Mourning Poem for the Queen of Sunday

By Robert Hayden

Lord’s lost Him His mockingbird,
   His fancy warbler;
Satan sweet-talked her,
   four bullets hushed her.
Who would have thought
   she’d end that way?

Four bullets hushed her. And the world a-clang with evil.
   Who’s going to make old hardened sinner men tremble now
   and the righteous rock?
Oh who and oh who will sing Jesus down
   to help with struggling and doing without and being colored
   all through blue Monday?
Till way next Sunday?

All those angels
   in their cretonne clouds and finery
   the true believer saw
when she rared back her head and sang,
   all those angels are surely weeping.
Who would have thought
   she’d end that way?

Four holes in her heart. The gold works wrecked.
   But she looks so natural in her big bronze coffin
among the Broken Hearts and Gates-Ajar,
it’s as if any moment she’d lift her head
   from its pillow of chill gardenias
and turn this quiet into shouting Sunday
   and make folks forget what she did on Monday.

Oh, Satan sweet-talked her,
   and four bullets hushed her.
Lord’s lost Him His diva,
His fancy warbler’s gone.
Who would have thought,
   who would have thought she’d end that way?


Source: Collected Poems (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1985)