

Seven Locks Road

Background: Bruce Springsteen once said that to write a song, latch on to a nice metaphor and go from there. Inject a bit of truth and reality to make it seem real - and to a degree it is - but embellish it with some exaggeration to make it seem larger than life. No one does that better than Bruce, who created fictional characters based on real life people or composites, with nicknames and a life unfolding in what was really just a random beach town with a tiny nondescript boardwalk that he breathed life into to make it seem bigger than Las Vegas or Monte Carlo. For those there back then, it was.

This is a song that speaks to a piece of lost Americana outside of Washington DC (the C&O Canal), threaded with some local icons (Great Falls, the Potomac River, Georgetown, the Chesapeake Bay), and a road with a prison at one end and the Potomac River at the other. But that's not really what the song is about.

The back story is fictional but meant to have meaning threaded through the song in symbols and metaphors. It is deliberately vague and left with minimal context or resolution so as to allow the listener to interpret however it impacts them. However they do, it is right. But look for the symbolism in the words and phrasing, particularly the second verse, which really isn't about the Potomac River.

The C&O canal shut down 100 years from the year I coincidentally wrote this song, in 1924. Like anything that was once significant, there are remnants of it.

Written: Spring 2024

Verse 1

She climbed the rocks
To watch the rapids descend
To get closer to her God
Maybe he'll wash away her sins
As if Great Falls could cleanse her soul
As if contrition could set her free
Her baptism by fire is now just
A graveyard of bad memories

Pre-chorus 1

From the river to the prison
Lost souls are condemned to go
From the prison to the river
Redemption rises slow
Down past Carderock
To where the Potomac River flows
Her spirit leads your soul

Chorus

Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road

Verse 2

Through all her twists and turns
Where water and rocks collide
Lay all she's seen and heard
But it's never the same way twice
Into Georgetown her heart bleeds
Out to the Chesapeake
Where whispers paint the wind
And legends create their mystique

Pre-chorus 2

From the river to the prison
Lost souls are condemned to go
From the prison to the river
Absolution arrives slow
Down past Carderock
To where the Potomac River flows
Her spirit grieves alone

Chorus

Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road

Bridge

The canal used to run through here
For a mile and a quarter more
These 7 locks breathed life into a town
That didn't know rich from poor
Bringing Allegheny coal
From '31 to '24
She's been dead now, shutdown
For 100 years or more
100 years or more

Verse 3

She climbed back down the rocks
As the sun shared a last encore
Before dipping beneath the sky
Just like every day before
If the night forgives the day that gently

Then surely you and I can mend
Because after all this water dries
I know you'll need a friend

Pre-chorus 3

From the river to the prison
Lost souls are condemned to go
From the prison to the river
Salvation rises slow
Down past Carderock
To where the Potomac River flows
Her spirit leaves your soul

Chorus

Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road

Outro

Every time I think of you
I feel the blood burn in my veins
Every time I wake up
I can only scream your name
I never meant to hurt you
To cause you this much pain
I don't know where you are now
But I know I'll see you again
Yeah I'll see you again
Down Seven Locks Road
Down Seven Locks Road