

# Goodnight Irene

Huddie 'Lead Belly' Ledbetter was singing a version of this song from as early as 1908, which he claimed to have learned from his uncles Terrell and Bob.

## CHORUS

*C* *G7* *C*  
Irene goodnight, Irene goodnight.  
*C* *C7* *F* *Dm*  
Goodnight Irene, goodnight Irene;  
*G7* *C*  
I'll see you in my dreams.

*C* *G7*  
Last Saturday night I got married.  
*G7* *C*  
Me and my wife settled down.  
*C* *C7* *F* *Dm*  
Now me and my wife are parted;  
*G7* *C*  
I'm gonna take another stroll downtown.

## CHORUS

*C* *G7*  
Sometimes I live in the country.  
*G7* *C*  
Sometimes I live in town.  
*C* *C7* *F* *Dm*  
Sometimes I take a great notion;  
*G7* *C*  
To jump into the river and drown.

## CHORUS

*C* *G7*  
Stop ramblin', stop your gamblin'.  
*G7* *C*  
Stop stayin' out late at night.  
*C* *C7* *F* *Dm*  
Go home to your wife and family;  
*G7* *C*  
Stay there by your fireside bright.

## CHORUS x 2

Capo in the 2nd fret to play this tune  
in the key of E.

## History

"Goodnight, Irene" or "Irene, Goodnight," is a 20th-century American folk standard, written in 3/4 time, first recorded by American blues musician Huddie 'Lead Belly' Ledbetter in 1933.

The specific origins of "Irene" are unclear. Lead Belly was singing a version of the song from as early as 1908, which he claimed to have learned from his uncles Terell and Bob. Some evidence suggests an 1886 Gussie L. Davis song was itself based on an even earlier song which has not survived. Regardless of where he first heard it, by the 1930s Lead Belly had made the song his own, modifying the rhythm and rewriting most of the verses.

In 1950, one year after Leadbelly's death, the American folk band The Weavers recorded a version of "Goodnight, Irene." The single first reached the Billboard Best Seller chart on June 30, 1950 and lasted 25 weeks on the chart, peaking at #1 and was *Billboard's* Number 1 song of 1950.

Although generally faithful, the Weavers chose to omit some of Leadbelly's more controversial lyrics, leading *Time* magazine to label it a "dehydrated" and "prettied up" version of the original. Due to the recording's popularity, however, The Weavers' lyrics are the ones generally used today and are shown above.



The Weavers, were formed in November 1948  
Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert, Lee Hays, Fred Hellerman

*Wikipedia*

Huddie Ledbetter (c1885 - 1949 ) was born near Murringsport, LA. A legendary singer and guitarist, he was raised near Shreveport, La., worked on farms in Texas, and began performing in Dallas, Texas, as a protégé of Blind Lemon Jefferson in the 1910s. Leadbelly got his own nickname because of his deep bass voice. In 1917 he was sentenced to prison on a murder conviction; eight years later he literally sang a plea of mercy to the Texas governor and was pardoned. A similar episode occurred in 1935: In 1930 he had been sentenced to ten years for wounding a group of men with a knife; in 1934 Leadbelly composed a song for the Louisiana governor, and, with the intervention of the folklorists John and Alan Lomax, won a reprieve. Over the next year, Leadbelly traveled with John Lomax and recorded hundreds of songs

that formed a cornerstone of the Library of Congress folklore archives. In 1938 he moved permanently to New York City, where he recorded for Columbia Records and became a celebrated figure in literary and political circles. His best-known songs include "Irene, Good Night," "Rock Island Line," and "Midnight Special."

*biography.com*