

Running Down to Cuba

The earliest known reference is in a book from 1924 titled "A Gipsy of the Horn"¹¹, in which author Rex Clements recounts his sailing career ending 20 years earlier. He calls this one a "shanty for doing nothing at all". It was sometimes started by a discontented crowd who felt they were having their old iron worked up unnecessarily. One of the men would begin: "I've got a sister nine foot high!" and was taken up by the chorus: "Way down in Cuba!" but, instead of heaving, the words were followed by three short jumps. It was infrequently heard and always came to an abrupt end after the first line, in obedience to an order from the mate to "Stop that!"

*The only known historical lyrics are from *American Sea Songs and Chanteys (1948)*; editor Frank Shay calls it an "elusive Mississippi River song" and offers just two verses. Not in *Roud*.*

*The song is heard in the 2013 video game *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, and this version uses the lyrics from the game. Words by Michel Schrey, Nils Brown, and Seán Dagher (2013)*

Running down to Cuba with a load of sugar

Weigh me boys to Cuba!

Make her run you lime juice squeezes

Chorus

Running down to Cuba <occasional> Hey!

Weigh, me boys to Cuba

Running down to Cuba †

O I got a sister she's nine feet tall

Sleeps in the kitchen with her feet in the hall

Chorus

The captain he will trim the sails

Winging the water over the rails

Chorus

Give me a gal can dance Fandango

Round as a melon and sweet as a mango

Chorus

Load this sugar and homeward go

Mister mate he told me so

Chorus

¹¹<https://archive.org/details/gipsyofhornnarra00clem/page/232/mode/1up>