

Montage of a Dream Deferred (excerpts) by Langston Hughes, 1951

I. DREAM BOOGIE

Good morning, daddy!
Ain't you heard
The boogie-woogie rumble
Of a dream deferred?

Listen closely:
You'll hear their feet
Beating out and beating out a --

*You think
It's a happy beat?*

Listen to it closely:
Ain't you heard
something underneath
like a --

What did I say?

Sure,
I'm happy!
Take it away!

*Hey, pop!
Re-bop!
Mop!*

Y-e-a-h!

II. MOTTO

I play it cool
And dig all jive
That's the reason
I stay alive

My motto,
As I live and learn,
 is:
*Dig And Be Dug
In Return.*

III. JAM SESSION

Letting midnight
out on bail
 pop-a-da
having been
detained in jail
 oop-pop-a-da
for sprinkling salt
on a dreamer's tail
 pop-a-da

IV. BOOGIE: 1 a.m.

Good evening, daddy!
I know you've heard
The boogie-woogie rumble
Of a dream deferred
Trilling the treble
And twining the bass
Into midnight ruffles
Of cat-gut lace.

V. NIGHTMARE BOOGIE

I had a dream
and I could see
a million faces
black as me!
A nightmare dream:
*Quicker than light
All them faces
Turned dead white!*
Boogie-woogie,
Rolling bass,
Whirling treble
of cat-gut lace.

VI. DREAM BOOGIE: VARIATION

Tinkling treble,
Rolling bass,
High noon teeth
In a midnight face,
Great long fingers
On great big hands,
Screaming pedals
Where his twelve-shoe lands,
Looks like his eyes
Are teasing pain,
A few minutes late
For the Freedom Train.

VII. HARLEM [2]

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore --
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over --
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?