

ON A DOWNTOWN STREET

On a downtown street, all those years ago
I heard a negro play
The night was hot and petrified
And my life was changed that day
On a wooden crate he sat and swayed
And thumped his old guitar
With eyes wide shut he sang the blues
Outside of some old bar

On a breathless night when I was young
I heard a negro moan
The words he sang were writhed in pain
And every word alone
The weary blues for no-one there
Were shimmering in the heat
While in the dirt he stamped his foot
To a personal secret beat

I have to tell you this story
How he gave me the pain of the blues
The pain in his eyes made me realize
He hadn't got nothing to lose
Not searching for fame or for glory
The blues was a part of his soul
He gave me that pain, and when I think back again
That was the part that we stole

The blues, the beat, the night, the heat
Electrified my soul
He sang the blues because it was
His subject, object, goal
He sang to the night as if it was
The vessel for his pain
And he could cork the bottle shut
If it should hurt again

On a downtown street all those years ago
A black man played the blues
In a threadbare jacket and worn out pants
No laces in his shoes
With weary words straight from his heart
He said what he had to say
He hypnotized, he paralyzed
He changed my life that day

Refrain

Lyrics by John Kirkbride - Copyright John Kirkbride