

Momma Said

By Calvin Forbes

The slice I ate I want it back
Those crumbs I swept up
I'd like my share again
I can still taste it like it was

The memory by itself is delicious
Each bite was a small miracle
Both nourishing and sweet
I wish I had saved just a little bit

I know it wasn't a literal cake
It's the thought that counts
Like a gift that's not store-bought
Making it even more special

Like a dream that makes you
Want to go back to sleep
You can't have your cake
And eat it too Momma said

I was defiant and hardheaded
And answered yes I can too
The look she gave me said boy
I hope you aren't a fool all your life

Source: *Poetry* (July 2011)



Calvin Forbes teaches writing, literature, and jazz history at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Blues and jazz inform both the rhythm and content of his poetry. He often uses ballads to tell family stories or the ups and downs of romance. But Forbes updates the tradition with surreal techniques, epigrammatic humor, and changing voices. He described his work as “simplicity shackled up with complexity.”