

FOUR SONGS

Toni Morrison

1. MERCY

I could watch
heads
turn from the traveler's look
the camera's probe
bear the purity of their
shame
hear mute desolation in syllables
ancient as
death.
I could do these things
if
only if only
I knew that when milk
spills
and hearts stop
underheel
some small thing gone
chill
is right
to warm toward a touch because
mercy
lies in wait
like a shore.
Mercy
mercy
mercy
like a shore.

2. STONES

I don't need no man
telling me I ain't one.
My trigger finger strong
as his on a shot gun.
Buttercake and roses smooth
stones in my bed.

Handmade quilts cover
stones in my bed.
I don't need no man
telling me I ain't one.
My backbone ain't like his
but least I got one.
High-heeled slippers break
stones in my bed.
Games played at night trick
stones in my bed.
Stones in my bed.
Stones.
I don't need no man
telling me.

3. SHELTER

In this soft place
Under your wings
I will find shelter
From ordinary things.

Here are the mountains
I want to scale
Amazon rivers
I'm dying to sail.

Here the eyes of the forest
I can hold in a stare
And smile the movement
Of Medusa's green hair.

In this soft place
Under your wings
I will find shelter
From ordinary things.

4. THE LACEMAKER

I am as you see
what most becomes me:
miles skipped
cancelled trips
masters yet unmet.
Lace alone is loyal, sacred, royal,
in control
of crimes stopped
by patterns of blood bred to best
behavior.
As you see I am
what has become of me.