

# In the Jailhouse Now

Words and music by Jimmie Rodgers



Jimmie Rodgers's lighthearted tale of crime and justice has proved to be one of his most enduring songs, covered by numerous country stars and revived for contemporary audiences in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou*. Rodgers knew how to mine a successful vein, and even recorded "In the Jailhouse Now, No. 2," with the same melody and theme but different lyrics, two years after his original recording. The version transcribed here was recorded on February 15, 1928, with Rodgers on guitar and Ellsworth T. Cozzens on banjo.

In this version, Rodgers plays a variation on one of his stock intros and then sticks

to alternating bass rhythm for most of the song, with just a couple of bass runs (on the G7 before the chorus, for example), giving Cozzens two short, strummed banjo solos in the interludes after the yodels. Rodgers never felt obliged to constrict the lengths of his verses or choruses to any standard form. Instead he lets his guitar follow his voice, inserting bars of  $\frac{2}{4}$  whenever necessary. And even if his vocal remained the same, the guitar chords might change. For example, the third chorus is the same length and has the same vocal phrasing as the first two, but Rodgers is ambivalent about where the chords change in the phrase "in the jailhouse now." Sometimes it's on "jailhouse"; sometimes it's on "now."

—SCOTT NYGAARD

## Intro C



## G7



## C



## G7



## C



Musical notation for the Intro, showing a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass staff with a bass line. The bass line features a repeating pattern of 0 0 0 1 1 1 0 0 0 2 2 2, with triplets and other rhythmic markings.

## Verse

6 I had a friend named Ram-bl-in' Bob who used to steal gam-ble and rob  
2-3. See additional lyrics.

10 He thought he was the smart-est guy in town But I

15 found out last Mon-day that Bob got locked up Sun-day They've

19 got him in the jail-house way down town He's in the jail-house now



# roots of country rhythm

24 He's in the jail-house now I told him once or twice to quit

29 play-in' cards and shoot-in' dice He's in the jail-house now

**Yodel**

34 Oh lay hee hee ee hee Oh lee oh

39 hee hee-ee-ee hee Ah dee oh a lay hee hee hee - dle-ee-hee Oh lay hee

1. I had a friend named Ramblin' Bob  
Who used to steal, gamble, and rob  
He thought he was the smartest guy in town  
But I found out last Monday

That Bob got locked up Sunday  
They've got him in the jailhouse way downtown

## Chorus

He's in the jailhouse now

He's in the jailhouse now

I told him once or twice

To quit playin' cards and shootin' dice

He's in the jailhouse now

## Yodel

2. He played a game called poker, pinochle, whist, and euchre  
But shootin' dice was his greatest game  
Now he's downtown in jail, nobody to go his bail  
The judge done said that he refused a fine

## Repeat chorus and yodel

3. I went out last Tuesday, met a girl named Suzie

I told her I was the swellest man around

We started to spend my money, then she started to call me honey

We took in every cabaret in town

## Chorus 2

We're in the jailhouse now, we're in the jailhouse now

I told the judge right to his face

We didn't like to see this place

We're in the jailhouse now

## Yodel