

DUST CAN'T KILL ME (Woody Guthrie) (1938)



New song ideas were coming more frequently now [1938]. They could be triggered by a small change in the lyric of an old tune, or spring full-blown from his head. He always was refining the words, always juggling them around -- playing with them seemed his greatest pleasure. He would forget old verses, and make up new ones as he sang. He would change lines to fit an audience or a situation. Everything seemed negotiable except the anger. And sometimes the anger became a near shriek, as in the opening verse of "Dust Can't Kill Me," a song that captured the defiant pride and anguish Woody had seen in the camps....

Joe Klein, Woody Guthrie: A Life, London, 1981, p. 116.

Lyrics as recorded by Woody Guthrie, RCA Studios, Camden, NJ, 26 Apr 1940, released on "[Dust Bowl Ballads](#)," transcribed by Manfred Helfert.
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That old dust storm killed my baby,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.

That old dust storm killed my family,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.

That old landlord got my homestead,
But he can't get me, Lord,
And he can't get me.

That old dry spell killed my crop, boys,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.

That old tractor got my home, boys,
But it can't get me, Lord
And it can't get me.

That old tractor run my house down,
But it can't get me down,
And it can't get me.

That old pawn shop got my furniture,
But it can't get me, Lord,
And it can't get me.

That old highway's got my relatives,
But it can't get me, Lord,
And it can't get me.

That old dust might kill my wheat, boys,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.

I have weathered a-many a dust storm,
But it can't get me, boys,
And it can't kill me.

That old dust storm, well, it blowed my barn down,
But it can't blow me down,
And it can't blow me down.

That old wind might blow this world down,
But it can't blow me down,
It can't kill me.

That old dust storm's killed my baby,
But it can't kill me, Lord
And it can't kill me.

