



Picnic on the Moon

Charles Coe

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Known for his powerful readings and unusually warm and compassionate voice, Charles Coe's poems speak to the heart and mind as well as the ear. Combining subjects as diverse as Afro-American history, myth, jazz, and family as well as surprising observations of those unexpected moments of joy to be found in a work-a-day inner city life, Coe offers us poems as personal as the tale of a sister who opened his life to literature and closed her own with dope; as quietly momentous as the story of Rosa Parks. Here are poems for Ella Fitzgerald and Charlie Mingus alongside a haunting homage to the 'guests' of a battered women's shelter. Above all, Coe's poems touch upon what is essential in us all and speak of life as a gift that is far from perfect but all we have.

Charles Coe is the winner of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Poetry Fellowship. A jazz and popular vocalist, he was born in Indianapolis, lives in the Boston area and travels widely to perform and record his work.

Get on Up!

Can anybody else here say that
in the summer of 1967,
when they were fourteen years old,
their mama took them to a James Brown concert?
Did you walk alongside her
Through the gates of
A minor-league ballpark
On a hot, cloudless Indiana night
When the moon shone like a spotlight
On the rough wooden stage?
Was anybody else here sittin' beside their mama
On those hard benches
When James's band, the Famous Flames
Came out to lay down
A red carpet of funk
And the announcer whipped that crowd
Like a bowl of black cream
'til the Godfather of Soul finally skated onstage
like a waterbug,
tellin; everybody 'bout his brand-new bag?
If your mama yelled like everybody else,
Then let it now be told!
Let everybody know how
She clapped her hands raw
As James flew back and forth across the stage,
Sweat and grease from his conked-up hair
Pouring down the front of his ruffled shirt,
Purple satin jacket ripped off and tossed aside.

Let everybody know how she stomped her feet
When he grabbed that mike like a dog grabs a bone,
Fell to one knee,
And begged for: "just one more chance,
Baby, baby please,"
And then when he fin

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Frances Fortier:

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Pearl Moore:

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Kathleen Jones:

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