

## Kevin Gordon

### "Colfax / Step In Time"

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I played trumpet in the band  
In 7th grade, blasting out songs  
At football games and fall parades  
We'd ride the bus  
To the small towns like Winfield,  
Downsville, and Colfax  
In purple jackets and white slacks  
We were the Braves  
We were the Jack Hayes Braves  
Named after a dead administrator  
And the noble ideal  
Of the young Native American male  
School ambassadors  
Of popular song and good will

Mr. Minifield  
Was our director, skin the color  
Of a brown paper sack, he was black  
Trying to teach us white kids to play  
But confronted every baton-breaking day  
By juvenile delinquents, like Danny Amos  
Who locked himself into Minifield's office,  
With my Ted Nugent double album;  
Playing "Wang Dang Sweet Poontang"  
Full-blast over the bandroom speakers  
And I remember Minifield, just sitting there  
Staring out into the air  
From the podium, smoking a camel  
Looking straight ahead  
Imagining himself  
Somewhere else, I'd guess  
Where he'd be getting paid  
More for less B.S.

Tomorrow morning  
We'd be marching through  
What's ahead from what's behind  
Just another step in time

Valerie  
Played clarinet

13 going on 35, sexy  
In a hard way, like a 1st cigarette,  
Bourbon spilled on a bare thigh  
(You could say she was ahead of the game)  
She'd barely speak to me  
So that 2-hour ride  
Felt like an all-day tense erotic dream,  
Staring out at the pine trees and red clay,  
And the country stores where inevitably  
An old dough-faced man would be standing outside  
Staring at us like his life going by  
And was that her leg, was that her leg  
Just brushing against mine?

Riding on the bus  
Sitting next to Valerie Thrash  
Between what's ahead, what's behind  
Just another step in time

The morning was cold  
The silver bell of my horn shining back  
Convex reflections of faces and hands  
And the yellow smear of the bus  
While I blew out my spit valve,  
Put the wax on my braces  
We were getting ready to play,  
Standing in line, moving in formation.  
First up, a Stevie Wonder song called Sir Duke,  
About Ellington (I didn't know that then),  
Chameleon by Herbie Hancock  
Jungle Boogie by Kool and the Gang,  
K.C. and the Sunshine Band  
Get Down Tonight  
That's when I saw them at the end of the block  
Imperial Knights of the Ku Klux Klan  
In their white dunce caps  
And robes with red crosses  
Embroidered on  
Like gilded leaves on an automatic rifle  
Or an image of the suffering Christ  
Airbrushed on the side of a missile  
In broad daylight;  
Donald Lovelady said  
He thought they only came out at night

Like an apparition,  
Blood-real in the silver sun  
Between what's ahead, what's behind  
Just another step in time

They were handing out tracts

To the Caucasian mothers and daughters  
And fathers and sons of Colfax  
Laughing and joking, kneeling down,  
Placing a gentle hand on a child's blonde head  
Like Santa Claus, or the pope  
Like this was normal, like this was okay  
Another doo-dah day down in dixieland  
He didn't say a word,  
Minifield didn't turn his head  
Just kept marching  
Looking straight ahead  
Looking straight ahead  
Like there was somewhere better  
He was going  
But this was the only goddamned way to get there  
Today, with his baton in the air  
Looking straight ahead  
Straight ahead...

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