and the Reverend is starting to slide. A cop was here and told us to get moving. You happen to have any job of work for us? We're handy to have around, and we'll not take up too much room. Happy to do any work for food, except be President."

The girl is amazed and speechless at first. "Oh my! Excuse me, very glad to meet you. We're just sharecroppers here, but you're welcome. I don't know about work. Maybe you could help out with my baby brother."

"Why sure," Lefty says, perking up. "The youngster probably needs instruction. Never too young to learn all about the Martyrs of Labor."

"Might like to hear a hobo song or two before bedtime," offers Buddy.

"His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me," declares Reverend Tom thankfully.



17. There's a Bright Side Somewhere

PEOPLE ARE LEAVING THE LITTLE COUNTRY CHURCH where Lefty Mouse has been speaking on the Martyrs of Labor, followed by a selection of union songs led by Buddy, and concluding with a prayer for peace and this old hymn, led by Reverend Tom. There is a somber feeling in the air as the last notes die away, the crowd silent and sad, yet peaceful and joined in spirit as they walk outside to their automobiles.

"Look here, we did good." Buddy is checking the collection box. "We got two quarters, a half dollar, a slug, and a five-dollar bill!"

"That was the woman with the camera, the one who cried the whole time," says Lefty. "I wonder if she got any good pictures?"

"She was deep in the spirit, and forgot about the contraption. Sometimes, folks need to be at rest in themselves and stop thinking about everything for a little while. That's the best thing you can do for them," says the Reverend, with an air of satisfaction. "It's a simple thing, and it's free."

"Well, she gave five dollars," says Lefty. "She wants to help."

"Boys, a five-spot is what I call first-class help!" says Buddy. "Right now I'm ready for some real good eating, and I don't mean cheese!"



1. SUITCASE IN MY HAND

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*

Roland White *vocal*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

Paddy Moloney *whistle, uilleann pipes*

Mike Seeger *banjo, fiddle*

When I was still a kitten, daddy told me,
Son,
There's just one thing that you should
know

As through this world you ramble and
through this world you roam
Just take this little suitcase when you
go

When the evening sun goes down and you're
tired of rambling round
Just set her on the ground and climb
right in
You won't ever have to worry about the
cold night wind
When you got your little suitcase in your
hand

Little suitcase in my hand, I'm rolling
through this land
A mansion is much too big for me
When the stars come out at night
everything will be alright
'Cause I got my little suitcase in my
hand

A hard-boiled egg's yellow inside
There's some in every crowd you will find
They're afraid to have to do an honest
day's work
So they blame the workingman every time
But the harder they come, the bigger they

fall
Just you hold your ground and take your
stand
'Cause the free and independent life's
still the best of all
When you got your little suitcase in your
hand

Chorus

2. CAT AND MOUSE

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*

Van Dyke Parks *piano*

I had an Uncle Charley, back in my
hometown
Said, Don't take no mice to be your
friend
'Cause they'll wait till you're asleep
and steal your money and your food
And rat you out when the police come
around

Later on I started traveling, seeing
something of this world
And I learned to know a thing or two
Just because you been told a story back
in your hometown
Don't have to mean that story's always
true

I remember it was winter and things were
going bad
It rained and it snowed all day long
Nobody would feed me and I couldn't find
no job
In a factory or working on a farm
I was laying in my suitcase and the
snow was falling down

I didn't know what I was gonna do
When I heard a tiny voice out there in
the dark
Saying, Brother, can I come in there
with you?

Right here in my bag I got some real good
cheese
And a crust of bread or two
If you let me come in there and get out
of the snow
I'll share what I got with you

Don't take no mice to be your friend
Was the rule Uncle Charley always told
But the north wind kept howling and the
snow kept blowing down
And I couldn't leave him out there in the
cold

He said his name was Lefty and he'd been
traveling round
The secrets of this world he'd share with
you
Mouse traps are set right-handed, get
your cheese out from the left
We are many, Buddy, they are few

He said, They'll tell you lies to make
you doubt your fellow man
Like cats and mice just can't get along
It suits the bosses, Buddy, and it serves
them fine
'Cause it keeps us working folks from
being strong

There's a better world a coming, Buddy
Which side are you on?
Don't let the big men take it, Buddy
Which side are you on?
It's your country, too, Buddy

Which side are you on?
It's time to take a stand, Buddy
Which side are you on?
Boy, it's a fact mice ain't no good—
Old Charley always said they'll treat you
bad
But I'm here to tell you people, and I
want it understood
Lefty is the truest friend I ever had

3. STRIKE!

Ry Cooder *vocals, guitar*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

Mike Seeger *fiddle, harmonica, jaw harp*

I got off the train one evening in a
little mining town
I started walking up the main street when
the sun was going down

When I heard some voices singing, so I
went to see what for
Might just be a birthday party, might be
room for just one more

It was miners and their families, they
had left the mine that day
Walked out for safe conditions, on strike
for decent pay

And they sang about their struggle, and
their spirit never failed
Keep your hand upon the dollar and your
eye upon the scale

Union miners stand together, heed no
operator's tale
Keep your hand upon the dollar and your
eye upon the scale

All at once police came running, they
came running everywhere
They broke up that miners' meeting,
carried everyone to jail

But the miners kept on singing and they
sang the whole night through
When the sun rose in the morning I had
learned that miners' song

The judge he asked the police captain,
What's that red cat doing here?
Get all the reds off the streets, sir,
was you orders loud and clear

They turned me out of the jailhouse back
door, but I wouldn't leave my miner
friends

I jumped back to the jailhouse window and
I sang that miner songs again

Chorus

4. J. EDGAR

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*
Mike Seeger *banjo*
Pete Seeger *banjo*

Down on the farm we had a pig, J. Edgar
was his name
He'd eat up all our victuals and start
back up again
Just like the vacuum cleaners they sell
down in the lane
Well, that's how J. Edgar Hoover got his
name

Now, mama baked a cherry pie and set it
out to cool

So we'd have something good to eat when
we got home from school
J. Edgar climbed up on the porch and ate
up all that pie
When we got home that morning we heard
our mama cry
J. Edgar, J. Edgar, just look what
you've done
You ate up the cherry pie that was for
everyone
We made it through the dusters, and the
hoppers too
But God help us, J. Edgar, 'cause
nothing's safe from you

We had an extra man named Bob, he
wouldn't work a lick
He drank bad moonshine likker, and it
always made him sick
We rode to church on Sunday and stayed a
while in town
When we reached home at supertime, poor
Bob could not be found

He wasn't in the parlor, and he wasn't
in the lone
Drinking in the pantry or sleeping in
the hay
His hat was in the pigpen, that he
always wore
Poor Bob won't be drinking moonshine
likker anymore

J. Edgar, J. Edgar, it just don't seem
fair
You ate Bob the hired man while we were
at prayer
Let's say a prayer for poor old Bob, and
our country too

God help us, J. Edgar, nobody's safe
from you

5. FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

Ry Cooder *vocal, bajo sexto*
Roland White *vocal, mandolin*
René Camacho *bass*
Joachim Cooder *drums*
Flaco Jiménez *accordion*
Van Dyke Parks *piano*
Mike Seeger *fiddle*

Well, some folks like the summertime when
they can walk about
Strolling through the meadow green is
pleasant there's no doubt
But to me the wintertime is the best of
all
'Cause I found her when the snow was on
the ground

I traced her little footprints in the
snow

I found her little footprints in the snow
I bless that happy day when Nellie lost
her way
'Cause I found her when the snow was on
the ground

Now, the Ladies' Garment Workers walked
out last wintertime
One little union kitty was a dear
sweetheart of mine
She walked around all winter on the
picket line
But I found her when the snow was on the
ground
Now, the Union Strike Committee didn't

like me hanging round:
Don't interfere with sisters while the
strike is on
Don't go around behaving like a ring-
tailed tom
But I found her when the snow was on the
ground

Chorus

She's somewhere out there marching with
the union band
We'll get back together when the pension
check comes in
But every time the snow falls, it brings
back memories
'Cause I found her when the snow was on
the ground
Chorus

6. SUNDOWN TOWN (THE REVEREND TOM TOAD)

Terry Evans *vocal*
Bobby King *vocal*
Ry Cooder *guitar, bass*
Jim Keltner *drums*

Mine eyes have seen the beauty of a land
bright and fair
My soul looked out and wondered, can we
make the journey there
But I've lost my sight and I have to be
led
I mean to work for justice till I'm dead
Sundown town, sundown town
Don't let 'em catch you, Buddy, when the
sun goes down

There won't be no more friends around
Don't let 'em catch you, Buddy, when the
sun goes down

I used to preach and I used to pray
Was the prayinest man that you ever did
see

But they ran my people off one day
Now there ain't nobody round that looks
like me

Chorus

We used to sing and we used to shout
Was the shoutinest church that you ever
did see

But I ain't going to preach and I ain't
going to sing

And I don't feel at home in this town no
more

Chorus

If you black, you better get back
If you brown, don't you hang around
If you red, you might be dead
If you ain't white, man, you just ain't
right

Chorus

7. GREEN DOG

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*

Juliette Commagere *vocal*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

Stefan Harris *vibes, marimba*

Jacky Terrasson *piano*

Walking cross the desert, it ain't no fun
Too hot in the daytime, too much sun

Lefty says we'll cross at nighttime
Like my people always have done
Keep moving, quit nagging
Walk, don't run

I ask Lefty, Why'd we bring so much
cheese?

Coyotes, Buddy, just you wait and
see

Coyotes eat anything, Buddy, long as it's
free

Suppose they want a little something
extra, Lefty?

Might be you and might be me

The desert's dark and the desert's deep,
stars everywhere

Something like you never see sitting in
your easy chair

Watch out, Lefty, something strange is
coming down

Look out! It's a bird, it's a plane, it's
a flying tin can

Got those coyotes on the run

Out steps a green dog, as green as he
can be

Or maybe she, 'cause when they're wearing
space suits

You can't tell, 'cause you can't see

"In my world, toads are purple, mice are
blue, and I declare

A red cat is really something new

I'm so far from home, can you tell me
what should I do?

"Do you think there is room for me in
this strange land?

I'm sorry I scared your friends

I write poetry, teach astronomy, how

about me?

"In my world everyone is a friend
Shaking hands, saying how do you do
Guess you'd notice we all look the same,
it's so tame

I'd rather take a chance here with you"

Let's ride, says Lefty, let's see how
fast this crate can fly

Va-va-voom, says Lefty, watch those
coyotes scatter, watch the towns go

streaking by

Kingman, Barstow, San Bernardino just
won't do

Go west, you green dog, Hollywood's the
place for you

Green dog, green dog, green dog, you're
so rare

8. THE DYING TRUCK DRIVER

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*

Roland White *vocal, mandolin*

Mike Seeger *harmonica*

We made our way up 99 in the springtime
of the year

The San Joaquin was all in bloom, and
songbirds everywhere

We chanced upon a workingman lying by the
road

I judged him for a truck driver by the
clothes he wore

We drew some nearer to him then,
inquiring of his name

Well, here's three little angels come
down for to carry me home

Then, bear me up to Jesus now, my Savior
I shall see
You ain't no regular angels, boys, but
that's alright by me

Then Lefty, stepping forward, addressed
the dying man

Saying, We're no angels, brother, but
we'll do all we can

What cowards set upon you, sir, and dealt
the fatal blow?

We'll pull out every workingman from here
to Ohio

It was no vigilante gang, nor ranch-boss
thugs this time

But the meatloaf special dinner I had on
Highway 99

A comely waitress served me there, she
cooled me with her fan

But fatal meatloaf has struck down this
old truck driving man

Then Lefty reached down in his bag,
saying, You ain't dying, friend

Just take a drink of whiskey now, you'll
feel alright again

All through the night we lingered there
and passed that bottle round

We hauled aboard at sunrise, lit out for
Frisco town

Now, the workingman must be well warned
whenever headlines scream

"Your rights must yield, the bombs must
fall to save democracy"

The flag they fly, their stew of lies
served up at voting time

Like poison under the gravy on Highway 99

9. CHRISTMAS IN SOUTHGATE

Ry Cooder *vocal, bajo sexto*

René Camacho *bass*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

Flaco Jiménez *accordion*

Van Dyke Parks *piano*

Mike Seeger *fiddle*

Roland White *mandolin*

You got no credit and I've got no cash
That bonus they give us were nothing but
trash

You been laid off at Goodyear, I been
laid off at Hughes

It looks like a bad year, there just
ain't no use

'Cause it's Christmas in Southgate, you
been a true friend

I ain't never been much of a churchgoing
man

But I'd even give up drinking whiskey and
gin

If Jesus and Santa Claus ever get back
down to Southgate again

Well, the telephone rang and it jumped
off the wall

Says, We're sorry, Buddy, but we can't
place your call

'Cause Jesus don't answer, Santa ain't
got back yet

What's a poor old Red Cat got a right to
expect?

So I called up my banker to ask for a
loan

Said, It's Christmas Eve, Buddy, there
ain't no one home

Then I called up my preacher and he said,

We're through

What the heck is a poor old Red Cat gonna
do?

I'd work any job just to clear a day's
pay

Except for being President of the old USA
That's dirty work, Lefty, no future, it's
true

I'd rather drink up my last nickel with
you

Chorus

10. HANK WILLIAMS

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitars*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

Mike Elizondo *bass*

You been over at that jukebox, mister,
all this afternoon
Playing Hank Williams records for a dime
Well, I may be just a cat to you, but I
know that heartbreak tune
And I'm proud to say Hank Williams was a
real good friend of mine

I never asked for money or his autograph,
you see

'Cause I don't need too much to get along
I just liked to sit there with him and

keep him company

Who says cats can't understand a real
good country song?

You think you know the man inside your
little radio

All the trials and heartaches he's been
through

To you he's just a country star, to me
he's just a friend
No, you don't know Hank Williams like I
do

Some nights we'll go out riding in his
great big car

With the little radio that's built right
in

I'd sit up front there with him and his
old guitar

And listen while the DJ played "Your
Cheatin' Heart" again

"Well, Buddy, you know there's something
mighty strange about trying to live a
life of fame, you see

It's supposed to make me happy, all it
does is worry me

Nobody else seems to understand the
things that I go through

Only time I feel peaceful is when I'm
riding round with you"

You've heard it on the radio, Hank has
passed away

In the back seat of that Cadillac, it's
true

To you he's just a legend now, to me he's
still a friend

No, you don't know Hank Williams like I
do

11. RED CAT TILL I DIE

The original Cardboard Avenue Jaywalkers:

Buddy Red Cat *vocal, guitar*

Lefty Mouse *fiddle*

The Reverend Tom Toad *tambourine*

I'm a Red Cat till I die, I'm a Red Cat
through and through

You can't turn me yellow and you can't
make me blue

You can't make me do things I know it's
wrong to do

I'm a Red Cat till I die, I'm telling you

A bunch of sneaking deputies come a-
snooping round

They grabbed me in the alley whilst I was
laying down

They threw me in the wagon and then they
ran me in

They locked me in the jailhouse with all
my hobo friends

Saying, Where's that rat named Lefty?

Where's that frog named Tom?

Been agitating lately

And spreading a great alarm

The cows walked out this morning

Now the hens won't lay

Said, You're going to wreck our country

And it ain't the American Way

I ain't no strikebreaker and I ain't no
stoolie rat

Won't squeal on Tom and Lefty, won't say
where they're at

You can't scare me, copper, and I don't
care what you do

I'm a Red Cat till I die, I'm telling you

Now, you think you're hard-boiled, you're
just yellow inside

My daddy always warned me, now I know
he's right

You're just cowards hiding behind a
little tin star

The people are starting to realize what a bunch of clowns you are

I might have been a banker without the least excuse

I might have been the President, but tell me what's the use

Might have been an FBI man but I ain't no Peeping Tom

Might have been a deputy and put my white sheet on

But I'm a Red Cat till I die, I'm a Red Cat through and through

I won't fight your rich man's war and kill poor folks for you

You can't make me do things I know it's wrong to do

I'm a Red Cat till I die, I'm telling you

12. THREE CHORDS AND THE TRUTH

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar, bass*

Jim Keltner *drums*

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night, standing in the prison yard
They were taking poor Joe, chained and bound, to a Utah firing squad
He turned and looked at me right then, saying, Don't you be misled
They're trying to tear our free speech down, and Buddy, they ain't near quit yet
See, they framed me on a killing charge, you know I wouldn't lie to you
But the only crime here that I done was three chords and the truth

Three chords and the truth, three chords and the truth

The only crime that Joe Hill done was three chords and the truth

He sang his good old union songs, he got his message through

But they couldn't stand to hear a workingman sing three chords and the truth

Old J. Edgar Hoover liked to hear the darkies sing, till one man changed that all around

Paul Robeson was a man that you couldn't ignore, that's what drove J. Edgar down
He called up his New York Klan boyfriends, saying, I got something good for you

Get right down there to Peekskill, New York town, and kill three chords and the truth

Three chords and the truth, three chords and the truth

The only crime you ever got from Paul was three chords and the truth

If this is the land of democracy, I got one question for you

Why wasn't Paul Robeson set free on three chords and the truth?

They took Pete Seeger before the law and put him on the witness stand
But he stood right up to tyranny with just a banjo in his hand
Such a righteous banjo picker, watching out for me and you

That was just a man who wouldn't back down on three chords and the truth

Three chords and the truth, three chords and the truth

The only crime Pete Seeger done was three chords and the truth

He sang his freedom songs real good, still getting his message through

Better check out old Pete Seeger on three chords and the truth

13. MY NAME IS BUDDY

Ry Cooder *vocal, mandola, guitar, bass, keyboard*

Joachim Cooder *drums*

My name is Buddy, don't you pity me

Don't you pity me, don't you pity me

Just because I ain't so big, you think I'm small

Well, you think I'm small, now you think I'm small

You go around with your head up in the clouds

You just tall, that's all, you just tall, that's all

Now, if you like your tree, better watch out for your tree

Watch out for you tree, Lord, that tree ain't free

The birds won't be round just to keep you company

Keep you company, keep you company

If you like your little backyard, watch out for your backyard

Don't let 'em put a toll road right through your backyard

You go around with your head up in the clouds

Head up in the clouds, your head up in the clouds

Well, you ain't so big, you just tall, that's all

Now, this land was made for you and me
Better watch out for your land, better watch out for your land

14. ONE CAT, ONE VOTE, ONE BEER

Ry Cooder *vocal*

Joachim Cooder *keyboard, percussion*

Jon Hassell *trumpet*

Hey bartender, what you say?

I'm gonna get drunk on election day!

Want one glass of bourbon, one glass of rye

Come on, set me up, Joe, don't pass me by!

My money's alright, but my feets got sore
See, I been trying to vote, 'bout a hour or more

I tried, but I didn't get nowhere
Joe, I just don't think they're doing this voting fair and square!

Better make it one cat, one vote, and one beer

Bartender, one cat, one vote, and one beer

See, I went downtown to the voting room
'Cause I wanted to get my voting done soon

The man said, "We're gonna have to do a little checking on you"

Come back a little later on and said,
"Well, Buddy, you know, your vote just
can't go through
Says you been dead, ten years back. We're
sure not gonna take a vote off a dead red
cat"

"What you say?"
"Step aside now, you're interfering with
the election process, that's a crime"
"The crime is you!"

"Well, Buddy, voting is just something I
don't think you're going to do"

Chorus

Now, I'm gonna drink a little gin and
some mellow wine
Then I'm gonna try that voting machine
out just one more time
'Cause democracy is in our hands, but
it's slipping through our fingers just
like sand
I'm worried for you, sure worried for me,
watching the election coming round on the
T.V.

Voting is closed, we already lost the
race
Might as well meet me down to Little
Joe's Place

Chorus

15. CARDBOARD AVENUE

Ry Cooder *vocal, banjo*
Joachim Cooder *percussion*
Mike Elizondo *bass*
Jim Keltner *drums*
Mike Seeger *fiddle*
Roland White *mandolin*

Well, thank you for the drink my friend,
that's alright with me
Let's drink to the workingman, wherever
he might be
Remember what he stood up for and the
struggles he went through
Then, let's take a little stroll down
Cardboard Avenue

Down on the street where I live, when
evening comes around
No T.V. or radio, never hear a lonesome
sound
Except some poor joe crying, Lord, can I
make it up to you?
But he never gets an answer down on
Cardboard Avenue

Here's my little heartbreak hotel, now
don't you be let down
When the ghost of Hobo Bill comes a-
shuffling round
He might pause by your side, saying,
Buddy, can you spare a dime or two?
Then he'll just drift off into the night
on Cardboard Avenue

I hear the whistle blowing now, must be
the Red Ball train
We'll see you in the North Country, when
the springtime comes again
Just ask any workingman, wherever you
might be
The whereabouts of Reverend Tom, Lefty
Mouse, and Buddy
And if he asks you, Were you in the
fight, did you join the strike of 1932?
Just tell him that you knew us down on
Cardboard Avenue

16. FARM GIRL

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*
Juliette Commagere *vocal*
Mike Elizondo *bass*
Jim Keltner *drums*
Mike Seeger *fiddle*
Roland White *mandolin*

We ran out of cheese in Goleta town, so
we sat right down by the big oak tree
Little farming town, by the deep green
sea
Watch the tide roll out, watch the tide
roll in

Farm girl, walking along, singing a song
by the big oak tree
Farm girl, how would you like to be
friends with a poor boy like me?

Mama always says strangers can be friends
Come along with me, it's almost
supper time
We don't have too much, set yourself
right down
Tell me who you are, tell me where you've
been

Then Reverend Tom he says, Thank you for
this day
I had never dreamed that we'd get this
far
Bless this little place, everybody here
There's a brighter side, I can see it
clear

Farm girl, walking along, singing a song
by the big oak tree
Farm girl, how do you like to be friends
with a poor boy like me?

Farm girl, walking along, seen some hard
times in the country
Farm girl, still got the time to be
friends with a poor boy like me

17. THERE'S A BRIGHT SIDE SOMEWHERE

Ry Cooder *vocal, guitar*
Mike Elizondo *bass*
Flaco Jiménez *accordion*
Jim Keltner *drums*
Paddy Moloney *whistle*
Van Dyke Parks *piano*
Mike Seeger *fiddle*

There's a bright side somewhere, there's
a bright side somewhere
I ain't gonna rest until I find it,
there's a bright side somewhere

There's more love somewhere, there's more
peace somewhere
I ain't gonna rest until I find it,
there's a bright side somewhere

People got a good job somewhere, got a
lot of good friends somewhere
Got a little suitcase, got a little
family, over on the bright side somewhere



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Dedicated to Buddy (?–2005) and to all our creature friends.

PRODUCED BY RY COODER

Recorded by Don Smith at Sound City Studios, Van Nuys, California.

Additional recording by Sunny D. Levine at Orange Stella Studio, Santa Monica, California, and in Beacon, New York; Martin Pradler at Chateau Martín, Los Angeles. Mixdown by Don Smith and Martin Pradler at Sound City Studios.

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All songs written by Ry Cooder, Hi-Lo Shag Music, BMI.

"Sundown Town," "Three Chords and the Truth," by Ry Cooder and Joachim Cooder, Zegama Beach Music, BMI; "One Cat, One Vote, One Beer," by Ry Cooder, Joachim Cooder, and Jared Smith, Privy Seal Music, BMI. "Footprints in the Snow" and "There's a Bright Side Somewhere" are traditional; new lyrics by Ry Cooder, Hi-Lo Shag Music, BMI.

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Mike Seeger, Roland White.



PRODUCED BY RY COODER

1. SUITCASE IN MY HAND
2. CAT AND MOUSE
3. STRIKE!
4. J. EDGAR
5. FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW
6. SUNDOWN TOWN
7. GREEN DOG
8. THE DYING TRUCK DRIVER
9. CHRISTMAS IN SOUTHGATE
10. HANK WILLIAMS
11. RED CAT TILL I DIE
12. THREE CHORDS AND THE TRUTH
13. MY NAME IS BUDDY
14. ONE CAT, ONE VOTE, ONE BEER
15. CARDBOARD AVENUE
16. FARM GIRL
17. THERE'S A BRIGHT SIDE SOMEWHERE

