

## FOUR POEMS

### YOU CAN'T TAKE ALL OF ME BLUES

*Youk'n hide de fier, but w'at you gwine do wid de smoke? –Joel Chandler Harris (1845-1908)*

Troublin' vision of the far distant past  
As far as these eyes can see, I remember the stories, I've been told . . . .  
Yet, in spite of it all, so many times I lost count . . .  
I do believe you knows what I'm talkin' about . . .

*And W.C. Handy groans, just like a sinner on Revival Day . . .*

The man, the Boss Man, who we all only to ourselves call The Hammer, says, "Don't be shy."  
But just like a sufferin' tar baby I thinks  
'Bout all the threats in dis here world I'd like to sing 'bout people  
And their wantin' to have their say in the world they's livin' in,  
But I don't so shruggin' my shoulders I just smile  
And do a Br'er Rabbit . . .

*And W.C. cries out something about the breeze that whines . . .*

And I know the Boss Man doesn't understand our tunes,  
I'm gonna rise in that great gittin' up morning  
And maybe, just maybe, I'll dust and sweep and pick and do whatever I'm told . . .  
Suddenly, out of the blue, I hear a deep smooth voice crooning a song I will never forget:  
Take this hammer, carry it to the captain, sings my best friend Bucky  
And the Boss Man say, "Boy, you best not lettin' me hear you sing stuff like that or else . . . ."  
Bucky, told the Man "Lawdy, Capt'n, I's not a singin' I's a jes hollerin' for help"  
And the Man ripped Bucky's shirt off, tied him to a tree, whipped him twenty times;  
So that night Bucky whispered to me that given the chance he would kill the Boss Man;  
Henceforth, I puts my hand over Bucky's mouth and says, "Quiet. Just be . . . ."  
Bucky says, "No be. Never will be. I'll be when I gits the chance. . . then I'm runnin' . . . ."

*And the Midnight Special will come for me, I know . . . .*

And I told Bucky 'bout the drinkin' gourd in da sky and that it be best if he follow it . . .  
But Bucky tells me no train, no gourd before I do a Stagolee on da Man.  
I says, "You crazy. Just wait for your chance and run,"  
And Bucky says, "Like John Henry and the Hammer, he may think he's killin' me but . . ."  
"You do know what happened to John Henry. Don't you?" I looks him straight.  
"Yup. And while da hammer done killed him, it ain't 'bout to kill me. . . ."

*And W.C softly chants, Life is something like a trumpet . .*

## SONG FOR AMERICAN FLAPPER

Success cannot rear magic in doin' whatever she pleases  
Or gratifyin' not capturin' long-ago moments in the same way

She knows luck's casino rules a honky tonk state of mind  
Where swing out Lindy hops embrace scornful idyllics

She doubts worthless fortune worships beautiful innocent lottery picks  
Yet never recovers from damned barren potholes on the Alabama road

She roams the lost side of paradise where cold hard night lacks tenderness  
While listening to slick dreamy tales of bitter deceptions and steamy truths

She desires to explore great faces of delusive misery  
And even greater saxophone raptures chasin' certainty

Envy won't wait for this fun-loving shimmying smokin' Venus  
Yearning for lip stick flirtations and drunken unattainable virtues

She watches Apollo's dark umbrage chase the slave of sentimentality  
As her deteriorating imagination rubs out the last waltz dance card

## RAGING STYLE

Cat walk striking image crisscrossing moving mass  
Stirring kicking arousals addictions like mushroom brain mists  
Jumpin' limbos standbys struttin' hearts of sand pebbles  
Where coal black Mississippi eyes signal heat wags  
Longing for scrawny free plunges to jerking flinches  
In the dangerous nesting cradles floating uncontrollably  
Blazing atmosphere fires from six-gun gold-digger aficionados

## A COUNTRY WINDOW IN SPRING

The wisp of wind exhaled forcefully bringing the cold  
To shivering birds arriving on time from the southern climes;  
Puzzled, unaware their internal clock drove them forward  
Too soon North to face the fertile earth, find a mate, enjoy  
The now absent warmth, the budding leaves, the emergence  
Of all flora and fauna and sounds of nibbling rabbits  
On leaves of green and squirrels scurrying and digging  
For nuts now forgotten where planted saplings will rise  
Against the grey windy world of near-frosted overcast skies.  
Now flakes of snow showers sparkingly fluttered across  
All the landscaped yard where young Jolanda sat listening  
As Simona mumbled *serie di inverno* as if her Italian  
Built a barrier to shield us all and explain away the day;  
Up she got with much struggling effort and proclaimed  
That she was done with the *inverno*—the wind howls much too much  
To listen at this time of life as she shook free her wavy long hair  
Now gray from age but was once wavy long black tresses luring  
One Salvatore to chase her like the wind.  
Now looking into the mirror of her life she unknowingly pauses  
To reflect by merely saying in her best Italiano,  
*Annerire I capelli ondulati a grigio,*  
Almost causing a tear to appear in eyes that have seen more storms and felt more breezes,  
Remembering games played in more gusts, *Un balletto delle masse,*  
Knowing not of how many more wafts blow however calmly or turbulently,  
Affecting the years, *Quando dormire, sarà felice?*  
Marked by springs, *Con un lupo e imparerete da urlo*  
The wisp of wind exhaled forcefully bringing the cold.