

Sixteen Tons

Words & Music:

Believed to be George S. Davis

Merle Travis claimed authorship of this song on his 1947 recording, but it is believed that Davis wrote it in the 1930s. In 2005, GE used this for an ad for "clean coal". They apparently used the same devoid-of-irony ad agency that chose "Born In The U.S.A." for Ronald Reagan's campaigns. The ad was pulled when someone actually listened to the lyrics and meaning.

Am Dm E
Some people say a man's made out of mud.
Am Dm E
But, a poor man's made out of muscle and blood.
Am Dm
Muscle and blood, skin and bones,
Am E E7
A mind that's weak and a body that's strong.

CHORUS:

Am Am/G Am/F E Am Am/G Am/F E
You load sixteen tons and whaddya get? Another day older and deeper in debt.
Am Dm
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go,
Am E Am
I owe my soul to the company store

I was born one morning when the sun didn't shine,
Picked up my shovel and walked to the mine.
I loaded sixteen tons of number nine coal;
The straw boss said "Well, damn my soul!"

CHORUS:

I was born one morning, it was drizzling rain.
"Fightin'" and "Trouble" are my middle name.
I was raised in a cane break by an old mama lion.
Can't no high-toned woman make me walk the line.

CHORUS:

If you see me comin', you better step aside.
Another man didn't and another man died.
I've got a fist full of iron and a fist full of steel.
If the left one don't get you, well, the right one will.

CHORUS: