

Joni Mitchell, Goodbye Pork Pie Hat

(Joni Mitchell/Charles Mingus)

When Charlie speaks of Lester
You know someone great has gone
The sweetest swinging music man
Had a Porkie Pig hat on
A bright star
In a dark age
When the bandstands had a thousand ways
Of refusing a black man admission
Black musician
In those days they put him in an
Underdog position
Cellars and chittlins'

When Lester took him a wife
Arm and arm went black and white
And some saw red
And drove them from their hotel bed
Love is never easy
It's short of the hope we have for happiness
Bright and sweet
Love is never easy street!
Now we are black and white
Embracing out in the lunatic New York night
It's very unlikely we'll be driven out of town
Or be hung in a tree
That's unlikely!

Tonight these crowds
Are happy and loud
Children are up dancing in the streets
In the sticky middle of the night
Summer serenade
Of taxi horns and fun arcades
Where right or wrong
Under neon
Every feeling goes on!
For you and me
The sidewalk is a history book
And a circus
Dangerous clowns
Balancing dreadful and wonderful perceptions
They have been handed
Day by day
Generations on down

We came up from the subway
On the music midnight makes
To Charlie's bass and Lester's saxophone
In taxi horns and brakes
Now Charlie's down in Mexico
With the healers
So the sidewalk leads us with music
To two little dancers
Dancing outside a black bar
There's a sign up on the awning
It says "Pork Pie Hat Bar"
And there's black babies dancing...
Tonight!