

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FC 7774

The Dream Keeper

& other poems of Langston Hughes



read by the author

carles

PS
3515
U265
D7
1955



MUSIC LP

The Dream Keeper

& other poems of Langston Hughes

BRING ME ALL OF YOUR DREAMS
HOLD FAST TO DREAMS
THE SPRING IS NOT SO BEAUTIFUL THERE--
THE SEA IS A WILDERNESS OF WAVES
OFF THE COAST OF IRELAND
HE SAT UPON THE ROLLING DECK
ONCE YOU WERE YOUNG
THIS ANCIENT HAG
THE LOW BEATING OF THE TOM-TOMS
TO FLING MY ARMS WIDE

I HAVE KNOWN RIVERS
LET'S GO SEE OLD ABE
AUNT SUE HAS A HEAD FULL OF STORIES
IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO
I, TOO, SING AMERICA
I HAD MY CLOTHES CLEANED
WHEN SUSANNA JONES WEARS RED
LET THE RAIN KISS YOU
DRONING A DROWSY SYNCOPATED TUNE
MA BABY LIVES ACROSS DE RIVER

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

THE RAILROAD BRIDGE'S
SUN'S A SETTING
AT DE FEET O' JESUS
I ASK YOU THIS
GLORY! HALLELUIAH!
MA LORD AIN'T NO STUCK-UP MAN
ALBERT!
WELL, SON, I'LL TELL YOU
HOLD FAST TO DREAMS
WE HAVE TOMORROW

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FC 7774

©1955 Folkways Records and Service Corp., 632 BROADWAY, N.Y.C. 10012

The Dream Keeper

& other poems of Langston Hughes



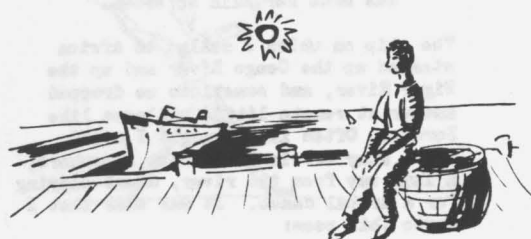
read by the author

FC 7104 Folkways Records..New York

Carlis

PS
3515
U265
D7
1955

MUSIC LP



SIDE 1

Bring me all of your
dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the toe rough
fingers
Of the world.

And that is what poetry may do—
wrap up your dreams, protect and
preserve them, and hold them, until
maybe they come true. Columbus
dreamed of finding a new world. He
found it. Edison dreamed of light,
more light, and he made light.



All the progress that human beings
have made on this old earth of ours
grew out of dreams. That is why it
is wise, I should think, to:

Hold fast to dreams—
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Held fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Once one of my dreams was to cross the
Atlantic and see the world on the other
side. So, as a young man, I went down
to the waterfront in New York and I
began to try to get work as a seaman
on the boats. The streets facing the
piers were wide, busy, old dirty streets.
Although it was spring, there were no
trees or flowers—only warehouses and
dock fronts and cobble stones and trucks.
It was then that I wrote this poem
called, "Water Front Streets":

The spring is not so beauti-
ful there—
But dream ships sail away
To where the spring is

wondrous rare
And life is gay.

The spring is not so beauti-
ful there—
But lads put out to sea
Who carry beauties in their
hearts
And dreams, like me.

Certainly one of my dreams then was
to work my way across the ocean. That
dream came true. I found a job on a
freighter going to Africa. It took
almost three weeks to cross the Atlantic
from New York to Dakar in Senegal. One
of my first poems about the ocean was
this one called, "Long Trip":

The sea is a wilderness of
waves
A desert of water.
We dip and dive,
Rise and roll,
Hide and are hidden
On the sea.

Day, night,
Night, day,
The sea is a desert of waves,
A wilderness of water.

Later I made a trip as a seaman to
Europe. As we neared the English Cham-
nel one day:

Off the coast of Ireland
As our ship passed by
We saw a line of fishing
ships
Etched against the sky.

Off the coast of England
As we rode the foam
We saw an Indian merchantman
Coming home.

From foreign ports sailors often bring
home souvenirs. From Africa I brought
back a monkey. Some of the sailors
brought back parrots, or slippers made
of leopard's skin, or little statuettes
of brass or wood. Some sailors collect
souvenirs on their own bodies in the
form of tattoos—drawings made directly





on their skins by tattooing artists
in different ports. I knew such a
sailor:

He sat upon the rolling deck
Half a world away from
home,
And smoked a Capstan cig-
arette
And watched the blue waves
tipped with foam.
He had a mermaid on his arm,
An anchor on his breast,
And tattooed on his back he had
A blue bird in a nest.



Because I had always wanted to see Paris,
I got off a boat I was working on, and
went to Paris. I got there with seven
dollars. Although I couldn't speak
French very well at first, nevertheless,
I found a job—and stayed for almost
a year in France, working in Montmartre,
a section where many artists and writers
lived. But there were many poor people
in Paris, too, who were not artists or
writers. Sometimes at night I would see
them rummaging through the garbage cans
in the streets looking for something to
eat. It was then, during that year in
Paris, that I wrote this poem,
"Parisian Beggar Women":

Once you were young.
Now, hunched in the cold,
Nobody cares that you are
old.
Once you were beautiful.
Now, in the street,
No one remembers
Your lips were sweet.
Oh, withered old woman
Of rue Fontaine,
Nobody but death
Will kiss you again.

In Mexico once I wrote a poem about
another old woman, an Indian peasant
woman from the hills. I lived in Toluca
where there was a big market. And this
old woman had come into town one day
with a bag of vegetables on her back
that she spread out on the earth in the

market place to sell. So I wrote:

This ancient hag
Who sits upon the ground
Selling her scanty wares
Day in, day round,
Has known high wind-swept
mountains,
And the sun
Has made her skin so brown.

The ship on which I sailed to Africa
steamed up the Congo River and up the
Niger River, and sometimes we dropped
anchor at remote little villages like
Buruta. Often in the night I could
hear, away off in the forest somewhere,
a long way from the river, drums playing
for a tribal dance. It was then that I
wrote this poem:

The low beating of the
tom-toms,
The slow beating of the
tom-toms,
Low....slow,
Slow....low—
Stirs your blood:
Dance!
A night-veiled girl
Whirls softly
Into a circle of light.
Whirls softly...slowly,
Like a wisp of smoke around
a fire—
And the tom-toms beat,
And the tom-toms beat,
And the low beating of the
tom-toms
Stirs your blood.

It was in Africa, too, that I wrote one
day this poem called, "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
Dark like me.

Many of my poems have been about the history of the Negro people. In this poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," I try to link, in terms of the rivers we have known, Africa — the land of our ancestors — and America, our land today:

I have known rivers:
I have known rivers ancient
as the world
And older than the flow of
human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like
the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when
dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo
and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised
the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the
Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans,
And I've seen its muddy bosom turn
all golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like
the rivers.

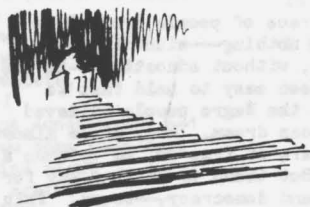
When Abraham Lincoln went down to New Orleans, he saw men and women sold in the slave markets there, and he never forgot it. In 1863 it was Lincoln who signed the Emancipation Proclamation setting the Negro slaves free. This is a poem called, "Lincoln Monument: Washington":

Let's go see old Abe
Sitting in the marble and
the moonlight,
Quiet for ten thousand centuries

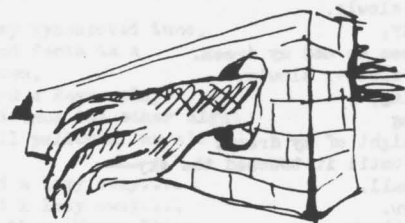
now, old Abe.
Quiet for a million, million
years.

Quiet—
And yet a voice forever
Against the
Timeless walls
Of time—
Old Abe.

And this is a poem about an old woman who remembered slavery, "Aunt Sue's Stories":



Black slaves
Working in the hot sun,
And black slaves
Walking in the dewy night,
And black slaves
Singing sorrow songs on the banks
of a mighty river
Mingle themselves softly
In the dark shadows that cross
and recross



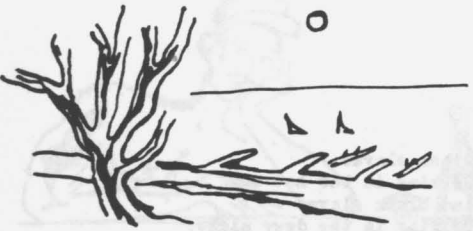
Aunt Sue's stories.
And the dark-faced child,
listening,
Knows that Aunt Sue's stories
are real stories.
He knows that Aunt Sue
Never got her stories out of any
book at all,
But that they came
Right out of her own life.
And the dark-faced child is quiet
Of a summer night
Listening to Aunt Sue's Stories.

This next poem, "As I Grew Older," might be about one of Aunt Sue's own children, growing up in the world:

It was a long time ago.
I have almost forgotten
my dream.
But it was there then,

Aunt Sue has a head full
of stories.
Aunt Sue has a whole heart
full of stories.
Summer nights on the front porch
Aunt Sue cuddles a brown-faced
child to her bosom
And tells him stories.



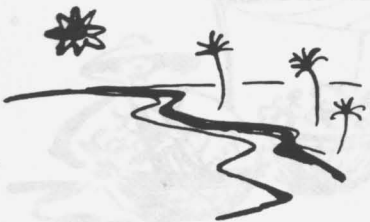


In front of me,
Bright like a sun—
My dream.

And then the wall rose,
Rose slowly,
Slowly,
Between me and my dream.
Rose slowly, slowly,
Dimming,
Hiding
The light of my dream.
Rose until it touched the sky—
The wall.
Shadow.
I am black.

I lie down in the shadow.
No longer the light of my dream
before me,
Above me.
Only the thick wall.
Only the shadow.

My hands!
My dark hands!
Break through the wall!
Find my dream!
Help me to shatter this darkness,
To smash this night,
To break this shadow
Into a thousand lights of sun,
Into a thousand whirling dreams
Of sun!



For a whole race of people freed from
slavery with nothing—without money,
without work, without education—it has
not always been easy to hold fast to
dreams. But the Negro people believed
in the American dream. Now, since almost
a hundred years of freedom, we've come a
long ways. But there is still a way for
the Negro—and democracy—to go. This
is a poem called, "I, Too":

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the
kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,



And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful we are
And be ashamed—

I, too, an America.

END OF SIDE I



SIDE II

I had my clothes cleaned
Just like new.
I put 'em on,
But I still feel blue.

I bought a new hat,
Sure is fine,
But I wish I had back
That old girl of mine.

I got new shoes—
They don't hurt my feet.
But I ain't got nobody
To call me sweet.

I was about fifteen years old when I wrote that poem at Central High School in Cleveland. It was there that my first verses were published in our high school magazine. And I think I was a senior in high school when I wrote this poem about a beautiful new girl who had come into our school from the South. It's called, "When Sue Wears Red":

When Susanna Jones wears red
Her face is like an ancient
cameo
Turned brown by the ages.
Come with a blast
of trumpets,
Jesus!
When Susanna Jones wears red
A queen from some time-dead
Egyptian night
Walks once again.
Blow trumpets, Jesus!
And the beauty of Susanna
Jones in red
Burns in my heart a love-fire
sharp like pain.
Sweet silver trumpets,
Jesus!

Another very early poem of mine is
"April Rain Song":

Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your
head with silver
liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools
on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools
in the gutter.
The rain plays a little sleep-song
on our roof at night—
And I love the rain.

During my high school days, the two poets I liked best, and who influenced my way of writing, were the modern free verse poet, Carl Sandburg, and the great Negro poet of a former generation, Paul Laurence Dunbar. The first poem of mine to receive an award was "The Weary Blues" granted the First Prize in a literary contest conducted by OPPORTUNITY magazine in New York City. It is a poem about a working man in Harlem coming home very late at night, very tired, and sitting down at a battered old piano, playing the blues:

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Reeking back and forth to a
mellow croon,

I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old
gas light

He did a lazy sway....
He did a lazy sway....
To the tune of those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.

O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like
a musical fool.

Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!

In a deep song voice with a melancholy
tone

I heard that Negro sing, that
old piano moan—

"Ain't got nobody in
all this world,

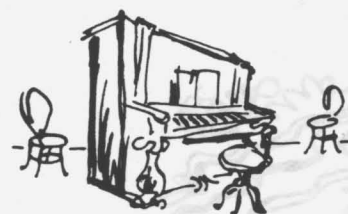
"Ain't got nobody but
ma self.

I's gwine to quit my
frownin'

And put ma troubles on
de shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot
on the floor.

He played a few chords then he sang



some more—

"I got de Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got de Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned
that tune.

The stars went out and so did the
moon.

The singer stopped playing and
went to bed.

While the Weary Blues echoed through
his head

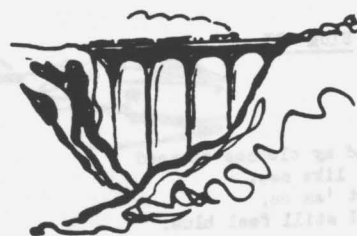
He slept like a rock or man
that's dead.

Since that time I have written many poems
in the style of the Blues. Real Blues are
Negro folk songs with a strict poetic pattern:
one long line repeated, and a third line to
rhyme with the first two. Sometimes the
second line in repetition is slightly changed
and sometimes, but seldom, the second line
is omitted. The Blues are almost always
very sad songs about being friendless, or
hungry, or disappointed in love, or a long
ways from home. Yet there is almost always
in the Blues a strong sense of determination,
love of life, and a feeling of humor that
make people laugh. One of my Blues is about
a boy who lived on one side of the river and
his sweetheart lived on the other, so this
is what he says:

Ma baby lives across de river
An' I ain't got no boat.
She lives across de river.
I ain't got no boat.
I ain't a good swimmer
An' I don't know how to float.

Wide, wide river
'Twixt ma love an' me.
Wide, wide river
'Twixt ma love an' me.
I never knewed how
Wide a river can be.

I got to cross that river
An' git to ma baby somehow.
Cross that river,
Git to ma baby somehow—



Cause if I don't see ma baby
I'll lay down an' die right now.

Fear boy! Well, here is another blues of
mine:

The railroad bridge's
A sad song in the air.
The railroad bridge's
A sad song in the air.
Ever time the trains pass
I wants to go somewhere.

I went down to the station.
My heart was in my mouth.
Went down to the station.
Heart was in my mouth.
Lookin' fer a box car
To roll me to the South.

Homesick blues, Lawd,
'S terrible thing to have.
Homesick blues is
A terrible thing to have.
To keep from cryin'
I opens my mouth and laughs.

One of the most famous of American popular
songs is "The St. Louis Blues" which begins,
"I hate to see de evenin' sun go down."
Here is a little Blues of mine that I call,
"Night and Morn":

Sun's a settin',
This is what I'm gonna sing.
Sun's a settin',
This is what I'm gonna sing:
I feel the blues a-comin',
Wonder what the blues'll bring?

Sun's a-risin',
This is gonna be my song.
Sun's a-risin',
This is gonna be my song:
I could be blue—
But I been blue all night long.

In the style of the Spirituals—those
beautiful old religious songs of the Negro
people—I have written many poems, too.
One of mine that Marian Anderson has used
on her concert programs is so short it
might almost be called the breath of a
Spiritual:



At de feet o' Jesus,
Sorrow like a sea.
Lordy, let yo' mercy
Come driftin' down on me.

At de feet o' Jesus,
At yo' feet I stand.
O, my precious Jesus,
Please reach out yo' hand.

Another poem of mine in the same mood,
although not in the style of a Spiritual,
is this one called, "Prayer":

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.

And here is a very short little poem
called, "Prayer Meeting":

Glory! Halleluiah!
De dawn's a-comin'!
Glory! Halleluiah!
De dawn's a-comin'!
A black old woman croons
In the amen-corner of the
Ebenezer Baptist Church.
A poor old woman croons —
De dawn's a-comin'!

In our church when I was a child, there was
an old woman, like the one in this poem, who
was very poor. But she was always neat and
clean, although her clothes were most quaint
and old-fashioned. She wore a satin shirt-
waist with a high collar, and her wide skirts
and many petticoats swept the floor as she
came marching down the aisle on Sunday morn-
ing toward the amen corner. Sometimes some
of the young people might be inclined to
giggle a little bit at this funny old lady.
One Sunday morning she heard them and
stopped in the aisle of the church, and
turned around and said, "That's all right.
You-all can laugh if you want to. You can
be stuck-up if you want to — but my Lord
ain't stuck up." With that she went on to
her seat. Years later I remembered



what this old lady had said. It came out
like this in a poem I called, "Ma Lord.":

Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.
Ma Lord, he ain't proud.
When He goes a-walkin'
He gives me his hand.
"You ma friend," He 'lowed.

Ma Lord knowed what it was to work.
He knowed how to pray.
Ma Lord's life was trouble, too,
Trouble every day.

Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.
He's a friend o' mine.
When He went to heaben,
His soul on fire,
He tole me I was gwine.
He said, "Sho you'll come wid Me
An' be ma friend through eternity."

Well, that's a poem about that old woman
who had faith. I like to write poems about
people. This is one about a mother calling
her baby:

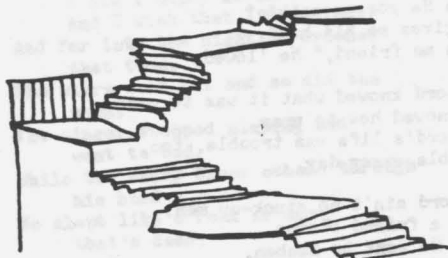
Albert!
Hey, Albert!
Don't you play in dat road.

You see dem trucks
A-goin' by.
One run ovah you
An' you die.

Albert, don't you play in dat road.

And here is a poem picturing an old woman
talking to her son who is discouraged.
She says:

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it, and splinters,
and boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on, and reachin'
landin's, and turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it kinder hard.



Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no
crystal stair.

What she's really telling her son is:

Held fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Held fast to dreams
For if dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

And that is just what the poems are about
in my book, "The Dream Keeper." It's
final poem is this one, called "Youth."
It's dedicated to all the girls and boys,
young men and young women today:

We have tomorrow
Bright before us
Like flame.

Yesterday
A night-gone thing,
A sun-down name.

And dawn-today
Broad arch above
The road we came.

We march,
Americans together!

We march!

E N D





Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. He attended public schools in Lawrence, Kansas, but had moved with his mother to Cleveland by the time he was ready for high school. At Central High he was class poet and editor of the yearbook. A year in Mexico with his father followed and one at Columbia University on his own before Hughes decided to chuck it all and go to sea. Voyages along the African coast and to the ports of Europe took the place of studies and textbooks for the next two years, and in these years, on these voyages, many of the poems by which he first became widely known were written.

He returned to college eventually, of course, graduating from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1929, and has pursued a literary career ever since. His first book of poems was *THE WEARY BLUES*, 1926. His first book of prose, *NOT WITHOUT LAUGHTER*, a novel, appeared in 1930. Many others have followed in each field, but where Brown's creative impulses have expanded to include criticism and college teaching, Hughes' have tended to spill over into the entertainment field. He has written librettos for such operas as *TROUBLED ISLAND* and lyrics for Broadway shows such as the musical version of *STREET SCENE*. Along the way he has had his share of literary approbation, however, Guggenheim and Rosenwald Fellowships, grants from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, honorary degrees. His songs are numerous.

THE BLACK AMERICAN -- HIS HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENT

Five Special Record Library Units On Afro-American History and Culture

HERE is a unique history in sound that provides the authentic materials so urgently needed for teaching Afro-American history. On these 27 critically-acclaimed albums, your students will hear the black American tell his own story—through words, voices, and music of people as diverse as Martin Luther King and Leadbelly . . . Langston Hughes and Jelly Roll Morton . . . Ralph Bunche and Miriam Makeba . . . and many others.

Each Afro-American Record Library Unit includes from four to nine documentary, narrative, song, and story albums packaged with accompanying brochures in a sturdy slipcase. These fine recordings offer educators an unusual opportunity to set the record straight on the black American's history and culture.

■ **STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.** Protest from slavery days to the present. Eight albums.

■ **AFRICAN ORIGINS AND INFLUENCES.** Folk music and tales reflecting African heritage. Four albums.

■ **CULTURAL FLOWERING: MUSIC AND LITERATURE.** Afro-American poetry, music, and drama. Seven albums.

■ **NEGRO SONGS, STORIES, AND POETRY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.** Inspiration and instruction for elementary graders. Eight albums.

■ **NEGRO HISTORY SOUND CAPSULE.** Survey of black heritage. Five albums.

"It is glorious—
this history of ours!"

POET LANGSTON HUGHES

For information regarding THE RECORD LIBRARY UNITS write to:
FOLKWAYS

LITHO IN U.S.A.  199