

# MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Traditional Old-Time and Bluegrass Song; **DATE:** Early 1900's; **CATEGORY:** Early Country and Bluegrass Songs; **RECORDING INFO:** Hoyt Axton; Blue Sky Boys; Leadbelly; Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry; Mac Wiseman; **NOTES:** Leadbelly's arrangement of the Midnight Special has become the most popular arrangement for this song. A character from the song "Midnight Special": "Sheriff Benson will arrest you..." if you go to Houston, the song warns. The sheriff in the song may have a historical basis in an actual sheriff, T.A. Binford, county sheriff of Harris County, Texas, from Dec. 1918 to Jan. 1, 1937. Indeed, Leadbelly sang "Binford," not "Benson" in his version of "Midnight Special."

(G) C G  
If you ev - er go to Hous - ton\_\_\_\_\_ You know you bet - ter walk right\_\_\_\_\_

D7 G  
you know you bet - ter not stag - ger\_\_\_\_\_ You bet - ter not fight\_\_\_\_\_ Be - cause the she - riff will a -

C G  
rrest you\_\_\_\_\_ You know he'll car - ry you down And you can bet your bot - tom

D7 G Chorus C  
dol - lar\_\_\_\_\_ Oh Lord, you're pen - i - te - n - tia - ry bound\_\_\_\_\_ Let the Mid - night Spe - cial

G  
shine her light on me,\_\_\_\_\_ Let the Mid - night

D7 G  
Spe - cial\_\_\_\_\_ shine her ev - er lov - in' light on me.\_\_\_\_\_

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(G) C G  
Yonder come Miss Rosie, How in the world do you know?

D7 G  
I can tell her by her apron, And the dress she wore

C G  
Umbrella on her shoulder, Piece of paper in her hand

D7 G  
Goes a marchin' to the Captain, Says I want my man. *Chorus*

Now here comes jumpin' Judy, I'll tell you how I know  
You know, Judy brought jumpin', To the whole wide world  
She brought it in the morning, Just about the break of day  
You know, if I ever get to jumpin', Oh Lord, I'll up and jump away. *Chorus*