

BLUES

Carried off in chains
Thrown into a ship
Unloaded again
And inspected
Sold and flogged
Thus my singing colored blue
The infinite land
full of unlimited promises
reigned me in
my longing was turned into music
people liked to listen to
Hear me grieve
Hear me complain
among the cotton and sugarcane

It sounded like a drag
the chopping of my knife
me wailing
the cracking of the whip
of massa, of those
assaulting us slaves
This golden land was tilled
Plodded
Labored and
a song was thrown in
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Not even my own God
Hear me grieve
Hear me complain
among the cotton and sugarcane

Longing for paradise
Singing and swinging
to the tune
of what was taught
in another man's language
in Sunday's church

My doom my slavery
my Lord what is it
I do wrong
What burden for me to carry
Bale for bale for bale
Hear me grieve
Hear me complain
among the cotton and sugarcane

And along the Mississippi
heed! A better life - the train
is whistling an opening chord
whining in A minor seven
The liberated slave will never
finish his song and be silenced
Even now the lament is loud
A testament of misery and pain
still only twelve bars to go
Hear me grieve
Hear me complain
among the cotton and sugarcane

My hands are digging into the soil
Ploughing the leaf mold up
I harvest
a song of slavery
in blues
in ragtime, in soul
misery, melting in
a pot of stile and hope
I stumble
I stagger
On the rhythm of the Cotton Seed
Hear me grieve
Hear me complain
among the cotton and sugarcane



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Poet Laureate of Wijk bij Duurstede, The Netherlands

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