

Who but the Lord? By Langston Hughes (written in 1947)

I looked and I saw
That man they call the Law.
He was coming
Down the street at me!
I had visions in my head
Of being laid out cold and dead,
Or else murdered
By the third degree.
I said, *O, Lord, if you can,*

Save me from that man!

Don't let him make a pulp out of me!

But the Lord he was not quick.
The Law raised up his stick
And beat the living hell
Out of me!
Now, I do not understand
Why God don't protect a man
From police brutality.
Being poor and black,
I've no weapon to strike back
So who but the Lord
Can protect me?
We'll see.

Fantasy in Purple by Langston Hughes

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
Beat the drums of tragedy and death.
And let the choir sing a stormy song
To drown the rattle of my dying breath.
Beat the drums,
Beat the drums of tragedy for me
And let the white violins whirl thin and slow,
But blow one blaring trumpet note of sun to go with me
To the darkness where I go.

Song for Billie Holiday

What can purge my heart
Of the song
And the sadness?

What can purge my heart
But the song
Of the sadness?

What can purge my heart
Of the sadness
Of the song?

Do not speak of sorrow
With dust in her hair,
Or bits of dust in eyes
A chance wind blows there.
The sorrow that I speak of
Is dusted with despair.

Voice of muted trumpet,
Cold brass in warm air.
Bitter television blurred
By sound that shimmers—
Where?

-- Langston Hughes