

Last Chance

Traditional

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G D7

G * See notes

1. Em 2. Em G

Em G

1. Em * See notes 2. Em

G Up the neck break D7

G 1. Em 2. Em

Em

31

G

35

G

Em

* See notes

39

Em

This is my interpretation of an old time banjo tune that comes from the playing of old time musician Hobart Smith of Saltville, Virginia. Smith, who died in 1965, was a multi-instrumentalist equally at home on banjo, fiddle, and guitar, and like his contemporary Doc Boggs, was heavily influenced by both black and white musicians. Smith played this tune in the key of G in an unusual tuning, gEGDE, so that he could easily get the relative minor that both parts of the tune resolve to. I have set the tune in my alternate G tuning instead, gDGAD, which shares a key similarity with Smith's tuning, in that neither have the major third, or B note, on an open string. This gives both tunings a modal quality.

In the 9th measure of the A part, and throughout the B part, I use a Bb note in the melody. I have seen some clawhammer players (who are presumably listening to the same Smith recording as I did), play this as a B natural. Smith is using a fretless banjo, and is actually pretty consistently hitting the quarter tone between the two notes, both in ending his slides, and beginning his pull-offs. He uses a natural B elsewhere in the high part, an octave higher, so I can see where they would err in the direction of the major third throughout. I just don't hear it that way. Smith was heavily influenced by the blues in general, and it shows in his playing of this tune, and I think he tends closer to the minor in both pitch and feel, and so I have tabbed this with the Bb instead.

Smith plays the B part, or "coarse" part of the tune crooked, in that he only plays one measure of the Em at the end of the line, thus only playing seven measures. Almost all of the modern pickers I have heard do this tune have made it regular by adding another measure of Em to round it out to a full 8 measures, and I have done so here (see measures 19 and 38). When in Rome...