Goodbye Pork Pie Hat

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 the 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 positionCellars 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 streetNow 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 unlikelyTonight these crowds are happy and loud
Children are up dancing into 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 bookAnd a circus dangerous clowns
Balancing dreadful and wonderful perceptions
They have been handed day by day
Generations on downWe came up from the subway on the music midnight mix
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 dancersDancing 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

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