

Pray for Me

Brother Ali

Somebody pray for me
(Bless his, bless his heart)
Somebody please pray for me
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What more could you say to me?
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The first day of third grade
Topic of discussion at the kick ball game
Is who's the new student why he look that way?
A eight-year-old expert determined I've got AIDS
A vote must've been taken, it became my name
I mean literally AIDS is my name okay
It made its way around the school and eventually
I heard a teacher try to catch herself as she yelled it to me
I tried to be invisible honestly
Wishing that the ground would just open up, swallow me
What kind of crime did I commit for this mockery?
Guess I must've lost some kind of cosmic lottery
How am I processing this at a baby's age?
It felt like I had a gut full of razor blades
I fantasized someone else would come take my place
Cause they taught me to hate my face

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Imagine how my mama felt
Obviously she wants to offer me some type of help
Pretty white lady never probably dealt
With this particular type of hell
If she dyed my hair blonde maybe I can blend
Get a better response maybe even a friend
She took me to the salon, put chemicals in my head
When they took the towel off, it was purple in the end
Lot of money spent just to get me presentable
Message that it sent, the real you ain't acceptable
I knew what she meant, what else could she expect to do?
That was just the lens that she viewed protection though
And so eventually I began to see that
What grows out of me is my dirty little secret
Had to go back every few weeks to keep it
I think that part depressed me the deepest

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Thank God for the grown ups
That roll up when they know it's time to hold us
The elder queen showed so much homegrown love
She said "hair doesn't die but your soul does"
She said "Elvis wore his hair in a pompadour
So he could try to look like Muddy Waters more"
But he would fry his crown so that he could lay it down
Like a white boy they called it a conk before
Until James Brown came kicked down the door
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud my boy
That the meaning behind the afros and all
Get free being what it is that you know you are
She said "Beauty's the splendor of truth
You will never cut loose 'til you're suitable to you
And your living is the proof just let it do what it do
Now watch them follow suit and try to catch up to you"

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