

# ***3 Monday Midnights*** **by Jamal Gerald**

*Mojuba Esu Modupe*  
*Open the doors, let's have some fun.*  
*I want to be known as troublesome.*  
*Ase Ase Ase.*

## **PART 1**

*Elvis, known as the King of Rock 'n' Roll.*  
*It's time for a new story to be told.*  
*Banish away his catalogue*  
*and show the world a new dialogue.*  
*Burn his legacy and create a new destiny.*  
*Let a Queen astonish and let the King be demolished.*

It's Monday at midnight. I'm looking out the window like I'm waiting for a message from God, but I'm only waiting for my takeaway. It'll be here in an hour. I'm thinking of God's opposition, Lucifer. First off, what a beautiful name. I've always been fascinated by him. Yes, he's evil. But there are some traits I find admirable. I love his rebellious nature. And I do love me a problematic fave.

My subconscious leads me to the crossroads, where I sit and meditate with a blue waxing crescent smiling: the incense flickers and the smoke twirls. My spirit rises. But my meditation has been electrocuted by a white man singing about his white guilt. Eurgh. His liquorice tears are staining his charity shop clothing.

Oh, what do you know? It's Elvis, the former King of Rock 'n' Roll. And yes, I said 'former'. Elvis doesn't look like Elvis Presley. Natural blonde hair and eyebrows. No trace of black shoe polish in use. He has no care for being clean-shaven, looks similar to a caveman. Ha, okay that was mean. There's an odour in the air; it's his depression. He's sweating from drug withdrawals, the drug being fame. And that's all because of me. Bwahahaha. I swear to you, I'm not evil.

“Oh, it's you. The one that did the eradication spell.” Elvis says.

Yes, it's me.

*I gush and flick my locs.*

“What are you doing here?”

I'm pretending to be Robert Johnson.

“Ha!”

What about you?

“I'm waiting for my friend. He's going to help break your spell.”

Oh really? And who will that be?

*A dark-skinned Black man in a black suit with an Afro and a beard appears. He's dressed like he's going to a ball and a funeral. His eyes fill with flames. Instrumentals of classical music, heavy metal and blues play interchangeably whilst he walks towards us.*

*He also looks like he was a member of the Black Panther party.*

*But I don't think he's about that life.*

“Hey, Luc.”

“What's up, El?”

*There was something about Luc's energy that feels tempting. Like, he could easily manipulate you into doing something you would regret - a wicked charmer.*

*Luc smiles, gives me a head nod and says “Hey, I'm Luc!”*

*I smile and give a head nod back, and say ‘Hey, I'm Jamal!’*

“It's a pleasure to meet you, Jamal.”

Is that Luc as in Lucifer?

“The one and only.”

*I gasp.*

I'm such a big fan! I was thinking about you before I left my house.

*I'm too giddy!*

“That’s sweet. Thanks, my brother.”

*He then winks at me. I'm not going to lie;  
Luc makes me blush.  
He's so fine. Like, damn. Omg!  
He also has diamond grillz on his teeth.  
Ahhh!*

*Elvis shakes his head and  
looks down at the ground.  
He looks up and says:*

“Don’t be nice to him. We’re here because of his mess.”

“Oh, it's you that did the spell?”

Yes, it was me.

“Why?”

“Yeah, why?!”

Elvis, you’re talented, but you’re also a Black music coloniser.

*Elvis rolls his eyes and takes a deep sigh.*

“Damn!” *Luc says whilst taking a step back.*

“Eradicate me, and there’ll just be another white man in my place. Aren't you aware of the world that we live in?”

Yes, I'm highly aware, thank you!

“You know, he's just a white brother that loves Black music.”

Yeah, white people just love Black music, don’t they? Did he praise Black artists? Yes. That's not good enough for me. A white man shouldn't be the King of a Black music genre.

“Okay, I agree. I never invented Rock ‘n’ Roll; there are Black people way more deserving of being called King or Queen.”

Yes, especially with the number of Black artists you ripped off! Does Roy Brown ring a bell, Elvis?

*Luc makes a cringe face.*

“Damn, boy! Everybody is always ripping off somebody!”

“That is true.”

Eurgh. Whatever.

“But Jamal, what about all the Black people who loved me? They didn't have a problem.”

“Yeah, I'm one of those Black people.”

Pfft. Black people love it whenever white people do Black things. So, to me, that doesn't even mean anything.

“Okay, fine! We'll agree to disagree.”

Yeah, let's do that.

*I give Elvis a cheeky smile.*

“But, what if we both made a deal?”

Go on.

“What if I'm never King, but I'm still a rockstar? And the stardom I once had goes to a Black artist of your choosing?”

Hmm. That could work.

“Who would it be?” Luc asks.

Well, I would love for Rock ‘n’ Roll to be synonymous with Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

“I love Miss Tharpe so much! She's such an inspiration to me as an artist.”

Trust me; I know. I would love it if Elvis' stardom were thrown onto Tharpe's legacy. A Black queer woman was a big part of Rock 'n' Roll, and a lot of people today aren't aware of her influence unless they are music nerds.

“Yeah, the average person would probably only know about Tina Turner.” Luc says

“Yeah, you're right.”

“But then again, Jamal, you're a man. So, who are you to decide what a Black queer woman wants?”

*I gasp again. Luc challenged me!  
It's making him even more dreamy!  
Ahhh!*

“You make a good point, Luc.”

Oh Luc, you a feminist?

“I've been around for a while; I know what's what.”

*Oh, yes, you do!*

Okay, you got me. I want to shine light onto a Black woman instead of white man.

“I get that. However, Sister Rosetta Tharpe should be a part of this conversation.”

*Luc cares about what a Black woman thinks.  
Aww, he's a keeper.*

“Yeah, I agree.”

Absolutely. I do still love the thought of a Black queer woman being the face of Rock 'n' Roll without much discussion. I feel her talent speaks for itself.

“Well, you've convinced me.”

“Okay, Jamal. I hope Miss Tharpe is going to be okay with three men rewriting her history.”

Hmm. I hate to say it, but it is the world we live in. Might she thank us later?

*Yes, I know, I'm so problematic.*

“Let’s do it and see what happens. Do we have ourselves a deal?” Luc says.

Yeah, deal.

“Deal.”

“Jamal, you promise you won't do another eradication spell?” Elvis asks.

I only did the spell because I was bored. I wanted a reason to entertain myself.

*Elvis and Luc both make a face of disbelief.*

Okay, there was some slight resentment too. But, what's the point of having magic, if I'm not using it for the greater good? You know what never mind - get on with it.

*Elvis grins and I kiss my teeth.*

*I am trying to hide my smile.*

*Luc snaps his fingers and Elvis disappears  
with a golden star floating in the air.*

*The wind kisses Luc and I.*

*We then hear Elvis singing 'Hound Dog'  
recorded originally by Big Mama Thorton.*

“Now that I’ve sorted El out. Is there anything I could do for you?”

No, I'm good.

“Are you sure? I can do anything in exchange for your soul.”

Eh? Oh yeah, you are the devil.

“What else were you expecting?”

Nothing. I'm still good, though. And yes, I'm a big fan. But not that big of a fan to sell you my soul. Sorry!

“That’s fair.”

Thinking about what you said, Luc. I’m going to make an offering to Miss Tharpe. Sit by her altar, have a conversation with her and see what she wants. I wanted to do something nice for her. A gift, you know?

“I hear you. Find out if it's a gift she would’ve wanted. And if you need help with anything, let me know.”

Thanks, I’ll keep that in mind.

*Both Luc and I smile at each other.  
And we give each other a fist bump.*

*Papa Legba,  
open the gate for me.  
Let me pass through,  
and find new opportunities.  
Papa Legba, open the gate for me.  
Let me speak to those in Guinee.  
Papa Legba, open the gate for me.  
When I return, I will thank the Loa.*

## **PART 2**

It's Monday at midnight.  
I'm sipping a Jack Daniel's wannabe.  
The burning in my chest craves  
poshness;  
it's cheap as fuck.

It cured my vocal cords -  
I can sing! (clears throat)  
Ha!  
I wish.

My singing notes are flat like business cards  
with a fraudulent person's details.

I want to write heart sacrifice records  
as a remedy for unrequited love.  
Perform a blues song  
healing ancestral trauma.

I wish Robert Johnson could teach me  
how to play the guitar.

A pink full moon winks,  
makes werewolves fancy  
a game of hide and seek.  
Crystal candles are telling me to light them.



I've thrown dice on my laminate floor;  
it no longer needs a sweep.  
I got 3, Papa Legba's number.  
He poses at the crossroads with his German Shepherd.  
Gives consent to speak to spirits in Guinee.

I visit Papa.  
Left 21 pennies, dark rum  
and some tobacco for him.  
I sense his fatherly presence.  
The smoke from his wooden pipe  
smells of Haribo.  
I praise his platinum cane,  
black straw hat and leather jacket.  
He invokes a navy blue  
acoustic guitar as a gift.  
It has my name on it.  
I give Papa a bear-hug and say 'Thank you!'  
He says "You're welcome, my son."

Robert Johnson is in a golden suit, tie,  
fedora hat and Converse strolling towards us.  
He's smoking a cigarette,  
has an Isabella's Islay bottle,  
and a Gibson L-1 on his back.  
He pours a shot for each of us,  
tastes of mischief.

It's my first guitar lesson. Yay!  
Papa stays to support.  
Rob teaches me the 12 bar blues.

He places my fingers in a triangle shape,  
to play an A7 chord.

Rob. Is. So. Cool!

He's like a big brother.  
I'm strumming away,  
the sound makes foxes sprint.

String vibrations  
tickle my self-esteem.  
I'm rapture personified.

The 3 of us are now sitting in a cemetery.  
We're sharing stories of  
how we all played tricks on people.  
The jumbies are intrigued.  
Crept from their graves, wanting to know the T.  
You can hear their angelic laughter.

Black men vibing.  
We can't stop smiling.  
Our elation compelled auras to glow.  
I improvise a song  
cherishing Black boy joy.  
Trust me, it's dope.  
Papa and Rob agree.

It's dawn.  
Rob plays his song, 'Me and the Devil'.  
I twinkle.  
Papa nods his head,  
gently taps right foot.  
His dog rubs against me, I stroke him.  
When Rob plays the last chord,  
they all fade away in harmony with a giddy sunrise.

*Mojuba Esu Modupe*  
*Open the doors; I'll offer you some rum.*  
*Skittles and riddles to the beat of a drum.*  
*I want to see the Queen astonish.*  
*She who walked the world with sonics.*  
*Bring her to me; I'll leave you more sweets,*  
*I promise. Ase Ase Ase.*

## **PART 3**

It's Monday at midnight.  
I am eating an Oreo sundae.  
Hailstones are disrespecting my window.  
I'm thinking about what film would be best to cry to.

I am sitting by my ancestor altar. Telling my ancestors,  
they were right about the man they told me to stay away from.

Mi coo hear dem stupes.  
Mi coo feel dem cut eye.

On the altar, there is  
Sister Rosetta Tharpe framed in black and white.  
A lit purple candle. A pearl goblet of prosecco.  
A damask roses bouquet.  
A white plate with fried catfish and chicken.

I wrote a response to Miss Tharpe's song 'I Want A Tall Skinny Papa'.  
And I'm going to share it with her; I hope she likes it.  
I also want to know her thoughts on the gift.

Remember the eradication spell I did?  
And then the deal with Elvis and Luc?  
It would be nice to know how things have progressed.

I'm blazing sage to cleanse the space whilst I chant my lyrics.  
I'm so nervous, here it goes. Wish me luck!

'I'm skinny but not tall.  
Have made plenty of sugar daddies fall.

I hope Sister Rosetta Tharpe will give me a pass.  
I bet she smells good like spiced rum in a glass.

She'll take your heartbeats away in a flash.  
Move to the side Elvis, putting your records in the trash.

I'm mighty fine; my love is deep like red wine.  
She's a Black queer woman, let's sing together in Brooklyn.

I'll drop my last name and be Mr Tharpe.  
Be forever a soulmate to her art.

Together the church would label us sinners,  
we're just melanated winners.

She wants a tall skinny papa, and that's almost me,  
may her music be heard for eternity.

I think I'm too young to be called 'papa',  
but I promise I will protect her legacy with my chopper.'

Well, I guess that wasn't so bad.  
Fuck. I'm about to have a panic attack.  
An applause soundscape surprises my eardrums.  
Miss Tharpe has appeared.  
I have forgotten how to speak.

"Hello, my dear. Bless you.  
Thank you for such a heartwarming tribute.  
And the offering was beautiful and delicious."

Oh wow. Hi! I didn't think you would come.  
I, erm. Thanks!

"Why wouldn't I come?"

I honestly don't know what to say.

"Don't worry; you've already said and done enough.  
I'm flattered by your gift.

I loved making music.  
It wasn't about how many people knew who I was.  
Although, I'm glad more people know who I am.  
I hope that the love they have for me;  
they'll keep for other Black women in Rock 'n' Roll."

I hope so too.

"And I agree with Luc;  
I should've been a part of the conversation  
before any decisions were finalised.  
Oh my, Lord, forgive me.  
I can't believe I agreed with Lucifer.  
I won't hold it against you, you're still young and dumb, haha.  
And I kind of don't mind; I don't get to rest as much.  
People still want to see and hear me play my music.  
And I still get to spend time with  
my gorgeous Marie Knight that makes me so happy.  
Well, I gotta run.  
I have a gig up in Heaven.  
The angels are waiting for me; I'm already so late.  
You take care now."

Quickly, before you go. I wanted to say,  
thanks for everything you have done.  
I hear you, I see you.

"Honey, I already got all of that from your tribute."

Oh yeah.

"I'm so glad you do see and hear me.  
And now, thanks to you, many more people do.

*I gush.*

"Now, come here and give me some sugar."

*We both kiss each other on the cheek and hug.*

"Bye now."

Bye!

Since making the deal,  
Miss Tharpe could only be in places for a short period.  
I guess that's what happens when you're synonymous with Rock 'n' Roll.  
So many people want to engage with you, even if you have passed.

I think about Esu and how he opens the doors.  
I wonder if it's fair to say Tharpe is like Esu?  
She did open the doors for Chuck Berry,  
Elvis, and of course, other Black women.

But the thing is, society would never tell  
you, a Black woman opened the door for a white man.  
Similar to how The Devil gets all the credit,  
when it could've been Esu granting people opportunities.  
And no, he doesn't want your soul, just a simple offering.

Chuck Berry said his music career is a  
Sister Rosetta Tharpe impersonation.  
It's great to know a Black man admitted that.  
What if Esu inspired the Devil?  
But he took his inspiration way too far?  
Ooh, now that's deep!  
Or was it the white man/white supremacy taking it too far?  
White people always do that, ha!

I wonder if Miss Tharpe and I could go on a train journey together.  
She can perform her song 'This Train' for me.  
I'm curious to know what that would be like.  
Yes, I know, I'm cheesy.  
Will need to find the right time in her busy schedule.  
I'll contact Esu to make it happen, and then he could join us.  
3 troublemakers together.  
Envision all the trouble we could create.  
Oh, what a pleasure that would be.

I'm now thinking about  
the past 3 Monday midnights,  
and what they mean -

contacting Black musicians who I found fascinating.  
Such an honour to be in their presence.  
I thank Esu and Papa Legba.  
I'm going to slide into Luc's DMs to see if he wants to hook up.  
Ha! A boy can try.  
I blow out the purple candle and say:

*Mojuba Sister Rosetta Tharpe Modupe  
Mojuba Robert Johnson Modupe  
Thank you for guiding me.  
Please continue to guide  
and protect me through  
my journey of being an artist.  
May your wisdom nourish my growth.  
Ase.*

*The End.*