

... And Then He Wrote Meditations

Gil Scott-Heron

This is, this poem is specifically for
The master of the tenor saxophone
The immortal John Coltrane
Um, and, uh, there have been a lot of poems written
Mentioning Coltrane, the contributions he made to black music
But none specifically about him that I know of
And none that, um, that go into what I consider
His greatest piece, "A Love Supreme"
And I wrote this with "A Love Supreme" in mind
It's called, "And Then He Wrote Meditations"

Straddling the darkness
He controlled the bucking thrusts and rode on
Into the emptiness that, he alone, would try to fill
Into the middle to try and be the bridge between spirits
"Expand," he screamed
The vacuum was aroused, suspicious, and alarmed
Who would dare? But on he rode

The tailwinds were from Africa
The bass and force were timeless rhythms
That restructured beat and consciousness
The chasms between seconds
Were made real and whole
New targets imploded within the void
Holes were punctured through ebony nothingness
And resistance increased, walls appeared

Rise up train, the answer is just beyond the next wall
Rise up train, the answer is just
Beyond the next wall
The train rose up

No one had ever so thoroughly defied the night
The crosswinds were from the east
Lyrical assessments, harmonic sirens that called gut-deep
Into never-seen, yet half-remembered desires
Is there a reincarnation, oh Lord?
Do I recognize a part of me that is dying
In the crevices of all these bleak skulls
Lying conception-less here?

Non-existence attacked the man
"Go back, intruder! You are not welcome here
We have no need for your emotion here
We have no emotion here"

But obscurity was losing its grip
The inky blackness gave way to grey shadows
The canvas of limbo became a veil
Porous and smoking from the heat
As rays of light touched upon never illuminated concern

The screams grew louder
The once placid nightmare of soundlessness was crumbling
Giving way to cries, "Go back! Go back! Go back!"
And screams of pain and anger

In this the place you seek, black traveler, he was asked
In this place we will tear the flesh from your body
Here we will gladly crush your skull
And pour acid on your exposed and rotting brain
But we never let you die

We hold you here alone and worst of all
Aware of all that we do to you
We hold you captive here in Hell
"But come," said the wind
The threats were not the only sound

The faint throb of warmth that lay vibrating
Just beyond the horror of Hell
Was a magnet pulling and reaching, drawing him on
"Come. Hell is past for you," said the wind
And the rhythms of heaven absorbed him

A Love Supreme
A Love Supreme
A Love Supreme
A Love Supreme
And then John Coltrane wrote Meditations

That's it
It's called "And Then He Wrote Meditations"
And it's for John Coltrane