

H. Leslie Adams:
NIGHTSONGS*

I. Prayer

(Text by Langston Hughes, 1902-67)

I ask you this,
Which way to go?
I ask you this,
Which sin to bear?
Which crown to put
Upon my hair?
I do not know,
Lord God,
I do not know.

II. Drums of Tragedy**

(Text by Langston Hughes)

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
Beat the drums of tragedy and death.
And let the choir sing a stormy song
To drown out the rattle of my dying breath.
Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
And let the white violins whirl thin and slow.
But blow one blaring trumpet note of sun
To go with me to the darkness where I go.

III. Night Song

(Text by Clarissa Scott Delany, 1901-27)

The night was made for rest and sleep,
For winds that softly sigh,
It was not made for grief and tears,
So then, why do I cry?
The wind that blows through leafy trees
Is soft and white and sweet;
For me the night is a gracious cloak
to hide my soul's defeat.
Just one dark hour of shaken depths,
Of bitter black despair—
Another day will find me brave,
And not afraid to dare!

IV. The Heart of a Woman

(Text by James Weldon Johnson, 1871-1938)

The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,
As a lone bird, soft-winged, so restlessly on,
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales does it roam
In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,
And enters some alien cage in its plight;
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

V. Sense You Went Away

(Text by James Weldon Johnson)

Seems lak to me de stars don't shine so bright,
Seems lak to me de sun done loss its light,
Seems lak to me der's nothin' goin' right,
Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me de sky ain't half so blue,
Seems lak to me dat ev'rything wants you,
Seems lak to me I don't know what to do,
Sence you went away.

Oh, ev'ything is wrong.
De day's jes twice as long,
De bird's forgot his song
Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me I jes can't he'p but sigh,
Seems lak to me ma th' oat keeps gittin dry,
Seems lak to me a tear stays in my eye
Sence you went away.

VI. Creole Girl

(Text by L. Morgan Collins, b. 1914-2014)

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

When you laugh, do you think of France,
Golden wine and mincing minuets,
Creole Girl?

When you sing, do you think of young America,
Grey guns and battling bayonets?
When you cry, do you think of Africa,
Blue nights and casual canzonets?

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

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