

BILOXI TO SOWETO, THEIR LOVE LETTERS

By

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What can I send to you, tempestous 'sotsi,'
Love letters filled with rose wine and soft lyre?
In the whip-chiselled soul of slavery's hour:
Bellicose vines yield only blood fruit, bitter and dour,
Festering streams grow a strange deformed flower
Unfit for the ancient bouquet,
Cackling carrion feed on burning black flesh
Pluck out our eyes and fly away
With the ode and elegy; a mocking carcass left, grey,
Knit with rotting rhymes in the white maws of death,
Worms bore into open-breasted Harmony
Eternally bereaved, bereft and moaning in the light of day.
We know too much of blood to sing of live, some will say.

But, Ah, sweet warrior ebony manchild, I do not cry.
I sing thy garbage-can-lid shield & assegai.
We will not let them plague our tomorrow
And its strong song.
Do you not hear the fiery stanzas of the melody
This ancient song I send thee
On tensile laughter of sun-prism spires and time
To mend thee
The earth washed clean in raindrops of fire
Attend thee
A tender cavern of mystery giving birth
To love
Volcano's molten symphony
Womb of the nations
Giving birth.

From the throat of coffled black patience
From ocean-bleached bones of haunting kalimbas
Comes the wild song of love.
Out of cotton bales and Harlem saxophones
Swelling rivers and riveting hate it comes.
The crack of a hundred whips and
Tower of a thousand right hands
Cannot hold it back.

We feast upon starlight and glisten
Listen to the wisdom of thunder
How tenderly birds' flight
Adorns the air, caresses life

Like a gentle lover,
Thinks with an ancient grace.
It is love of it
That keeps it whole.

Listen to the tone
Of a million voices
Deep with ancestral time
Listen to the blazing song
of Africa rising!
This is our love song,
Yours and mine.

Ah! Sweet warrior ebony manchild.