

This Old Guitar
(In memoriam Pete Seeger)

3.25.14, 4AM

If this old guitar could talk it would spin you out a tale G - C G
Of railroad bulls and boxcars and nights in county jail C Em Am D
Of old men sipping coffee by a hobo jungle fire G - C Am
And pledges made and broken by the cold hand of desire C G D G

If this old guitar could whistle it would whistle you a tune
Of steel doors clanging shut at the hollow stroke of noon
Of folks who turned the other way as bullets found their mark
If this guitar could whistle it would whistle in the dark

If this old guitar could sing it would sing of days gone by C - G -
Of Tom Joad and Joe Hill and the sweet by and by C Em Am D
It would sing a song of working folk who made the hammers ring G C
Before they busted up the union halls oh this guitar could sing Am G D G

This old guitar don't say much don't say much any more
Like a voice heard in whispers through an old cabin door
But I recall a time that you could hear from miles away
On a highway bright with promise what this old guitar would say

*Written just before dawn in March of 2014. Pete Seeger, the grand old man of American folksong, had died two months earlier, and I offer this in his memory. Tom Joad is the hero of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Joe Hill the IWW activist, songwriter, and labor martyr executed by firing squad in 1915. "The sweet by and by" echoes his satirical song "The Preacher and the Slave."*