

## The Roots

# "Somithng in the Way of Things"

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The Roots f/ Amiri Baraka  
Phrenology  
Something in the Way of Things (In Town)

In town x3

Something in the way of things  
Something that will quit and won't start  
Something you know but can't stand  
Can't know get along with  
Like death  
Riding on top of the car peering through the windshield  
for his cue  
Something entirely fictitious and true  
That creeps across your path hallowing your evil ways  
Like they were yourself passing yourself not smiling  
The dead guy you saw me talking to is your boss  
I tried to put a spell on him but his spirit is illiterate

I know things you know and nothing you don't know  
'cept I saw something in the way of things  
Something grinning at me and I wanted to know, was it  
funny?  
Was it so funny it followed me down the street  
Greeting everybody like the good humor man  
But an they got the taste of good humor but no ice  
cream  
It was like dat  
Me talking across people into the houses  
And not seeing the beings crowding around me with  
ice picks  
You could see them  
But they looked like important Negroes on the way to  
your funeral  
Looked like important jiggaboos on the way to your  
auction  
And let them chant the number and use an ivory  
pointer to count your teeth  
Remember Steppen Fetchit  
Remember Steppen Fetchit how we laughed  
An all your Sunday school images giving flesh and  
giggling

With the ice pick high off his head  
Made ya laugh anyway

I can see something in the way of our selves  
I can see something in the way of our selves  
That's why I say the things I do, you know it  
But its something else to you  
Like that job  
This morning when you got there and it was quiet  
And the machines were yearning soft behind you  
Yearning for that nigga to come and give up his life  
Standin' there bein' dissed and broke and troubled

My mistake is I kept sayin' "that was proof that God  
didn't exist"  
And you told me, "nah, it was proof that the devil do"  
But still, its like I see something I hear things  
I saw words in the white boy's lying rag  
said he was gonna die poor and frustrated  
That them dreams walk which you 'cross town  
S'gonna die from over work  
There's garbage on the street that's tellin' you you ain't  
shit  
And you almost believe it  
Broke and mistaken all the time  
You know some of the words but they ain't the right  
ones  
Your cable back on but ain't nothin' you can see  
But I see something in the way of things  
Something to make us stumble  
Something get us drunk from noise and addicted to  
sadness  
I see something and feel something stalking us  
Like and ugly thing floating at our back calling us  
names  
You see it and hear it too  
But you say it got a right to exist just like you and if  
God made it  
But then we got to argue  
And the light gon' come down around us  
Even though we remember where the (light or mic??) is  
Remember the Negro squinting at us through the cage  
You seen what I see too?  
The smile that ain't a smile but teeth flying against our  
necks  
You see something too but can't call its name

Ain't it too bad y'all said  
Ain't it too bad, such a nice boy always kind to his  
motha  
Always say good morning to everybody on his way to

work  
But that last time before he got locked up and hurt, real  
bad  
I seen him walkin' toward his house and he wasn't  
smiling  
And he didn't even say hello  
But I knew he'd seen something  
Something in the way of things that it worked on him  
like it do in will  
And he kept marching faster and faster away from us  
And never even muttered a word  
Then the next day he was gone  
You wanna know what  
You wanna know what I'm talkin' about  
Sayin' "I seen something in the way of things"  
And how the boys face looked that day just before they  
took him away  
The is? in that face and remember now, remember all  
them other faces  
And all the many places you've seen him or the sister  
with his child  
Wandering up the street  
Remember what you seen in your own mirror and didn't  
for a second recognize  
The face, your own face  
Straining to get out from behind the glass  
Open your mouth like you was gon' say somethin'  
Close your eyes and remember what you saw and what  
it made you feel like  
Now, don't you see something else  
Something cold and ugly  
Not invisible but blended with the shadow criss-  
crossing the old man  
Squatting by the drug store at the corner  
With is head resting uneasily on his folded arms  
And the boy that smiled and the girl he went with

And in my eyes too  
A waving craziness splitting them into the jet stream of  
a black bird  
Wit his ass on fire  
Or the solomNOTness of where we go to know we  
gonna be happy

I seen something  
I SEEN something  
And you seen it too  
You seen it too  
You just can't call it's name name name name name  
name name

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