

## The Lynching

His spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.  
His father, by the cruelest way of pain,  
Had bidden him to his bosom once again;  
The awful sin remained still unforgiven.  
All night a bright and solitary star  
(Perchance the one that ever guided him,  
Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)  
Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.  
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view  
The ghastly body swaying in the sun:  
The women thronged to look, but never a one  
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;  
And little lads, lynchers that were to be,  
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

### Harlem Night Club

Sleek black boys in a cabaret.  
Jazz-band, jazz-band,—  
Play, pLAY, PLAY!  
Tomorrow. . . . who knows?  
Dance today!

White girls' eyes  
Call gay black boys.  
Black boys' lips  
Grin jungle joys.

Dark brown girls  
In blond men's arms.  
Jazz-band, jazz-band,—  
Sing Eve's charms!

White ones, brown ones,  
What do you know  
About tomorrow  
Where all paths go?

Jazz-boys, jazz-boys,—  
Play, pLAY, PLAY!  
Tomorrow. . . . is darkness.  
Joy today!

### Song for a Banjo Dance

Shake your brown feet, honey,  
Shake your brown feet, chile,  
Shake your brown feet, honey,  
Shake 'em swift and wil'—

Get way back, honey,  
Do that low-down step.

Walk on over, darling,

Now! Come out

With your left.

Shake your brown feet, honey,  
Shake 'em, honey chile.

Sun's going down this evening—  
Might never rise no mo'.  
The sun's going down this very night—  
Might never rise no mo'—  
So dance with swift feet, honey,  
(The banjo's sobbing low)  
Dance with swift feet, honey—  
Might never dance no mo'.

Shake your brown feet, Liza,  
Shake 'em, Liza, chile,  
Shake your brown feet, Liza,  
(The music's soft and wil')  
Shake your brown feet, Liza,  
(The banjo's sobbing low)  
The sun's going down this very night—  
Might never rise no mo'.

### Blues Fantasy

Hey! Hey!  
That's what the  
Blues singers say.  
Singing minor melodies  
They laugh,  
Hey! Hey!

My man's done left me,  
Chile, he's gone away.  
My good man's left me,  
Babe, he's gone away.  
Now the cryin' blues  
Haunts me night and day.

Hey! . . . Hey!

Weary,  
Weary,  
Trouble, pain.  
Sun's gonna shine  
Somewhere  
Again.

I got a railroad ticket,  
Pack my trunk and ride.

Sing 'em, sister!

Got a railroad ticket,  
Pack my trunk and ride.  
And when I get on the train  
I'll cast my blues aside.

Laughing,  
Hey! . . . Hey!  
Laugh a loud,  
Hey! Hey!

### **Lenox Avenue: Midnight**

The rhythm of life  
Is a jazz rhythm,  
Honey.  
The gods are laughing at us.

The broken heart of love,  
The weary, weary heart of pain,—  
    Overtones,  
    Undertones,  
To the rumble of street cars,  
To the swish of rain.

Lenox Avenue,  
Honey.  
Midnight,  
And the gods are laughing at us.

### *The Harlem Dancer*

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes  
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;  
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes  
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.  
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,  
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;  
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm  
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.  
Upon her swarthy neck black shiny curls  
Luxuriant fell; and tossing coins in praise,  
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,  
Devoured her shape with eager, passionate gaze;  
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,  
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

## LUSH LIFE

I used to visit all the very gay places,  
Those come-what-may places,  
Where one relaxes on the axis of the wheel of life  
To get the feel of life  
From jazz and cocktails.  
The girls I knew had sad and sullen gray faces,  
With distingué traces  
That used to be there.  
You could see where  
They'd been washed away  
By too many through the day  
Twelve o'clock tails.  
Then you came along  
With your siren song  
To tempt me to madness.  
I thought for a while  
That your poignant smile  
Was tinged with the sadness  
Of a great love for me.  
Ah, yes, I was wrong,  
Again, I was wrong!  
Life is lonely again,  
And only last year  
Ev'rything seemed so sure.  
Now life is awful again,

A thoughtful of hearts could only be a bore.  
A week in Paris will ease the bite of it.  
All I care is to smile in spite of it.  
I'll forget you, I will,  
While yet you are still  
Burning inside my brain.  
Romance is mush, stifling those who strive.  
I'll live a lush life in some small dive,  
And there I'll be, while I rot with the rest  
Of those whose lives are lonely too.

B  
fi  
th  
c  
a  
b  
a  
t  
p  
n  
o  
fi  
H  
A  
C  
n  
a  
d  
h  
N  
H  
H  
i  
H  
Y  
i  
t  
r  
H  
A  
L  
L

### BACKWATER BLUES

When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night  
When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night  
Then trouble's takin' place in the lowlands at night

I woke up this mornin', can't even get out of my door  
I woke up this mornin', can't even get out of my door  
That's enough trouble to make a poor girl wonder where  
she wanna go

Then they rowed a little boat about five miles 'cross  
the pond  
Then they rowed a little boat about five miles 'cross  
the pond  
I packed all my clothes, throwed 'em in and they rowed  
me along

When it thunders and lightnin', and the wind begins  
to blow  
When it thunders and lightnin', and the wind begins  
to blow  
There's thousands of people ain't got no place to go

Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill  
Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill  
Then looked down on the house where I used to live

Backwater blues done caused me to pack my things and go  
Backwater blues done caused me to pack my things and go  
'Cause my house fell down and I can't live there no mo'

Mmmmmmmmm, I can't move no mo'  
Mmmmmmmmm, I can't move no mo'  
There ain't no place for a poor old girl to go.

### Dream Variation

To fling my arms wide  
In some place of the sun,  
To whirl and to dance  
Till the white day is done.  
Then rest at cool evening  
Beneath a tall tree  
While night comes on gently,  
    Dark like me,—  
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide  
In the face of the sun,  
Dance! whirl! whirl!  
Till the quick day is done.  
Rest at pale evening. . . .  
A tall, slim tree. . . .  
Night coming tenderly  
    Black like me.



## Prove It On Me Blues

Went out last night, had a great big fight  
Everything seemed to go on wrong  
I looked up, to my surprise  
The gal I was with was gone.

Where she went, I don't know  
I mean to follow everywhere she goes;  
Folks say I'm crooked.  
I didn't know where she took it  
I want the whole world to know.

They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me  
Sure got to prove it on me;  
Went out last night with a crowd of my friends,  
They must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men.  
It's true I wear a collar and a tie,  
Makes the wind blow all the while  
Don't you say I do it, ain't nobody caught me  
You sure got to prove it on me.  
Say I do it, ain't nobody caught me  
Sure got to prove it on me.  
I went out last night with a crowd of my friends,  
It must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men.  
Wear my clothes just like a fan  
Talk to the gals just like any old man  
Cause they say I do it, ain't nobody caught me  
Sure got to prove it on me.

### March Moon

The moon is naked.  
The wind has undressed the moon.  
The wind has blown all the cloud-garments  
Off the body of the moon  
And now she's naked,  
Stark naked.

But why don't you blush,  
O shameless moon?  
Don't you know  
It isn't nice to be naked?

### Joy

I went to look for Joy,  
Slim, dancing Joy,  
Gay, laughing Joy,  
Bright-eyed Joy,—  
And I found her  
Driving the butcher's cart  
In the arms of the butcher boy!  
Such company, such company,  
As keeps this young nymph, Joy!