

Sal

Non enim erat tunc.

There was no then.

ST. AUGUSTINE

the *oba* sobs

water parts

there is
 creed there is
 fate there is
 oh
 oh oracle
 there are
 oh oh
 ashes
 over
ifá
ifá
ifá i
fa
 fa
 fall
 ing over
 &
 over the crew
 touching there
 is fate
 there is
 creed
 there is
 oh
 oh
 the *oba* sobs
 again *ifá*
ifá ifá i
fa over and over
 the seven
 seas
 ora
 in this time
 ora
 within
 ora ora
 time within

loss *ora pro*
 this is but an o
 ration time sands
 the loss within how many
 days how long where being is
 thirst & thirst be being she falls
 fortunes over board rub
 and rob her
 now i lose count i am lord
 of loss visions over and over the o
ba sobs from there to here bring them
 no provisions from is
 to wa s sow
 the seas
 with she
 negroes ma
 n negroes murder my lord
 my liege lord
 my *deus*
 my us
 my we my fate
 my god sun
 der crew
 from captain own
 from slave
 under
 from
 writer from
 mortality
mort

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

le mort le

mort le p tit mort

scent of mortality

she

falls

ifáifáifá

falling

to

port

over

&

over

my fortunes

a sin

you say

video video vide

o who says i am

the lord

of loss a rose

i say

a rose

for ruth

and for t

ruth sup

pose truth

then find

ing

a way

found

a port

a rule ought

evidence

suppose then t

ruth

a rose

over

&

over

with you

she f

alls falling

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

found a rose fou
 nd africa un
 der water
 proved
 justice danger
 ous the law
 a crime she
 died es es es
 oh es
 oh oh es es oh
 es s o
 s s o
 s s
 o s
 os
 os
 os
 bone
 us us os
 save us os
 salve & save
 our souls tone
 & turn the bo nes
 &
 our souls u
 salve
 s souls bo ne souls
 e *salve* to
 sin *salve* slave *salve*

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

and *ave* *ave*
 the rat the rat *ave*
 ah we cut cut
 cut the cost and serve where s the cat
 the yam no meat trim
 the loss payment
 you say what for where s
 the cat got
 the rat could
 the crime out out
 cut the ear be absolute do
 you hear
 the lute sound
 to raise the dead
 the died
 i hear
ave bell s
 ring out
 dear ruth
 this is a tale told
 cold a yarn
 a story dear dear ruth i
 woo time and you do
 i have y our
 ear there were aster s
 at tea time *éclairs* & you
 are my liege
 lord of nig nig &
 nog my *doge*
 there are

stars in
sidera
 as there is
ratio
 in rations
 but why ruth
 do the stars shine if only
 murder made us you were by my side
os os
 bo ne men
 misfortunes
 very new
 and we map
 uncommon the usual
 to me to the vessel winds & currents
 we ground upon
 i pen this
 to you
 when i am her
 able paps her
 dugs her
 teats
 leak in necessity there
 was sin a good supply of
 ply the negroes with
 toys lure them
 visions of l ace for a queen
 my queen
 there is pus

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

gin & rum of
 murder rimed with sin
 her sex
 open all night rain
 a seam of sin &
 to market to market tin
 such
 to trap a fat pig
 a fat nig as never be
 fore seen
 lords of reason
 all we were a lace cap for my
 and sane men too queen
 sapphire too
 for my lady gold
 a
el son
 song at vespers
 she rides
 my nights the bell the good ship
 vedic visions no
 gongs provisions
niger sum nigra *sum ego*
sum i
 am yam ben
 am am gin
 am rum make the mast
 teak men
 who can cure
 me the cur
 drag the seas seven miles

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

seven deep
 days
 weeks for *ius* sing a song
 months for us of water
 for *os* in bone
 for bone a deep
 wa ter water
 deep bo
 ne son g to cradle
 her where the sun
 sink s
 under throw them
 the rim crusts lost verses
 of sky circe the seer
 appears
 lip s in rictus there is an art
 to murder
 with rant and curse but the tense
 is all wrong rum
 rain and more
 rum ah but it s a rum
 tale ruth murder & rum they sang &
 sang
 she negroes sang
 mean *le sang*
 red verses groans *de men dem*
cam fo mi
 here & there
 a line i

you write to of
 mortality s
 lien on l
 ife on the
 ro
 se
 on
 bo ne on
 ne groes
 such drab necessity
 murder
 here we re negroes
 like ants
 sow the sea *is where*
we be seed the seas
 with es & oh & es os
 &
 us
 our pig got with n
 got our nig too negroes
 pai
 n captain pai n
 tha
 t hat that hat
 the rat mi lord
 my plea is negligence to her i
 say *te amo*

her name she smiles
 will be es se to be i smile
 and i am fall
 am falling
 am *sum* into
 of all murder
 am *sum* am
ame if
 if
 if
 if only *ifā*
 serve the *oba*
 sobs again
 the tea men there was piss *cum*
 let s have some bile *cum* pus
 jam and bread
 port too
 & leaky
 teats there was only
 bilge wat
 er for tea
 i argue my case
 to you take
 ruth everything
 you must hear me i say
cum grano *salis*
 with a grain of salt there was in
 surance again
 st sun not sin

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

hum hum hum him him
 & him too
 a hero he was and a negro
 we dare
 the deed
 act the part he cut
 the cards i won the throw one
 deuce two aces
 cut
 her
 open her
 shape tie her
 ripe toes
 round
 and firm
 the cord it is
 dead she went over &
 under she was
 wet put
 ashes
 on her water s
 leak oil her and bring
 her
 to me no god
 no i should
 cut the cord of this story
 i rest
 my case in negligence my plea
 ignorance *ave* to *àse*

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

too
 din din
 dong
aide moi i ration the truth the she negro
 ruth drives me mad
 and the facts
 whore they laid her
 to rest she died
lave the slave invest in
 tin in
 rum in
 slaves in
 negroes serve the preserve
 the jam and jamaica
 rum i remain god s jest
 rimed
 with sin rest master rest we
 have the ram is it
 just or just
 us i *rêve* of aster s
éclair s
 and ruth such a good
 dog pat pat nig
 nig nig
 nog
 nag the man
 ran the slave ran ma
 ma *mma ma* *mai* bard sing
 stir my thirst for song a ruse
 run ruth run

from me

& my sin mea

sure the ease

of

over

board

all

fled the lair

as if

on wing

how

such a thin

mite he

was just

seven

de man him

cam

fo mi a fez

pon his head row

row row the raft

how *orí*

orí

a gin nig

nig nig

orí ob

nig

omi

omi

nog &

omi

ob

nag

wa

wa

ter j ai

soif she stirs

my

thirst

an ace and

a deuce it was

pen my nig

my pig then

they came

for me *mes*

rêves our aim

to rid the good

ship of dying

& death

Copyright © 2008, Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved.

of them
 the way broad & wide
 as it was long i won
 her fair the pig got
 got to the east & west over
 the seas to sin am i
 a man of wit
 ruth i hear you say
 some see the dove
 on wing the red cove
le sang le sing *le* song
le son el son oh god no hug
 and tug *mai* she ran *ma* he
 ran *ma ba* *ba iya* they ran
 the cat got gut
 are we thugs all gut her
no no no run *run if you hear*
dogs hide the gods
are gone done
for hey
bola
 run round &
 round sound of dog
 of song there is pus it rains
 sin sip sup and doze a dose
 of the clap
 suppose the hat
 rode the rat round
 and round the fins
 herd them the crew does

my bid no sound

bell song lure

her dong she

dives dong

to the rim over

with you and

under she f

alls falling

appears under

water found

africa

a rose

round

and round the hat

the rat

the rot oh

the rot we

sort them new

rules state the test

man for men

& for t

ruth ask rome

fist to the head mis

fortunes tune pain

turn &

turn a

round the globe

bill the bell

& bell

the cat she was

torn we sear

& singe the rose

of afric a mole

on her nape a bill

of sale flap

flap

in the wind the sail

seal

the sale sad

sail s night

falls so far

to afric & the dog

star