

LANGSTON HUGHES



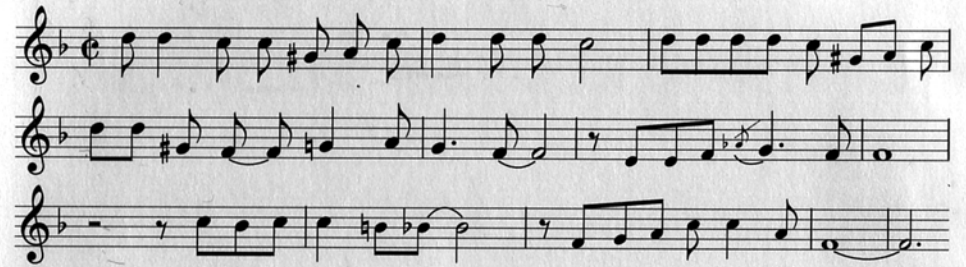
ALFRED • A • KNOPF

NEW YORK 1961

**ASK YOUR
MAMA**

**12 MOODS
FOR JAZZ**

HESITATION BLUES
(Traditional)



The traditional folk melody of the "Hesitation Blues" is the leitmotif for this poem. In and around it, along with the other recognizable melodies employed, there is room for spontaneous jazz improvisation, particularly between verses, where the voice pauses.

The musical figurine indicated after each "Ask your mama" line may incorporate the impudent little melody of the old break, "Shave and a haircut, fifteen cents."

SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT
(Figurine)



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

IN THE
IN THE QUARTER
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE DOORS ARE DOORS OF PAPER
DUST OF DINGY ATOMS
BLOWS A SCRATCHY SOUND.
AMORPHOUS JACK-O'-LANTERNS CAPER
AND THE WIND WON'T WAIT FOR MIDNIGHT
FOR FUN TO BLOW DOORS DOWN.

BY THE RIVER AND THE RAILROAD
WITH FLUID FAR-OFF GOING
BOUNDARIES BIND UNBINDING
A WHIRL OF WHISTLES BLOWING
NO TRAINS OR STEAMBOATS GOING—
YET LEONTYNE'S UNPACKING.

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE DOORKNOB LETS IN LIEDER

*The
rhythmically
rough
scraping
of a guira
continues
monotonously
until a lonely
flute call,
high and
far away,
merges
into piano
variations
on German
lieder
gradually
changing
into*

MORE THAN GERMAN EVER BORE,
HER YESTERDAY PAST GRANDPA —
NOT OF HER OWN DOING —
IN A POT OF COLLARD GREENS
IS GENTLY STEWING.

THERE, FORBID US TO REMEMBER,
COMES AN AFRICAN IN MID-DECEMBER
SENT BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT
AMONG THE SHACKS TO MEET THE BLACKS:
LEONTYNE SAMMY HARRY POITIER
LOVELY LENA MARIAN LOUIS PEARLIE MAE

GEORGE S. SCHUYLER MOLTO BENE
COME WHAT MAY LANGSTON HUGHES
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE RAILROAD AND THE RIVER
HAVE DOORS THAT FACE EACH WAY
AND THE ENTRANCE TO THE MOVIE'S
UP AN ALLEY UP THE SIDE.

PUSHCARTS FOLD AND UNFOLD
IN A SUPERMARKET SEA.
AND WE BETTER FIND OUT, MAMA,
WHERE IS THE COLORED LAUNDROMAT,
SINCE WE MOVED UP TO MOUNT VERNON.

RALPH ELLISON AS VESPUCIUS
INA-YOURA AT THE MASTHEAD
ARNA BONTEMPS CHIEF CONSULTANT
MOLTO BENE MELLOW BABY PEARLIE MAE

*old-time
traditional
12-bar
blues
up strong
between verses
until
African
drums
throb
against
blues*

*fading
as the
music
ends.
TACIT*

*"Hesitation
Blues" with
full band
up strong
for a chorus
in the clear
between verses
then down
under voice
softly as
deep-toned*

SHALOM ALEICHEM JIMMY BALDWIN SAMMY
COME WHAT MAY — THE SIGNS POINT:

GHANA GUINEA

AND THE TOLL BRIDGE FROM WESTCHESTER
IS A GANGPLANK ROCKING RISKY
BETWEEN THE DECK AND SHORE
OF A BOAT THAT NEVER QUITE
KNEW ITS DESTINATION.

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
ORNETTE AND CONSTERNATION
CLAIM ATTENTION FROM THE PAPERS
THAT HAVE NO NEWS THAT DAY OF MOSCOW.

IN THE POT BEHIND THE
PAPER DOORS WHAT'S COOKING?
WHAT'S SMELLING, LEONTYNE?
LIEDER, LOVELY LIEDER
AND A LEAF OF COLLARD GREEN.
LOVELY LIEDER LEONTYNE.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE NEGROES
NKRUMAH

IN THE SHADOW OF THE NEGROES
NASSER NASSER

IN THE SHADOW OF THE NEGROES
ZIK AZIKIWE

CUBA CASTRO GUINEA TOURÉ
FOR NEED OR PROPAGANDA
KENYATTA

AND THE TOM DOGS OF THE CABIN

*distant
African
drums
join the
blues until
the music
dies. . . .*

TACIT

*Delicate
lieder
on piano
continues
between verses
to merge
softly
into the
melody of the
"Hesitation
Blues" asking
its haunting
question,
"How long
must I*

THE COCOA AND THE CANE BRAKE
THE CHAIN GANG AND THE SLAVE BLOCK
TARRED AND FEATHERED NATIONS
SEAGRAM'S AND FOUR ROSES
\$5.00 BAGS A DECK OR DAGGA.
FILIBUSTER VERSUS VETO
LIKE A SNAPPING TURTLE —
WON'T LET GO UNTIL IT THUNDERS
WON'T LET GO UNTIL IT THUNDERS
TEARS THE BODY FROM THE SHADOW
WON'T LET GO UNTIL IT THUNDERS
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES

AND THEY ASKED ME RIGHT AT CHRISTMAS
IF MY BLACKNESS, WOULD I RUB OFF?
I SAID, ASK YOUR MAMA.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES . . .
NIGHTMARES . . . DREAMS! OH!
DREAMING THAT THE NEGROES
OF THE SOUTH HAVE TAKEN OVER —
VOTED ALL THE DIXIECRATS
RIGHT OUT OF POWER —
COMES THE COLORED HOUR:
MARTIN LUTHER KING IS GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA,
DR. RUFUS CLEMENT HIS CHIEF ADVISOR,
ZELMA WATSON GEORGE THE HIGH GRAND WORTHY.
IN WHITE PILLARED MANSIONS
SITTING ON THEIR WIDE VERANDAS,
WEALTHY NEGROES HAVE WHITE SERVANTS,

*wait?
Can I
get it
now—or
must I
hesitate?"
Suddenly
the drums
roll like
thunder
as the
music ends
sonorously.
TACIT*

*Figure impishly
into "Dixie"
ending in high
shrill flute call.
TACIT*

WHITE SHARECROPPERS WORK THE BLACK PLANTATIONS,
AND COLORED CHILDREN HAVE WHITE MAMMIES:

MAMMY FAUBUS
MAMMY EASTLAND
MAMMY PATTERSON.

DEAR, DEAR DARLING OLD WHITE MAMMIES —
SOMETIMES EVEN BURIED WITH OUR FAMILY!

DEAR OLD
MAMMY FAUBUS!

CULTURE, THEY SAY, IS A TWO-WAY STREET:
HAND ME MY MINT JULEP, MAMMY.

MAKE HASTE!

*"When the Saints
Go Marching In"
joyously for two
full choruses
with maracas. . . .*

RIDE, RED, RIDE

I WANT TO SEE MY MOTHER MOTHER
WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES:

TELL ME HOW LONG —
MUST I WAIT?
CAN I GET IT NOW?
ÇA IRA! ÇA IRA!
OR MUST I HESITATE?
IRA! BOY, IRA!

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
TU ABUELA, ¿DÓNDE ESTÁ?
LOST IN CASTRO'S BEARD?
TU ABUELA, ¿DÓNDE ESTÁ?
BLOWN SKY HIGH BY MONT PELÉE?
¿DÓNDE ESTÁ? ¿DÓNDE ESTÁ?
WAS SHE FLEEING WITH LUMUMBA?
(GRANDPA'S GRANDMA'S GRANNY

*Maracas
continue
rhythms
of
"When
the
Saints
Go
Marching
In"
until
the
piano
gently
supplies
a softly
lyrical
calypso
joined now*

ALWAYS TOOK THE OTHER SIDE.)
A LITTLE RUM WITH SUGAR.
AY, MORENA, ¿DÓNDE ESTÁ?
GRENADINE GRANADA OR
DE SANGRE ES LA GOTA?

SANTA CLAUS, FORGIVE ME,
BUT YOUR GIFT BOOKS ARE SUBVERSIVE,
YOUR DOLLS ARE INTERRACIAL.
YOU'LL BE CALLED BY EASTLAND.
WHEN THEY ASK YOU IF YOU KNEW ME,
DON'T TAKE THE FIFTH AMENDMENT.

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
RIDING IN A JAGUAR, SANTA CLAUS,
SEEMS LIKE ONCE I MET YOU
WITH ADAM POWELL FOR CHAUFFEUR
AND YOUR HAIR WAS BLOWING BACK
IN THE WIND.

*by the
flute
that ends
in a high
discordant
cry.
TACIT*

*Loud and
lively
up-tempo
Dixieland
jazz for
full chorus
to end.*

SHADES OF PIGMEAT

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
 BELGIUM SHADOW LEOPOLD
 PREMIER DOWNING AGING
 GENERAL BOURSE BELEAGUERED
 EASTLAND AND MALAN DECEASED
 DEAD OR LIVE THEIR GHOSTS CAST SHADOWS
 IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
 WHERE NEGROES SING SO WELL
 NEGROES SING SO WELL
 SING SO WELL
 SO WELL.
 WELL?
 WHERE IS LOTTE LENYA
 AND WHO IS MACK THE KNIFE
 AND WAS PORGY EVER MARRIED
 BEFORE TAKING BESS TO WIFE
 AND WHY WOULD MAI (NOT MAY)
 BECOME JEWISH
 THE HARD
 WAY?

TACIT

Humming:
 "All God's
 Chillun
 Got
 Shoes"

TACIT

"Eli Eli"

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
 ANSWER QUESTIONS ANSWER
 AND ANSWERS WITH A QUESTION
 AND THE TALMUD IS CORRECTED
 BY A STUDENT IN A FEZ
 WHO IS TO JESUIT
 AS NORTH POLE IS TO SOUTH
 OR ZIK TO ALABAMA
 OR BIG MAYBELL TO
 THE MET.

HIP BOOTS
 DEEP IN THE BLUES
 (AND I NEVER HAD A HIP BOOT ON)
 HAIR
 BLOWING BACK IN THE WIND
 (AND I NEVER HAD THAT MUCH HAIR)
 DIAMONDS IN PAWN
 (AND I NEVER HAD A DIAMOND
 IN MY NATURAL LIFE)
 ME
 IN THE WHITE HOUSE
 (AND AIN'T NEVER HAD A BLACK HOUSE)
 DO, JESUS!
 LORD!
 AMEN!

*merging
 into a
 wailing
 Afro-
 Arabic
 theme
 with
 flutes
 and
 steady
 drum beat
 changing
 into
 blues
 with
 each
 instrument
 gradually
 dropping
 out one
 by one
 leaving
 only the
 flute at
 the end
 playing a
 whimsical
 little
 blues of
 its own. . . .*

ODE TO DINAH

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE TO SNOW NOW ACCLIMATED
SHADOWS SHOW UP SHARPER,
THE ONE COIN IN THE METER
KEEPS THE GAS ON WHILE THE TV
FAILS TO GET PEARL BAILEY.
SINCE IT'S SNOWING ON THE TV
THIS LAST QUARTER OF CENTENNIAL
100-YEARS EMANCIPATION
MECHANICS NEED REPAIRING
FOR NIAGARA FALLS IS FROZEN
AS IS CUSTOM BELOW ZERO.
MAMA'S FRUITCAKE SENT FROM GEORGIA
CRUMBLES AS IT'S NIBBLED
TO A DISC BY DINAH
IN THE RUM THAT WAFTS MARACAS
FROM ANOTHER DISTANT QUARTER
TO THIS QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE SONG'S MAHALIA'S DAUGHTER
STEP-FATHERED BY BLIND LEMON

TACIT

*Traditional
blues
in gospel
tempo
à la Ray
Charles
to fade
out*

STEP-FATHERED BY
BLIND LEMON. . . .

WHEN NIAGARA FALLS IS FROZEN
THERE'S A BAR WITH WINDOWS FROSTED
FROM THE COLD THAT MAKES NIAGARA
GHOSTLY MONUMENT OF WINTER
TO A BAND THAT ONCE PASSED OVER
WITH A WOMAN WITH TWO PISTOLS
ON A TRAIN THAT LOST NO PASSENGERS
ON THE LINE WHOSE ROUTE WAS FREEDOM
THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF WHITE DANGER
TO THE HAVEN OF WHITE QUAKERS
WHOSE HAYMOW WAS A MANGER MANGER
WHERE THE CHRIST CHILD ONCE HAD LAIN.
SO THE WHITENESS AND THE WATER
MELT TO WATER ONCE AGAIN
AND THE ROAR OF NIAGARA
DROWNS THE RUMBLE OF THAT TRAIN
DISTANT ALMOST NOW AS DISTANT
AS FORGOTTEN PAIN IN THE QUARTER
QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WITH A BAR WITH FROSTED WINDOWS
NO CONDUCTOR AND NO TRAIN.

BONGO-BONGO! CONGO!
BUFFALO AND BONGO!
NIAGARA OF THE INDIANS!
NIAGARA OF THE CONGO!

BUFFALO TO HARLEM'S OVERNIGHT:
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE WHITE SHADOWS PASS,

slowly. . . .

TACIT

*Verse of
"Battle
Hymn
of the Republic"
through
refrain*

*repeated
ever
softer
to
fade
out
slowly
here*

TACIT

*Drums
up strong
for
interlude
and out.*

TACIT

DARK SHADOWS BECOME DARKER BY A SHADE
SUCKED IN BY FAT JUKEBOXES
WHERE DINAH'S SONGS ARE MADE
FROM SLABS OF SILVER SHADOWS.
AS EACH QUARTER CLINKS
INTO A MILLION POOLS OF QUARTERS
TO BE CARTED OFF BY BRINK'S,
THE SHADES OF DINAH'S SINGING
MAKE A SPANGLE OUT OF QUARTERS RINGING
TO KEEP FAR-OFF CANARIES
IN SILVER CAGES SINGING.

TELL ME, PRETTY PAPA,
WHAT TIME IS IT NOW?
PRETTY PAPA, PRETTY PAPA,
WHAT TIME IS IT NOW?
DON'T CARE WHAT TIME IT IS—
GONNA LOVE YOU ANYHOW

WHILE NIAGARA FALLS IS FROZEN.

SANTA CLAUS, FORGIVE ME,
BUT BABIES BORN IN SHADOWS
IN THE SHADOW OF THE WELFARE
IF BORN PREMATURE
BRING WELFARE CHECKS MUCH SOONER
YET NO PRESENT DOWN THE CHIMNEY.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE WELFARE
CHOCOLATE BABIES BORN IN SHADOWS
ARE TRIBAL NOW NO LONGER
SAVE IN MEMORIES OF GANGRENOUS ICING
ON A TWENTY-STORY HOUSING PROJECT
THE CHOCOLATE GANGRENOUS ICING OF

*"Hesitation
Blues"
softly
asking
over
and
over
its old
question,
"Tell
me
how
long?"
until
music
DIES. . . .
TACIT*

JUST WAIT.

TRIBAL NOW NO LONGER PAPA MAMA
IN RELATION TO THE CHILD,
ONCE YOUR BROTHER'S KEEPER
NOW NOT EVEN KEEPER TO YOUR CHILD—
SHELTERED NOW NO LONGER.
BORN TO GROW UP WILD—
TRIBAL NOW NO LONGER ONE FOR ALL
AND ALL FOR ONE NO LONGER
EXCEPT IN MEMORIES OF HATE
UMBILICAL IN SULPHUROUS CHOCOLATE:
GOT TO WAIT—
THIS LAST QUARTER OF CENTENNIAL:
GOT TO WAIT.

I WANT TO GO TO THE SHOW, MAMA.
NO SHOW FARE, BABY—
NOT THESE DAYS.

ON THE BIG SCREEN OF THE WELFARE CHECK
A LYNCHED TOMORROW SWAYS. . . .
WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED A
LYNCHED TOMORROW SWAYS.

LIVING 20 YEARS IN 10
BETTER HURRY, BETTER HURRY
BEFORE THE PRESENT BECOMES WHEN
AND YOU'RE 50
WHEN YOU'RE 40
40 WHEN YOU'RE 30
30 WHEN YOU'RE 20
20 WHEN YOU'RE 10

*Drums
alone
softly
merging
into
the
ever-
questioning
"Hesitation
Blues"
beginning
slowly
but
gradually
building to
up-tempo
as the
metronome
of
fate
begins
to
tick
faster
and
faster*

*as the
music*

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE PENDULUM IS SWINGING
TO THE SHADOW OF THE BLUES,
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE WINNING
THERE'S NO WAY NOT TO LOSE.

WHERE THE SHADOWS MERGE WITH SHADOWS
THE DOOR MARKED LADIES OPENS INWARD
AND CAN KNOCK THE HADES
OUT OF ONE IN EXIT
IF PUSHED BY HURRIED ENTRANCE.
IN THE SHADOW OF THE QUARTER
WHERE THE PEOPLE ALL ARE DARKER
NOBODY NEED A MARKER.
AMEN IS NOT AN ENDING
BUT JUST A PUNCTUATION.
WHITE FOLKS' RECESSION
IS COLORED FOLKS' DEPRESSION.

THEY ASKED ME RIGHT AT CHRISTMAS,
WOULD I MARRY POCAHONTAS?
MEANWHILE DINAH EATING CHICKEN
NEVER MISSED A BITE
WHEN THE MAN SHOT AT THE WOMAN
AND BY MISTAKE SHOT OUT THE LIGHT.

dies

TACIT

*Rim shot.
Dixieland
up-tempo
for full chorus
to ending.*

BLUES IN STEREO

YOUR NUMBER'S COMING OUT!
BOUQUETS I'LL SEND YOU
AND DREAMS I'LL SEND YOU
AND HORSES SHOD WITH GOLD
ON WHICH TO RIDE IF MOTORCARS
WOULD BE TOO TAME —
TRIUMPHAL ENTRY SEND YOU —
SHOUTS FROM THE EARTH ITSELF
BARE FEET TO BEAT THE GREAT DRUMBEAT
OF GLORY TO YOUR NAME AND MINE
ONE AND THE SAME:
YOU BAREFOOT, TOO,
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE AN ANCIENT RIVER FLOWS
PAST HUTS THAT HOUSE A MILLION BLACKS
AND THE WHITE GOD NEVER GOES
FOR THE MOON WOULD WHITE HIS WHITENESS
BEYOND ITS MASK OF WHITENESS

TACIT

AND THE NIGHT MIGHT BE ASTONISHED
AND SO LOSE ITS REPOSE.

IN A TOWN NAMED AFTER STANLEY
NIGHT EACH NIGHT COMES NIGHTLY
AND THE MUSIC OF OLD MUSIC'S
BORROWED FOR THE HORNS
THAT DON'T KNOW HOW TO PLAY
ON LPS THAT WONDER
HOW THEY EVER GOT THAT WAY.

WHAT TIME IS IT, MAMA?
WHAT TIME IS IT NOW?
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO ME—
BUT I'M ASKING ANYHOW.
WHAT TIME IS IT, MAMA?
WHAT TIME NOW?

DOWN THE LONG HARD ROW THAT I BEEN HOEING
I THOUGHT I HEARD THE HORN OF PLENTY BLOWING.
BUT I GOT TO GET A NEW ANTENNA, LORD—
MY TV KEEPS ON SNOWING.

*African
drum-
beats
over
blues
that
gradually
mount
in
intensity
to
end
in
climax.
TACIT*

HORN OF PLENTY

SINGERS

TACIT

SINGERS LIKE O-
 SINGERS LIKE ODETTA—AND THAT STATUE
 ON BEDLOE'S ISLAND MANAGED BY SOL HUOK
 DANCERS BOJANGLES LATE LAMENTED \$ \$ \$ \$
 KATHERINE DUNHAM AL AND LEON \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 ARTHUR CARMEN ALVIN MARY \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 JAZZERS DUKE AND DIZZY ERIC DOLPHY \$ \$ \$
 MILES AND ELLA AND MISS NINA \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 STRAYHORN HIS BACKSTAGE WITH LUTHER \$ \$
 DO YOU READ MUSIC? AND LOUIS SAYING \$ \$
 NOT ENOUGH TO HURT MY PLAYING \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 GOSPEL SINGERS WHO PANT TO PACK \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 GOLDEN CROSSES TO A CADILLAC \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 BONDS AND STILL AND MARGARET STILL \$ \$
 GLOBAL TROTTERS BASEBALL BATTERS \$ \$ \$
 JACKIE WILLIE CAMPANELLA \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 FOOTBALL PLAYERS LEATHER PUNCHERS \$ \$ \$
 UNFORGOTTEN JOES AND SUGAR RAYS \$ \$ \$ \$

WHO BREAK AWAY LIKE COMETS \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 FROM LESSER STARS IN ORBIT \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 TO MOVE OUT TO ST. ALBANS \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 WHERE THE GRASS IS GREENER \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
 SCHOOLS ARE BETTER FOR THEIR CHILDREN \$
 AND OTHER KIDS LESS MEANER THAN ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢
 IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢
 WHERE WINTER'S NAME IS HAWKINS ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢
 AND NIAGARA FALLS IS FROZEN ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢
 IF SHOW FARE'S MORE THAN 30¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢ ¢

I MOVED OUT TO LONG ISLAND
 EVEN FARTHER THAN ST. ALBANS
 (WHICH LATELY IS STONE NOWHERE)
 I MOVED OUT EVEN FARTHER FURTHER FARTHER
 ON THE SOUND WAY OFF THE TURNPIKE—
 AND I'M THE ONLY COLORED.

GOT THERE! YES, I MADE IT!
 NAME IN THE PAPERS EVERY DAY!
 FAMOUS—THE HARD WAY—
 FROM NOBODY AND NOTHING TO WHERE I AM.
 THEY KNOW ME, TOO, DOWNTOWN,
 ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, EUROPE—
 ME WHO USED TO BE NOBODY,
 NOTHING BUT ANOTHER SHADOW
 IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES,
 NOW A NAME! MY NAME—A NAME!

YET THEY ASKED ME OUT ON MY PATIO
 WHERE DID I GET MY MONEY!

*"Hesitation
 Blues" 8 bars.*

TACIT

I SAID, FROM YOUR MAMA!
THEY WONDERED WAS I SENSITIVE
AND HAD A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER?
DID I KNOW CHARLIE MINGUS?
AND WHY DID RICHARD WRIGHT
LIVE ALL THAT WHILE IN PARIS
INSTEAD OF COMING HOME TO DECENT DIE
IN HARLEM OR THE SOUTH SIDE OF CHICAGO
OR THE WOMB OF MISSISSIPPI?
AND ONE SHOULD LOVE ONE'S COUNTRY
FOR ONE'S COUNTRY IS YOUR MAMA.

LIVING IN ST. ALBANS
SHADOW OF THE NEGROES
WESTPORT AND NEW CANAAN
IN THE SHADOW OF THE NEGROES—
HIGHLY INTEGRATED
MEANS TOO MANY NEGROES
EVEN FOR THE NEGROES—
ESPECIALLY FOR THE FIRST ONES
WHO MOVE IN UNOBTRUSIVE
BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH IN CASES
SEEKING SUBURB WITH NO JUKEBOX
POOL HALL OR BAR ON CORNER
SEEKING LAWNS AND SHADE TREES
SEEKING PEACE AND QUIET
AUTUMN LEAVES IN AUTUMN
HOLLAND BULBS IN SPRING
DECENT GARBAGE SERVICE
BIRDS THAT REALLY SING
\$40,000 HOUSES—

Figurine.

*Gently
yearning
lieder
on
piano
delicately
sedate,
quietly
fading
on the
word*

PAYMENTS NOT BELATED—
THE ONLY NEGROES IN THE BLOCK
INTEGRATED.

HORN OF PLENTY
IN ESCROW TO JOE GLASSER.
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
IN BILLINGTON'S CHURCH OF RUBBER.
LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF
IN GEORGE SOKOLSKY'S COLUMN.
BIRDS THAT REALLY SING.
EVERY DAY'S TOMORROW
AND ELECTION TIME
IS ALWAYS FOUR YEARS
FROM THE OTHER
AND MY LAWN MOWER
NEW AND SHINY
FROM THE BIG GLASS SHOPPING CENTER
CUTS MY HAIR ON CREDIT.

THEY RUNG MY BELL TO ASK ME
COULD I RECOMMEND A MAID.
I SAID, YES, YOUR MAMA.

*belated. . . .
TACIT*

*Again
the old
"Hesitation
Blues"
against the
trills
of birds,
but the
melody
ends in
a thin
high
flute call.*

TACIT

Figurine.

G O S P E L C H A - C H A

IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE PALMS AND COCONUTS
CHA-CHA LIKE CASTANETS
IN THE WIND'S FRENETIC FISTS
WHERE THE SAND SEEDS AND THE
SEA GOURDS MAKE MARACAS OUT OF ME,
ERZULIE PLAYS A TUNE
ON THE BONGO OF THE MOON.
THE PAPA DRUM OF SUN
AND THE MOTHER DRUM OF EARTH
KNOW TOURISTS ONLY FOR
THE MONEY THAT THEY'RE WORTH
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
MAMA MAMACITA PAPA PAPIAMENTO
DAMBALLA WEDO OGOUN AND THE HORSE
THAT LUGGED THE FIRST WHITE
FIRST WHITE TOURIST UP THE MOUNTAIN
TO THE CITADELLE OF SHADOWS SHADOWS

*Maracas . . .
in
cha-cha
tempo,
then
bongo drums
joined
by
the
piano,
guitar
and
claves,
eerie
and
strange*

WHERE THE SHADOWS OF THE NEGROES
ARE THE GHOSTS OF FORMER GLORY
TOUSSAINT WITH A THREAD
THREAD STILL PULLS HIS
PROW OF STONE STONE.
I BOIL A FISH AND SALT IT
(AND MY PLANTAINS)
WITH HIS GLORY.

¡AY, BAHIA!

¡AY, BAHIA!

SUNSETS STAINED WITH BLOOD
CLEAR GREEN CRYSTAL WATER
AND THE CRY THAT TURNED TO MUSIC
WHERE THE SEA SAND AND THE SEA GOURDS
MAKE CLAVES OF MY SORROWS
IN THE WIND'S FRENETIC FISTS.
MAMACITA! PAPA LEGBA! SHANGO!
BEDWARD! POCOMANIA! WEDO! OGOUN!
THE BOAT BEYOND THE FORTALEZA
TO THE VILLE OF NAÑIGO.
A LONG WAY TO BAHIA—
HOW I GOT THERE I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT'S HIS NAME, MY COUSIN,
WHO SEDUCED MARIE LAVEAU?
DAMBALLA WEDO! THE VIRGIN! BEDWARD!
JOHN JASPER! JESUS! DADDY GRACE!

I TRIED
LORD KNOWS I TRIED
DAMBALLA
I PRAYED

*like
bones
rattling
in a
sort
of off-
beat mambo
up strong
between verse
then
down
under
voice
to
gradually
die away
in the
lonely
swish-
swish of
the
maracas . . .
TACIT*

*Gospel
music
with a
very
heavy*

LORD KNOWS I PRAYED
DADDY
I CLIMBED
UP THAT STEEP HILL
THE VIRGIN
WITH A CROSS
LORD KNOWS I CLIMBED
BUT WHEN I GOT
JOHN JASPER JESUS
WHEN I GOT TO CALVARY
UP THERE ON THAT HILL
ALREADY THERE WAS THREE—
AND ONE, YES, ONE
WAS BLACK AS ME.

CHA-CHA . . . CHA-CHA
CHA. . .

*beat
as if
marching
forward
against
great
odds,
climbing
a
high
hill—
to again
fade into
the dry
swish of
maracas
in cha-cha
time.*

IS IT TRUE?

FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE QUARTER
SHOUTS ARE WHISPERS CARRYING
TO THE FARTHERST CORNERS SOMETIMES
OF THE NOW KNOWN WORLD
UNDECIPHERED AND UNLETTERED
UNCODIFIED UNPARSED
IN TONGUES UNANALYZED UNECHOED
UNTAKEN DOWN ON TAPE —
NOT EVEN FOLKWAYS CAPTURED
BY MOE ASCH OR ALAN LOMAX
NOT YET ON SAFARI.
WHERE GAME TO BAG'S ILLUSIVE
AS A SILVER UNICORN
AND THE GUN TO DO THE KILLING'S
STILL TO BE INVENTED,
TO FERTILIZE THE DESERT
THE FRENCH MAY HAVE THE SECRET.
TURN, OH, TURN, DARK LOVERS
ON YOUR BED OF WHISPERED ECHOES:

TACIT

*Deep
drum
vibrato*

¡AY DIOS!
¡AY DIOS!
¡AY DIOS!

*into a
single high
flute
note. . . .*

TACIT

TWENTY HOURS
FOR THE MILL WHEEL TO BE MILL WHEEL
WAITED TWENTY DAYS
FOR THE BISQUIT TO BE BREAD
WAITED TWENTY YEARS
FOR THE SADNESS TO BE SORROW.
WAITED TWENTY MORE
TO CATCH UP WITH TOMORROW
AND I CANNOT WRITE COMMERCIALS—
TO MY CHAGRIN—NOT EVEN SINGING—
AND THE WHISPERS ARE UNECHOED
ON THE TAPES—NOT EVEN FOLKWAYS.

YES, SUBURBIA
WILL EVENTUALLY BE
ONLY IN THE SEA. . . .
MEANWHILE
OF COURSE
OF COURSE
OF COURSE
ON A MUDDY TRACK
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
NEGROES
NEGROES
SOME HORSE MIGHT
SLIP AND BREAK
ITS BACK:

BUT SCRIPT-WRITERS WHO KNOW BETTER
WOULD HARDLY WRITE IT IN THE SCRIPT—
OR SPORTS-WRITERS IN THEIR STORY.
YET THE HORSE WHOSE BACK IS BROKEN
GETS SHOT RIGHT INTO GLORY.

THEY ASKED ME AT THE PTA
IS IT TRUE THAT NEGROES—?
I SAID, ASK YOUR MAMA.

*High
flute
call.*

ASK YOUR MAMA

FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE QUARTER
SHOUTS ARE WHISPERS CARRYING
TO THE FARTHEREST CORNERS
OF THE NOW KNOWN WORLD:
5TH AND MOUND IN CINCI, 63RD IN CHI,
23RD AND CENTRAL, 18TH STREET AND VINE.
I'VE WRITTEN, CALLED REPEATEDLY,
EVEN RUNG THIS BELL ON SUNDAY, YET
YOUR THIRD-FLOOR TENANT'S NEVER HOME.
DID YOU TELL HER THAT OUR CREDIT OFFICE
HAS NO RECOURSE NOW BUT TO THE LAW?
YES, SIR, I TOLD HER.
WHAT DID SHE SAY?
SAID, TELL YOUR MA.

17 SORROWS
AND THE NUMBER
6-0-2.

Figurine.

HIGH BALLS, LOW BALLS:
THE 8-BALL
IS YOU.
7-11!
COME 7
PORGY AND BESS
AT THE PICTURE SHOW.
I NEVER SEEN IT.
BUT I WILL.
YOU KNOW.
IF I HAVE
THE MONEY
TO GO.

FILLMORE OUT IN FRISCO, 7TH ACROSS THE BAY,
18TH AND VINE IN K.C., 63RD IN CHI,
ON THE CORNER PICKING SPLINTERS
OUT OF THE MIDNIGHT SKY
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
AS LEOLA PASSES BY
THE MEN CAN ONLY MURMUR
MY! . . . MY! MY!

LUMUMBA LOUIS ARMSTRONG
PATRICE AND PATTI PAGE
HAMBURGERS PEPSI-COLA
KING COLE JUKEBOX PAYOLA
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
GOD WILLING DROP A SHILLING
FORT DE FRANCE, PLACE PIGALLE

*Delicate
post-bop
suggests
pleasant
evenings and
flirtatious
youth
as it
gradually
weaves
into its
pattern
a
musical
echo of
Paris
which
continues*

VINGT FRANCS NICKEL DIME
BAHIA LAGOS DAKAR LENOX
KINGSTON TOO GOD WILLING
A QUARTER OR A SHILLING. PARIS—
AT THE DOME VINGT FRANCS WILL DO
ROTONDE SELECT DUPONT FLORE
TALL BLACK STUDENT
IN HORN-RIM GLASSES,
WHO AT THE SORBONNE HAS SIX CLASSES,
IN THE SHADOW OF THE CLUNY
CONJURES UNICORN,
SPEAKS ENGLISH FRENCH SWAHILI
HAS ALMOST FORGOTTEN MEALIE.
BUT WHY RIDE ON MULE OR DONKEY
WHEN THERE'S A UNICORN?

NIGHT IN A SÉKOU TOURÉ CAP
DRESSED LIKE A TEDDY BOY
BLOTS COLORS OFF THE MAP.
PERHAPS IF IT BE GOD'S WILL
AZIKIWE'S SON, AMEKA,
SHAKES HANDS WITH EMMETT TILL.
BRICKBATS BURST LIKE BUBBLES
STONES BURST LIKE BALLOONS
BUT HEARTS KEEP DOGGED BEATING
SELDOM BURSTING
UNLIKE BUBBLES
UNLIKE BRICKBATS
FAR FROM STONE.
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES

*until
very
softly
the
silver
call
of a
hunting
horn
is
heard
far away.
African
drums
begin
a softly
mounting
rumble
soon
to fade
into a
steady
beat
like
the
heart*

TACIT

WHERE NO SHADOW WALKS ALONE
LITTLE MULES AND DONKEYS SHARE
THEIR GRASS WITH UNICORNS.

*Repeat high
flute call
to segue into
up-tempo blues
that continue
behind the
next sequence. . . .*

BIRD IN ORBIT

DE—
DELIGHT—
DELIGHTED! INTRODUCE ME TO EARTHA
JOCKO BODDIDLY LIL GREENWOOD
BELAFONTE FRISCO JOSEPHINE
BRICKTOP INEZ MABEL MERCER
AND I'D LIKE TO MEET THE
ONE-TIME SIX-YEAR-OLDS
FIRST GRADE IN NEW ORLEANS
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE SIT-INS ARE CONDUCTED
BY THOSE YET UNINDUCTED
AND BALLOTS DROP IN BOXES
WHERE BULLETS ARE THE TELLERS.

THEY ASKED ME AT THANKSGIVING
DID I VOTE FOR NIXON?
I SAID, VOTED FOR YOUR MAMA.

METHUSELAH SIGNS PAPERS W. E. B.
ORIGINAL NIAGARA N.A.A.C.P.

*Happy
blues
in
up-beat
tempo
trip
merrily
along
until
the music
suddenly
stops in
a loud
rim shot.*

TACIT

Figurine.

*Cool
bop*

ADELE RAMONA MICHAEL SERVE BAKOKO TEA
IRENE AND HELEN ARE AS THEY USED TO BE
AND SMITTY HAS NOT CHANGED AT ALL.
ALIOUNE AIMÉ SEDAR SIPS HIS NEGRITUDE.
THE REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER
KING MOUNTS HIS UNICORN
OBLIVIOUS TO BLOOD
AND MOONLIGHT ON ITS HORN
WHILE MOLLIE MOON STREWS SEQUINS
AS LEDA STREW HER CORN
AND CHARLIE YARDBIRD PARKER
IS IN ORBIT.

¡AY, MI NEGRA!
¡AY, MORENA!

GRANDPA, WHERE DID YOU MEET MY GRANDMA?
AT MOTHER BETHEL'S IN THE MORNING?
I'M ASKING, GRANDPA, ASKING.
WERE YOU MARRIED BY JOHN JASPER
OF THE DO-MOVE COSMIC CONSCIENCE?
GRANDPA, DID YOU HEAR THE
HEAR THE OLD FOLKS SAY HOW
HOW TALL HOW TALL THE CANE GREW
SAY HOW WHITE THE COTTON COTTON
SPEAK OF RICE DOWN IN THE MARSHLAND
SPEAK OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS'S BEARD
AND JOHN BROWN'S WHITE AND LONGER
LINCOLN'S LIKE A CLOTHESBRUSH
AND OF HOW SOJOURNER HOW SOJOURNER
TO PROVE SHE WAS A WOMAN WOMAN
BARED HER BOSOMS, BARED IN PUBLIC
TO PROVE SHE WAS A WOMAN?

*very
light
and
delicate
rising
to an
ethereal
climax . . .
completely
far
out. . .*

TACIT

*"The
Battle
Hymn
of
the
Republic"*

WHAT SHE SAID ABOUT HER CHILDREN
ALL SOLD DOWN THE RIVER.
I LOOK AT THE STARS,
AND THEY LOOK AT THE STARS,
AND THEY WONDER WHERE I BE
AND I WONDER WHERE THEY BE.
STARS AT STARS STARS. . . .

TOURÉ DOWN IN GUINEA
LUMUMBA IN THE CONGO
JOMO IN KENYATTA. . . . STARS. . . .
GRANDPA, DID YOU FIND HER IN THE TV SILENCE
OF A MILLION MARTHA ROUNDTREES?
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
DID YOU EVER FIND HER?

THAT GENTLEMAN IN EXPENSIVE SHOES
MADE FROM THE HIDES OF BLACKS
WHO TIPS AMONG THE SHADOWS
SOAKING UP THE MUSIC
ASKED ME RIGHT AT CHRISTMAS
DID I WANT TO EAT WITH WHITE FOLKS?

THOSE SIT-IN KIDS, HE SAID,
MUST BE RED!
KENYATTA RED! CASTRO RED!
NKRUMAH RED!
RALPH BUNCHE INVESTIGATED!
MARY McLEOD BETHUNE BARRED BY
THE LEGION FROM ENGLEWOOD
NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOL!
HOW ABOUT THAT N.A.A.C.P.
AND THE RADICALS IN THAT
THERE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE?

*as a
flute
solo
soft
and
far
away
fading
in the
distance. . . .*
TACIT

Flute cry. . . .

TACIT

AIN'T YOU GOT NO INFORMATION
ON DR. ROBERT WEAVER?
INVESTIGATE THAT SANTA CLAUS
WHOSE DOLLS ARE INTERRACIAL!
INVESTIGATE THEM NEGRAS WHO
BOUGHT A DOBERMAN PINSCHER.

THAT GENTLEMAN IN EXPENSIVE SHOES
MADE FROM THE HIDES OF BLACKS
TIPS AMONG THE SHADOWS
SOAKING UP THE MUSIC. . . .
MUSIC. . . .

*Flute
call
into
very
far-out
boopish
blues. . . .*

JAZZ TET MUTED

IN THE NEGROES OF THE QUARTER
PRESSURE OF THE BLOOD IS SLIGHTLY HIGHER
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE BLACK SHADOWS MOVE LIKE SHADOWS
CUT FROM SHADOWS CUT FROM SHADE
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
SUDDENLY CATCHING FIRE
FROM THE WING TIP OF A MATCH TIP
ON THE BREATH OF ORNETTE COLEMAN.

IN NEON TOMBS THE MUSIC
FROM JUKEBOX JOINTS IS LAID
AND FREE-DELIVERY TV SETS
ON GRAVESTONE DATES ARE PLAYED.
EXTRA-LARGE THE KINGS AND QUEENS
AT EITHER SIDE ARRAYED
HAVE DOORS THAT OPEN OUTWARD
TO THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES

*Bop
blues
into
very
modern
jazz
burning
the
air
eerie
like
a neon
swamp-
fire
cooled
by
dry
ice*

WHERE THE PRESSURE OF THE BLOOD
IS SLIGHTLY HIGHER—
DUE TO SMOLDERING SHADOWS
THAT SOMETIMES TURN TO FIRE.

HELP ME, YARDBIRD!
HELP ME!

*until
suddenly
there is
a single
ear-
piercing
flute
call. . . .*

SHOW FARE, PLEASE

TELL ME, MAMA, CAN I GET MY SHOW
TELL ME FARE FROM YOU?
OR DO YOU THINK THAT PAPA'S
GOT CHANGE IN HIS LONG POCKET?
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
WHERE THE MASK IS PLACED BY OTHERS
IBM ELECTRIC BONGO DRUMS ARE COSTLY.
TELL ME, MAMA, TELL ME,
STRIP TICKETS STILL ILLUSION?
GOT TO ASK YOU—GOT TO ASK!
TELL ME, TELL ME, MAMA,
ALL THAT MUSIC, ALL THAT DANCING
CONCENTRATED TO THE ESSENCE
OF THE SHADOW OF THE DOLLAR
PAID AT THE BOX OFFICE
WHERE THE LIGHTER IS THE DARKER
IN THE QUARTER OF THE NEGROES
AND THE TELL ME OF THE MAMA
IS THE ANSWER TO THE CHILD.

TACIT

*Rhythmic
bop,
ever
more
ironic,
laughs
itself
softly
into a
lonely
flute
call. . . .*

DID YOU EVER SEE TEN NEGROES
WEAVING METAL FROM TWO QUARTERS
INTO CLOTH OF DOLLARS
FOR A SUIT OF GOOD-TIME WEARING?
WEAVING OUT OF LONG-TERM CREDIT
INTEREST BEYOND CARING?

THE HEADS ON THESE TWO QUARTERS
ARE THIS OR THAT
OR LESS OR MOST—
SINCE BUT TWO EXIST
BEYOND THE HOLY GHOST.
OF THESE THREE.
IS ONE
ME?

THE TV'S STILL NOT WORKING.
SHOW FARE, MAMA, PLEASE.
SHOW FARE, MAMA. . . .
SHOW FARE!

*"The Hesitation
Blues" very loud,
lively and
raucously. Two
big swinging
choruses—
building full
blast to a
bursting climax.*

L I N E R N O T E S

For the Poetically Unhep

C U L T U R A L E X C H A N G E

In Negro sections of the South where doors have no resistance to violence, danger always whispers harshly. Klansmen cavort, and havoc may come at any time. Negroes often live either by the river or the railroad, and for most there is not much chance of going anywhere else. Yet *always* one of them has been away and has come home. The door has opened to admit something strange and foreign, yet tied by destiny to a regional past nourished by a way of life in common—in this case collard greens.

A State Department visitor from Africa comes, wishing to meet Negroes. He is baffled by the “two sides to every question” way of looking at things in the South. Although he finds that in the American social supermarket blacks for sale range from intellectuals to entertainers, to the African all cellophane signs point to ideas of change—in an IBM land that pays more attention to Moscow than to Mississippi.

What—wonders the African—is really happening in the shadow of world events, past and present—and of world problems, old and new—to an America that seems to understand so little about its black citizens? Even so little about itself. Even so little.

R I D E , R E D , R I D E

In the restless Caribbean there are the same shadows as in Mississippi, where, according to *Time*, Leontyne comes in the back door. Yet some persons in high places in Washington consider it subversive for ordinary people to be concerned with problems such as back doors anywhere—even suspecting those citizens of color who legitimately use the ballot in the North to elect representatives to front doors. But in spite of all, some Negroes occasionally do manage—for a moment—to get a brief ride in somebody's American chariot.

S H A D E S O F P I G M E A T

Oppression by any other name is just about the same, casts a long shadow, adds a dash of bitters to each song, makes of almost every answer a question, and of men of every race or religion questioners.

O D E T O D I N A H

Hard times endure from slavery to freedom—to Harlem where most of the money spent goes downtown. Only a little comes back in the form of relief checks, which leaves next to nothing for show fare for children who must live in a hurry in order to live at all. Yet in a milieu where so many untoward things happen, one cannot afford to take to heart too deeply the hazards. Remember Harriet Tubman? One of the run-

away slaves in her band was so frightened crossing from Buffalo into Canada that on the very last lap of his journey he hid under the seat of the train and refused to glance out the window. Harriet said: "You old fool! Even on your way to freedom, you might at least look at Niagara Falls."

B L U E S I N S T E R E O

Sometimes you are lucky, or at least you can dream lucky—even if you wake up cold in hand. But maybe with a new antenna you will get a clearer picture.

H O R N O F P L E N T Y

Certainly there are some who make money—and others who folks *think* make money. It takes money to buy gas to commute to the suburbs and keep one's lawns sheared like one's white neighbors who wonder how on earth a Negro got a lawn mower in the face of so many ways of keeping him from getting a lawn.

G O S P E L C H A - C H A

Those who have no lawns to mow seek gods who come in various spiritual and physical guises and to whom one prays in various rhythms in various lands in various tongues.

IS IT TRUE?

It seems as if everything is annotated one way or another, but the subtler nuances remain to be captured. However, the atom bomb may solve all this—since it would end the end results of love's own annotation. Meanwhile, although the going is rough, triumph over difficulties at least brings subjective glory. Everybody thinks that Negroes have the *most* fun, but, of course, secretly hopes they do not—although curious to find out if they do.

ASK YOUR MAMA

In spite of a shortage of funds for the movies and the frequent rude intrusions of those concerned with hoarding hard metals, collective coins for music-making and grass for dreams to graze on still keep men, mules, donkeys, and black students alive.

BIRD IN ORBIT

Those who contribute most to the joy of living and the stretching of the social elastic are not stymied by foolish questions, but keep right on drawing from the well of the past buckets of water in which to catch stars. In their pockets are layovers for meddlers—although somewhere grandma lost her apron.

JAZZTET MUTED

Because grandma lost her apron with all the answers in her pocket (perhaps consumed by fire) certain grand- and great-grandsons play music burning like dry ice against the ear. Forcing cries of succor from its own unheard completion—not resolved by Charlie Parker—can we look to monk or Monk? Or let it rest with Eric Dolphy?

SHOW FARE, PLEASE

If the answers were on tickets in long strips like those that come from slots inside the cashier's booth at the movies, and if I had the money for a ticket—like the man who owns *all* tickets, *all* booths, and *all* movies and who pays the ticket seller who in turn charges me—would I, with answer in my hand, become one of the three—the man, the ticket seller, me? Show fare, mama, please. . . .