

**A-Tisket, A-Tasket**

***Lancaster County, Virginia, 1855***

*A-tisket A-tasket a brown and yellow basket*

Ol' Pharoah Douglass perched Rosetta in his buggy  
making haste, for she was, they say, in the full act  
and article of parturition; "great with child" was she.

*On the way*

Rosetta bulged and bit she breached until her body preached.  
Eight miles that buggy panted through Virginia woods,  
eight miles Rosetta coiled and spat 'til like a stone

*I dropped it I dropped it*

her baby boy landed in the cool belly of Ol Pharoah's caravan.  
Born alive he wriggled and swooned  
slick with caul and vernix glazed. He wailed, Rosetta cried

and Pharoah whipped that aged mule. "Giddeyup old boy,  
the going's got to get!" But soon, the cord not yet cut  
that tied Rosetta to her son strangled him good and he died.

*A-tisket A-tasket I lost my yellow basket*

Rosetta, faint and almost grey around her lips, she moaned  
and brayed and pushed the afterbirth; she held the warm blue  
body of the boy. Ol' Pharoah pulled his mule to halt.

Rosetta was a hired slave on loan to earn a master's wage,  
belonged to Towles and great with child;  
he'd sent her off to work that day so as not a day to waste.

*And if the good lord don't return it  
Don't know what I'll do.*