

sat on the chair ledge in a soaking sweat—as though each of my 1,369 bulbs had everyone become a klieg light in an individual setting for a third degree with Bas and Rinehart in charge. It was exhausting—as though I had held my breath continuously for an hour under the terrifying serenity that comes from days of ~~invisibility~~. And yet, it was strangely satisfying experience for an invisible man to hear the silence of sound. I discovered unrecognized compulsions of ~~being~~—even though I could not answer “yes” to their pronouncements. I haven’t smoked a reefer since, however, not because they’re illegal, but because to see around corners is enough (that is not unusual when you are invisible). But to hear around them is too much; it inhibits action. And despite Brother Jack’s that sad, lost period of the Brotherhood I believe in nothing if not in action.

Please, a definition: A hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action. Besides, the drug destroys one’s sense of time completely. If that happened I might forget to dodge some bright morning and some cluck would run me down with an orange and yellow street car, or a bilious bus! Or I might forget to leave my hole when the moment for action presents itself.

Meanwhile I enjoy my life with the compliments of Isolated Light & Power. Since you never recognize me when in closest contact with me, and since, no doubt, you’ll hardly believe that I exist, it won’t matter if you know I’ve got a power line leading into the building and ran it ~~into the building~~. I lived in the darkness ~~and now I see~~. I’ve illuminated the blackness of my invisibility—and vice versa. I play the invisible music of my isolation. The last statement ~~isn’t~~ seem just right, do you hear this music? ~~because~~ music is heard in seen, except by me. ~~Could~~

and an example of despicable conduct—that as my grandfather had been. And what puzzled me was that the old man had referred to my *treachery*, when I was praised for my conduct. I felt a guilt that in some way I was doing something that was really against the wishes of the white folks, even though they had understood they would have desired me to act just the opposite. I thought I should have been sunny and mean, and that that really would have been what they wanted, even though they were fooled and thought they wanted him to act as I did. I made me afraid that some day they would look upon me as a traitor and I would be lost. And I was more afraid to act any other way because they didn't like that at all. The old man's words were like a curse. On my grandfather's day I delivered an oration in which I showed that humility was the secret, indeed the very essence of progress. (Not that I believed this—how could I, remembering my grandfather?—I only believed that it worked.) It was a great success. I've been praised and I was invited to give the speech at a gathering of the town's leading citizens. It was a triumph for our whole community.

It was in the main ballroom of the leading hotel. When I gathered there I discovered that it was on the occasion of a meeting and I was told that since I was to be there anyway I might as well take part in the battle royal to be fought by some of our schoolmates as part of the entertainment. The battle royal came first.

All of the town's big shots were there in their tuxedos, looking down the buffet table, drinking beer and whiskey and smoking black cigars. It was a large room with a high ceiling. Chairs were arranged in neat rows around three sides of a portable boxing ring. The fourth side was clear, revealing a gleaming expanse of polished floor. I had some misgivings over the battle royal, by the way. Not from a distaste for fighting, but because I didn't care too much for the other fellows who

she spun. Some of the more sober ones helped her to escape. And I started off the floor, heading for the anteroom with the rest of the boys.

Some were still crying and in hysteria. But as we tried to leave we were stopped and ordered to get into the ring. There was nothing to do but what we were told. All ten of us climbed under the ropes and allowed ourselves to be blind-

folded with our hands of white cloth. One of the men

backs against the ropes

"If you don't get him, I'm going to get you!" one of the bell and give it to him

If you don't get him, I'm going to get you! I don't like his looks." The blindfolds were put on

bright as flame. I felt oppressed into place

I felt blind terror. I was unused to darkness

voices yelling in

Get

at that big nigger!

black sonsabitches!

help me

get that nigger

I stood trembling

breath. A glove landed in my mid-section and I went over again, feeling as though the smoke had become a knife jabbed into my guts. Pushed this way and that by the legs milling around me, I finally pulled erect and discovered that I could see the black, sweat-washed forms weaving in the smoky-blue atmosphere like drunken dancers weaving to the rapid drum-like thuds of blows.

Everyone fought hysterically. It was complete anarchy. Everybody fought everybody else. No group fought together for long. Two, three, four, fought one, then turned to fight each other, were themselves attacked. Blows landed below the belt and in the kidney, with the gloves open as well as closed, and with my eye partly opened now there was not so much terror. I moved carefully, avoiding blows, although not too many to attract attention, fighting from group to group. The boys groped about like blind, cautious crabs crouching to protect their mid-sections, their heads pulled in short against their shoulders, their arms stretched nervously before them, with their fists testing the smoke-filled air like the knobbed feelers of hypersensitive snails. In one corner I glimpsed a boy violently punching the air and heard him scream in pain as he smashed his hand against a ring post. For a second I saw him bent over holding his hand, then going down as a blow caught his unprotected head. I played one group against the other, slipping in and throwing a punch then stepping out of range while pushing the others into the melee to take the blows blindly aimed at me. The smoke was agonizing and there were no rounds, no bells at three minute intervals to relieve our exhaustion. The room spun round me, a swirl of lights, smoke, sweating bodies surrounded by tense white faces. I bled from both nose and mouth, the blood spattering upon my chest.

The men kept yelling, "Slug him, black boy! Knock his guts out!"

"Uppercut him! Kill him! Kill that big boy!"

They were yelling for us to break it up and Tatlock spun me half around with a blow, and as a joggled camera sweeps in a reeling scene, I saw the howling red faces crouching tense beneath the cloud of blue-gray smoke. For a moment the world wavered, unraveled, flowed, then my head cleared and Tatlock bounced before me. That fluttering shadow before my eyes was his jabbing left hand. Then falling forward, my head against his damp shoulder, I whispered:

"I'll make it five dollars more."

"Go to hell!"

But his muscles relaxed a trifle beneath my pressure and I breathed, "Seven?"

"Give it to your ma," he said, ripping me beneath the heart.

And while I still held him, I butted him and moved away. I felt myself bombarded with punches, a fought-back with hopeless desperation. I wanted to deliver my speech more than anything else in the world, because I felt that only these men could judge truly my ability, and now this stupid clown was ruining my chances. I began fighting carefully now, moving in to punch him and out again with my greater speed. A lucky blow to his chin and I had him going too—until I heard a loud voice yell, "I got my money on the big boy."

Hearing this, I almost dropped my guard. I was confused: Should I try to win against the voice out there? Would not this go against my speech, and was not this a moment for humility, for nonresistance? A blow to my head as I danced about sent my right eye popping like a jack-in-the-box and settled my dilemma. The room went red as I fell. It was a dream fall, my body languid and fastidious as to where to land, until the floor became impatient and smashed up to meet me. A moment later I came to. An hypnotic voice said FIVE emphatically. And I lay there, lazily watching a dark red spot of

I saw him gazing at the long ash of his cigar, holding it delicately in his slender, manicured fingers.

"Yes, you are my fate, young man. Only you can tell me what it really is. Do you understand?"

"I *think* I do, sir."

"I mean that upon you depends the outcome of the years I have spent in helping with school. That has been my real life's work, not my barking out my researches, but my first-hand organizing of human life."

I saw him now leaning toward the front seat, speaking with an intensity which had not been there before. It was hard not to turn my eyes from the highway and face him.

"There is another reason, a reason more important, more passionate and yes, even more sacred than all the others," he said, no longer seeming to see me, but speaking to himself alone. "Yes, even more sacred than all the others. A girl, my daughter. She was a being more rare, more beautiful, purer, more perfect and more delicate than the wildest dream of a poet. I could never believe her to be my own flesh and blood. Her beauty was a well-spring of purest water-of-life, and to look upon her was to drink and drink and drink again . . . She was rare, a perfect creation, a work of purest art. A delicate flower that bloomed in the liquid light of the moon. A nature not of this world, a personality like that of some biblical maiden, gracious and queenly. I found it difficult to believe her my own . . ."

Suddenly he fumbled in his vest pocket and thrust something over the back of the seat, surprising me.

"Here, young man, you owe much of your good fortune in attending such a school to her."

I looked upon the tinted miniature framed in engraved platinum. I almost dropped it. A young woman of delicate, dreamy features looked up at me. She was very beautiful. I

my hand, the long and slender fingers delicately, with slender manicured fingers.

"Yes, you are my fate, young man. Only you can tell me what it really is. Do you understand?"

"I think I do."

"I mean that upon you depends the outcome of the years I have spent in helping your school. That has been my real life's work, not my banking or my researches, but my firsthand organizing of human life."

I saw him now, leaning toward the front seat, speaking with an intensity which had not been there before. It was hard not to turn my eyes from the highway and face him.

"There is another reason, a reason more important, more passionate and yes, even more sacred than all the others," he said, no longer seeming to see me, but speaking to himself alone. "Yes, even more sacred than all the others. A girl, my daughter. She was a being more rare, more beautiful, purer, more perfect and more delicate than the wildest dream of a poet. I believe her to be my own flesh and blood.

Her beauty was as pure as the purest water-of-life, and to look upon her was to drink and drink and drink again. She was rare, perfect creation, a work of purest art. A delicate flower in the liquid light of the moon, a nature not of this world, a purity like that of some biblical figure, gracious and queenly. I believe her to be my own daughter."

Suddenly he turned and looked at me and thrust something over the side of the car. It was a small, white, rectangular object, a miniature framed in engraved platinum. I almost dropped it. A young woman of delicate, dreamy features looked up at me. She was very beautiful, and

was also a good tenor singer, and sometimes when special white guests visited the school he was brought up along with the members of a country quartet to sing what the officials called "their primitive spirituals" when we assembled in the chapel on Sunday evenings. We were embarrassed by the earthy harmonies they sang, but since the visitors were awed we dared not laugh at the crude, highly imitative animal sounds Jim Trueblood made as he sang. That had all passed now with his disgrace, and what on the part of the school official had been in a attitude of contempt blunted by tolerance, had now become a contempt sharpened by hate. I didn't understand in those primitive days that their hate, and mine too, was charged with fear. Now all of it. At the college hated the black-belt people the "peasants." During those days we were trying to lift them up and then the Truebloods and everything seemed to pull us down.

It appeared that a new era was dawning, looking across the new frontiers, and the women moved in and out of the flames from the were were "And the family was a big plantation till lives in yes," he said. "I know that many of the families still survive. And individuals too, the human stock goes on, even though it degenerates. But these cabins!" He seemed surprised and confounded.

That's the way it was

Me

Black as the middle of a bucket of tar

didn't like him and he kept comin' through my thoughts

I was thinkin' 'bout

the other side. I was

I thought 'bout

could see 'em in my mind knowin' 'em like I do. In

looks

like

of people

we gittin' to be a better

face

again and again
the farce
by his death
hid
deeper than I thought
off—
Could he have
we were to affirm the principle on
which the world was built and not the men, or
did he mean to affirm the principle on which
he did the violence. Did he mean say "yes" to
that the principle was greater than the men, greater
than the numbers and the vicious power and all the methods
used to corrupt its name? Did he mean to affirm the principle,
which they themselves had dreamed into being out of the chaos
and darkness of the feudal past, and which they had violated
and compromised to the point of absurdity even in their own
corrupt minds? Or did he mean that we had to take the re-
sponsibility for all of it, for the men as well as the principle,
because we were the heirs who must use the principle because
no other fitted our needs? Not for the power or for vindica-
tion, but because we, with the given circumstance of our origin,
could only thus find transcendence? Was it that we of all, we,
most of all, had to affirm the principle, the plan in whose name
we had been brutalized and sacrificed—not because we would
always be weak nor because we were afraid or opportunistic,
but because we were older than they, in the sense of what it
took to live in the world with others and because they had
exhausted in us, some—not much, but some—of the human
greed and smallness, yes, and the fear and superstition that had
kept them running. (Oh, yes, they're running too, running all
over the selves.) Or was it, did he mean that we should affirm
the principle because we, through no fault of our own, were
linked to all the others in the loud, clamoring semi-visible
world, that world seen only as a fertile field for exploitation
by Jax and his kind, and with condescension by Nor

INVISIBLE

You don't want

You want

guilty

frozen

I was

I was

alive

to death.

in my head,

was

runnin'

I

see

her

I think

myself,

I see her

on me

I see the knuckles

bleedin'

I see it

go

I can see

the cold

skin,

I smell

sweat

yes!

come free!

NAAW

Lawd

NAW!!!

look

through

glass

guiltily



a dream, but they scorns me. I gits plum out of the house then. I goes to see the preacher and even **he don't believe** me. He tells me to git out of his house, that I'm the most wicked man he's ever seen and that I better go confess my sin and make my peace with God. I leaves tryin' to play, but I caint. I thinks and thinks, until I think my brain go n bust, 'bout how I'm guilty and how **I ain't guilty**. I don't eat nothin' and **I don't drink** nothin' and caint sleep at night. **Finally, one night, way early in the mornin'**, I looks up and sees the stars and I starts singin'. I don't mean to, I didn't think 'bout it, just start singin'. I don't know what it was, some kinda church song, I guess. All I know is I **ends up** singin' the blues. **I sings me some blues** that night ain't never been sang before, and while I'm singin' them blues **I makes up my mind that I ain't nobody** but myself **and ain't nothin' I can do** but let whatever is gonna happen, happen. I made up my mind that I was goin' back home and face Kate, yeah, and face Matty Lou too.

"When I gits here everybody thinks I done run off. There's a heap of women here with Kate and I runs 'em out. And when I runs 'em out I sends the younguns out to play and locks the door and tells Kate and Matty Lou 'bout the dream and how I'm sorry, but that what done happen is done happen.

"How come you don't go on 'way and leave us?' is the first words Kate says to me. 'Ain't you done enough to me and this chile?'

"I caint leave you,' I says. 'I'm a man and man don't leave his family.'

"She says, 'Naw you ain't no man. No man'd do what you did.'

"I'm still a man,' I says.

"But what you gon do after it happens?' says Kate.

"After *what* happens?' I says.

just love 'em.

"Shucks, me I'd kill an old man like
"Kill him nothing," Edna said. "Ginny, you
that all these rich ole white men got monkey glands
goat balls? These old bastards don't never git enough
want to have the whole world."

The doctor looked at me and said, "See, I'm
earning all about endocrinology, but you was
told you that he was only a monkey gland
both."
used to have me one

you ain't

jackass balls!

The fat man raised up with a quick grin. "As a scientist
and a physician I'm forced to discount that," he said. "That
one operation that has yet to be performed." Then he man-
aged to get the girls out of the room.

"If he should come around and hear that conversation,"
the vet said, "it would be enough to send him off again. Be-
sides, their scientific curiosity might lead them to investigate
whether he really does have a monkey gland. And that, I'm
afraid, would be a bit obscene."

"I've got to get him back to the school," I said.

"All right," he said, "I'll do what I can to help you. Go
see if you can find some ice. And don't worry."

VISIBLE MAN

I went out

seeing

baying,

thumping,

drenched

I

abandoned drink

and

who now breathed

a slightly irregular sound.

You were quick,

ice. "Swift with the spirit

self. "Hand me that clean

he, seeing him

son's face.

he all right?" I said.

"He will be in a few minutes."

"I took him for a drive."

"Did you have an accident?"

No." I said. "He was taken to a far hospital. The heat knocked him out. He got caught in the mob downstairs."

of the trustees

trustee of consciousness.

I asked.

There now, he's

out of

impulse to run out of

I feared

ould say to me, the

And yet, I was afraid

the face with its flash

side in the pale gl



You cannot see hear or smell
destiny And
he sees far less than you neither
of you can see the other. he is
a thing and not a man
And you,
are not a man to him
Let us
listen believe in the beat
of his heart. He believes in
you
He's your friend your
destiny.



The wheel felt like an alien dumb in my hands and I followed the white line to the highway. Heat rays from the sun above me arose from the gray concrete shimmering like the worn traces of a distant bugle blown upon still midnight air. In the mirror I could see Mr. Norton staring out vacantly upon the empty fields, his mouth set in his white forehead where I had scraped the screen. And seeing him I felt the fear balled coldly within me unfold. What would happen now? What would the school officials say? In my mind I visualized Mr. Nicholson's face when he saw Mr. Norton. I thought of the piteous return to home would feel if I were expelled. Dated grinning faces pressed through my mind. What would the white folks think who'd sent me to college? Was Mr. Norton angry about? In the Golden Day he had seemed more curious than anything else until the school started talking about him. The more I thought his life. If we had not sat in the space being Mr. Norton would not have needed whiskey and I wouldn't have gone to the Golden Day. And why would the white men and women with a white man in the house?

I headed the car through the red-brick campus gateposts with a sense of cold apprehension. Now even the rows of neat dormitories seemed to threaten me, the rolling lawns appearing as hostile as the gray highway with its white dividing line. As of its own compulsion, the car slowed as we passed the chapel with its low, sweeping eaves. The sun shone coolly through the avenue of trees, dappling the curving drive. Students strolled through the shade, down a hill of tender grass toward the brick-red stretch of tennis courts. Far beyond, players in whites showed sharp against the red of the courts surrounded by grass, a gay vista washed by the sun. In the brief interval I heard a cheer arise. My predicament struck me like a stab. I had a sense of losing control of the car and slammed on the brakes in the middle of the road, then apologized and drove on. Here within this quiet greenness I possessed the only identity I had ever known, and I was losing it. In this brief moment of passage I became aware of the connection between these lawns and buildings and my hopes and dreams. I wanted to stop the car and talk with Mr. Norton, to beg his pardon for what he had seen, to plead and show him tears unashamed tears like those of a child before his parent, to denounce all we'd seen and heard, to assure him that far from being like any of the people we had seen, I *bated* them, that I believed in the principles of the Founder with all my heart and soul, and that I believed in his own goodness and kindness in extending the hand of his benevolence to helping us poor, ignorant people out of the mire and darkness. I would do his bidding and teach others to rise up as he wished them to, teach them to be thrifty, decent, upright citizens, contributing to the welfare of all, shunning all but the straight and narrow path that he and the Founder had stretched before us. If only he were not angry with me! If only he would give me another chance!

Tears filled my eyes, and the walks and buildings flowed

and show her how the moon rises over all
the Founder's grave, man.

"Go to hell," I said.

He left laughing, opening the door to
footsteps from the hall: supper time. The
voices. Something of my life seemed to retreat with
a gray distance, moiling. Then a knock sounded at the door
and I sprang up, my heart tense.

A small student wearing a freshman's cap stuck his head
in the door, shouting, "Dr. Bledsoe said he wants to see you
down at Rabb Hall." And then he was gone before I could
question him, his footsteps thundering down the hall as he
raced to dinner before the last bell sounded.

At Mr. NORTON'S door I stood
mumbling a prayer.

"Come in," young man said. He was
dressed in fresh linen, the light
upon silk floss. A small piece
forehead. He was alone.

"I'm sorry, sir," I apologized. He told that Dr.
Bledsoe wanted to see me here.

"That's correct," he said, "but Dr. Bledsoe had to leave.
You'll find him in his office after chapel."

"Thank you, sir," I said and turned to go. He cleared
his throat behind me. "Young man,

I turned hopefully.

"Young man, I have explained to Dr. Bledsoe that you
were not at fault. I believe he understands."

I was so relieved that at first I could only look at him, a
small silken-haired, white-suited St. Nicholas seen through
misty eyes.

here beneath the deep indigo sky, here, alive
and darting moths, here in the hereness of the
by the moon that looms blood-red behind the
chapel like a fallen sun, its radiance shedding not upon the
here-dusk of twittering bats, nor on the there-night of
and whippoorwill, but focused short-rayed upon our place of
convergence, and we drifting forward with rigid motions, limbs
and voices now silent, as though on exhibit even in the
dark, and the moon a white man's bloodshot eye.

And I move more rigid than all the others with
of judgment, the vibrations of the chapel bells stirring the
depths of my turmoil, moving toward its nexus with a sense
of doom. And I remember the chapel with its sweeping eaves,
long and low as though risen bloody from the earth like the
rising moon, vine-covered and earth-colored as though more
earth-sprung than man-sprung. And my mind rushing
away from the spring dusk and flower scents, away
time-scene of the crucifixion to the time-scene of the bells
from spring-dusk and vespers to the high, hard moon of
winter and snow glinting upon the winter pines where in-
stead of the bells, the organ and the trombone choir speak
carols to the distances, drifted with snow, making of the night
air a sea of crystal water lapping the slumbering land to the
farthest reaches of sound, for endless miles, bringing the new
dispensation even to the Golden Day, even unto the house of
madness. But in the hereness of dusk I am moving toward the
doomlike bells through the flowered air, beneath the rising
moon.

Into the lights I go, silently, past
bending straight and torturous, finding
and bending my body to its agony
plaster with its pulpit and rail of
heads of the stu-

And I remember too, how we confronted those others, those who had set me here in this Eden, whom we knew though we didn't know, who were unfamiliar in their familiarity, who trailed their words to us through blood and violence and ridicule and condescension with drawling smiles, and who exhorted and threatened, intimidated with innocent words as they described to us the limitations of our lives and the vast boldness of our aspirations, the staggering folly of our impatience to rise even higher; who, as they talked, aroused furtive visions within me of blood-froth sparkling their chins like their familiar tobacco juice, and upon their lips the curdled milk of a million black slave mummies' withered dugs, a treacherous and fluid knowledge of our being, imbibed at our source and now regurgitated foul upon us. This was our world, they said as they described it to us, this our horizon and its earth, its seasons and its climate, its spring and its summer, and its fall and harvest some unknown millennium ahead, and these its floods and cyclones and they themselves our thunder and lightning; and this we must accept and love and accept even if we did not love. We must accept—even when those were absent, and the men who made the railroads and ships and towers of stone, were before our eyes, in the flesh, their voices different, unweighted with recognizable danger and their delight in our songs more sincere seeming, their regard for our welfare marked by an almost benign and impersonal indifference. But the words of the others were stronger than the strength of philanthropic dollars, deeper than shafts sunk in the earth for oil and gold, more awe-inspiring than the miracles fabricated in scientific laboratories. For their most innocent words were acts of violence to which we of the campus were hypersensitive though we endured them not.

And there on the platform I too had stridden and debated, a student leader directing my voice at the highest beams



impunity. And I remembered too that whenever white guests came upon the platform he placed his hand upon them as though exercising a powerful magic. I watched his teeth flash as he took a white hand; then, with all seated, he went to his place at the end of the row of chairs.

Several terraces of students' faces above them, the organist, his eyes glinting at the console, was waiting with his head turned over his shoulder and I saw Dr. Bledsoe, his eyes roaming over the audience, suddenly nod without turning his head. It was as though he had given a downbeat with an invisible baton. The organist turned and hunched his shoulders. A high cascade of sound bubbled from the organ, spreading, thick and clinging, over the chapel, slowly surging. The organist twisted and turned on his bench, with his feet flying beneath him as though dancing to rhythms totally unrelated to the decorous thunder of his organ.

And Dr. Bledsoe sat with a benign smile of inward concentration. Yet his eyes were darting swiftly, first over the rows of students, then over the section reserved for teachers, his swift glance carrying a threat for all. For he demanded that everyone attend these sessions. It was here that policy was announced in broadest rhetoric. I seemed to feel his eyes resting upon my face as he swept the section in which I sat. I looked at the guests on the platform; they sat with that alert relaxation with which they always met our upturned eyes. I wondered to which of them I might go to intercede for me with Dr. Bledsoe, but within myself I knew that there was no one.

In spite of the array of important men beside him, and despite the posture of humility and meekness which made him seem smaller than the others (although he was physically larger), Dr. Bledsoe made his presence felt by us with a far greater impact. I remembered the legend of how he had come to the



wounds wounds wounds
 ha! ha!
 you plunged with the mob
 deep into
 night,
 stung buzzed hooted zoomed
 darkness standing
 ha! ha!
 a fire. stood in the blackness
 fire the fire!
 fire
 hot hot-
 night,
 no hatred
 yes!

reminders of some precious memory, and each memory
 haunting stroke driving home the blunt spikes of their sorrow.
 Ah yes, some of them were gray-haired among you, and
 dedicated to the vineyard of life, working in the vineyard. But
 then with the black-draped coffin lying in state among them—
 inescapable reminder of death—the dark night of slavery
 settling on us more than them. For which that old obscene
 stink of darkness, that old slavery stink, rose in a rank
 haze of hoary death. Their sweet faces were in that black-
 draped coffin, their majestic sun snatched behind a cloud.

Oh, the sad sound of weeping bugles! I can hear
 them now, sounded at the four corners of the world, sounding
 the taps for the black general, announcing and reannouncing
 the sad tidings, telling and retelling the sad revelation.

To the old ones, the old ones, the old ones, for they
 could not understand, neither comprehend nor feel it;
 bugles weeping like a family of tender women lamenting their
 loved ones. For the people came to that old sorrow, and to
 express it in the old way, the old way. Black, black, black! Black
 people, blacker mourning, the bitterest mourning on their
 naked hearts, and in unshaved heads, black to the songs of
 sorrow, turning path of the sorrow, the sorrow walks,
 weeping and wailing beneath the storm of grief, and their low
 murmuring voices like the moans of winds in a wilderness. And

finally they gathered on the hill slope, and as far as the tear-
 wet eyes could see, the slope was their heads bowed, singing.

Then silence. The lonesome hole of earth, and poignant
 flowers. The soles, white-plaid hands, and the silken ropes. That awful silence. The final words are spoken.
 A single wild rose, its petals slowly, slowly, petals falling
 snowlike upon the snow, and down, and down. Then down
 into the earth, back to the ancient dust, back to the cold black
 mother of all.

Uttering apologies,

helped him to his chair
with a smile. Dr. Blaisone

moaning

This time

He was leaning in the
chairs, his face pale and exalted, as if
wanted to say something to me. I sat
and erect, my hands clasped, my feet
upon a form.

I could not have known now, because of the
had made me feel guilty and accept. For I wish I
had not made a mistake that endangered the
dream of the world.

I did not listen

to the next speaker, a tall, thin man who
was dancing his eyes like a headless man, and
I sat in a position of indifference. Then
the orchestra played excerpts from Donizetti's *Nell'Anfiteatro*,
and I kept hearing "Young Love, Sweet Love" through
its dominant melody, my fingers and my heart
favoring it. It was over then, I could stand and
the next speaker came on. I carried my eyes, my
eyes of teachers and students, out into the night.

A mockingbird's call came from the
the hand of the moon. **Founder.** Happily, the moon had
above the head of the city, and I gave it up
the shadowy drive, then again behind me. The stars
glowed brightly in the night, and the car
serene in its cage of shadows.

I might well have been in the hall of the
for I hadn't gone far when I heard the
orchestra striking up a march, followed
the students fled out into the night. **With a feeling of dread**

Then down the long avenue of trees I saw the familiar Cadillac approaching and started inside the building, suddenly filled with panic. I hadn't gone two paces before I turned and hurried out into the night again. I stepped forward to face Dr. Bledsoe immediately. I was fully shivering and still in behind a group of boys going up the stairs. They were arguing some point heatedly, but I was too agitated to listen and simply followed in their shadows, nursing the dull gleam of the polished shoe-leather in the rays of the street lamps. I kept trying to formulate what I would say to Dr. Bledsoe, and the boys must have turned into their building, for suddenly finding myself outside the gates of the campus, heading down the highway, I turned and ran back to the building.

When I went in he was standing with his neck wrapped in a blue-bordered handkerchief. The shaded light from catching the lenses of his glasses left half of his broad face in the shadow as his clenched fists stretched full before him toward the light before him. I stood, hesitating in the door, and suddenly of the old heavy furnishings, the relics from the time of the Founder, the framed portrait photographs and relief carvings of presidents and industrialists, men of power—fixations, trophies or heraldic emblems upon the walls.

"Come in," he said from the half-shadow; then I saw him move and his head coming toward me, his eyes flaring.

He began mildly, as if quietly looking, throwing me off balance.

"Boy," he said, "I understand that you not only carried Mr. Norton out to the Quarantine, but that you wound up at that sinkhole, that Golden Ditch."

It was a statement, not a question. I said nothing and he looked at me with the same mild gaze. Barbree helped Mr. Norton soften him?

"No," he said, "I don't want to take him to the

~~He thought that~~ he lived ~~in the South~~ he's great

~~He said~~

He said ~~that~~ white was right

What? Suddenly his face brightened and cracked like the

surface of dark water and yonder ~~dark~~ ~~dark~~

suppressing ~~hasty~~ ~~hasty~~ ~~hasty~~

~~He did not answer~~ thinking

Who was he ~~did you ever see him before~~

~~He said~~

Was he northern or southern?"

I don't know

~~He asked him~~ College for Negroes what do

you know ~~other than~~ how to ruin ~~an institution in half an~~

hour that is not over half a hundred years ~~to build and~~

~~to build and~~ ~~to build and~~

He talked like a white man ~~and~~ except that his

sounded southern like one of ours

I'll have to investigate him, he said. A Negro like

that should be under lock and key"

Across the campus a clock struck the quarter hour and

something inside me ~~seemed to make its sound~~ turned

him desperately ~~fully~~ sorry. I had no

intention ~~hand~~

understands

another,

might think

poor judgment

uplifting the race, you've torn

it down

He

had committed the worst

crime imaginable Don't you know

this?

think about that, son." He laughed. "With all your speech-making and studying I thought you understood something. But you . . . All right, go ahead. See Norton. You'll find that he wants you disciplined; he might not know it, but he does. Because he knows that I know what is best for his interests. You're a black educated fool, son. These white folk have newspapers, magazines, radios, spokesmen to get their ideas across. If they want to tell the world a lie, they can tell it so well that it becomes the truth; and if I tell them that you're lying, they'll tell the world even if you prove you're telling the truth. Because it's the kind of lie they want to hear . . ."

I heard the high, harsh voice of the old man. "You're nobody, son. You don't exist. . . . I talk tell everybody what to think. . . . I tell them; that's my life, tell you the things I know about. . . . That's the way it is. . . . You listen to me; I did it. . . . I did it. . . . But I've made . . . in the country hang . . . staying where I am."

He was looking at me with a fierce, charged and sincere, as the old man said, a fantastic revelation which I could neither see nor deny. Cold drops of sweat moved at a glacier's pace down my spine . . .

"I mean it, son," he said. "I had to be strong and purposeful to get where I am. I had to wait and play and lick around . . . Yes, I had to act the nigger!" he said, adding another fiery, "Yes!"

"I don't even insist that it was worth it, but now I'm here and I mean to stay—after you win the game, you take the prize and you keep it, protect it; there's nothing else to do." He shrugged. "A man gets old winning his place, son."

Chapter 7

The bus was empty, but the ticket window was open and a woman in a gray uniform was pushing a trolley. As soon as my ticket was cleared into the bus, there were only two passengers seated at the rear of the red and black interior, and I suddenly felt that I was dreaming. It was then that I experienced the shock of recognition; an attendant sat beside him.

"Welcome, young man," he said, smiling. "I'm glad, Mr. Crenshaw," he said to the attendant, "are you a traveling companion?"

"Morning," I said reluctantly. I looked around for a seat away from them, but although the bus was almost empty, only the rear was reserved for us and there was nothing to do but move back with them. I didn't like it; the vet was too much a part of an experience which I was already trying to blot out of my consciousness. His way of talking to Mr. Norton had been a foreshadowing of my misfortune—just as I had sensed that it would be. Now having accepted my punishment, I wanted to remember nothing connected with Trueblood or the Golden Day.

"There's other kinds of freedom beside some ole white trash women," Crenshaw said. "He might want to see him some shows and eat in some of them big restaurants."

The vet grinned. "Why, of course, but remember, Crenshaw, he's only going to be there a few months. Most of the time he'll be working, and so much of his freedom will have to be symbolic. And what will be his or any man's most easily accessible symbol of freedom? Why, a woman, of course. In twenty minutes he can inflate that symbol with all the freedom which he'll be too busy working to enjoy the rest of the time. He'll see."

I tried to change the subject. "Where are you going?" I asked.

"To Washington, D.C.," he said.

"Then you're cured?"

"Cured? There is no cure."

"He's being transferred," said Crenshaw.

"Yes, I'm headed for St. Elizabeth's," the vet said. "The ways of authority are indeed mysterious. For a year I've tried to get transferred, then this morning I'm suddenly told to pack. I can't but wonder if our little conversation with your friend Mr. Norton had something to do with it."

"How could he have anything to do with it?" I said, remembering Dr. Bledsoe's threat.

"How could he have anything to do with your being on this bus?" he said.

He winked. His eyes wrinkled. "All right, forget what I've said. But for God's sake, learn to look beneath the surface," he said. "Come out of the fog, young man. And remember, you don't have to make a complete fool in order to succeed. I don't believe in it—that much you must remember. Then I'm leaving you in a strait jacket or a padded cell. But the same. You play it your own way—part of the time, I mean. Play it your own way, my boy. Learn how."

ground of brick buildings, neon signs, plate glass and roaring traffic—not even on trips I had made with the debating team to New Orleans, Dallas or Birmingham. They were everywhere. So many, and moving along with so much tension and noise that I wasn't sure whether they were about to celebrate a holiday or join in a street fight. There were even black girls behind the counters of the Five and Ten as I passed. Then at the street intersection I had the shock of seeing a black policeman directing traffic—and there were white drivers in the traffic who obeyed his signals as though it was the most natural thing in the world. Sure I had heard of it, but this was real. My courage returned. This really was Harlem, and now all the stories which I had heard of the city-within-a-city leaped alive in my mind. The vet had been right. For me this was not a city of realities, but of dreams; perhaps because I had always thought of my life as being confined to the South. And now as I struggled through the lines of people a new world of possibility suggested itself to me faintly, like a small voice that was barely audible in the roar of city sounds. I moved wide-eyed, trying to take the bombardment of impressions. Then I stopped still.

It was ahead of me, angry and shrill, and upon hearing it I had a sensation of shock and fear such as I had felt as a child when surprised by my father's voice. An emptiness widened in my stomach. Before me a gathering of people were almost blocking the walk, while above them a short squat man shouted angrily from a ladder to which were attached a collection of small American flags.

"We gine chase 'em out," the man cried. "Out!"

"Tell 'em about it, Ras. mahn," a voice called.

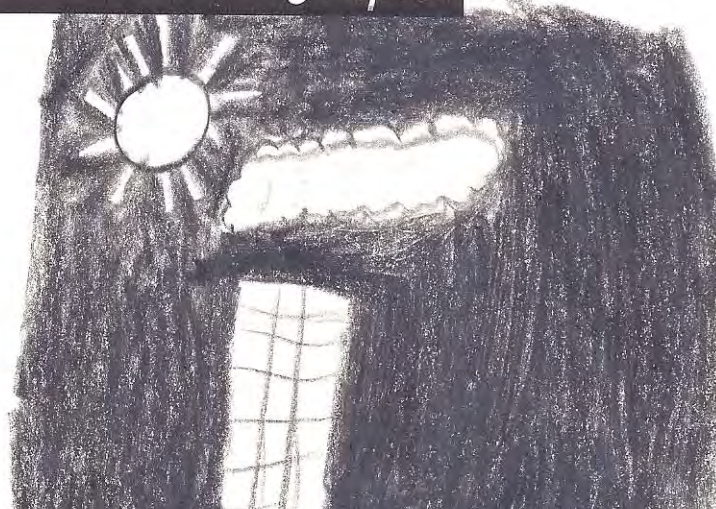
And I saw the squat man shake his fist angrily over the uplifted faces, yelling something in a staccato West Indian accent, at which the crowd yelled threateningly. It was as though

all but the letter to a Mr. Emerson, who I knew from the papers was away from the city. Several times I started down to see what had happened but changed my mind. I didn't wish to seem too impatient. But time was becoming short. Unless I found work soon I would never earn enough to enter school by fall. I had already written home that I was working for a member of the trustee board, and the only letter I had received so far was one telling me how wonderful they thought it was and warning me against the ways of the wicked. Now I couldn't write them for money without revealing that I had been lying about the job.

Finally I tried to reach my employers by telephone, only to receive polite refusals from the secretary. But fortunately I still had the letter from Mr. Norton. I decided to use it, but instead of handing it over to a secretary, I wrote a letter explaining that I had a message from Dr. Bledsoe and requesting an appointment. Maybe I've been wrong about the secretary, I thought; maybe they destroyed the letters. I should have been more careful.

I thought of Mr. Norton. If only the last letter had been addressed to him. If only he lived in New York so that I could make a personal appeal. Somehow I felt closer to Mr. Norton, and felt that if he should see me, he would remember that it was I whom he connected so closely to his fate. Now it seemed ages ago and in a different season and a distant land. Actually, it was less than a month. I became energetic and wrote him a letter expressing my belief that my future would be immeasurably different if only I could work for him; that he would be benefited as well as I. I was especially careful to allow some indication of my ability to come through the appeal. I spent several hours on the typing, destroying copy after copy until I had completed one that was immaculate, carefully phrased and most respectful. I hurried home and passed it before the final

Chapter 9



day when the sun and the sun burned with a pale, grey
Only a single, snowy cloud lay high in the pale blue-
blue sky, and a
felt better, as if the sun had grown, and
down the street the skyscrapers rose tall and mysterious
in a pale haze. A mile away, the sun had
suddenly, what were they doing now on the campus? Had the
moon sunk low, and the sun climbed clear? Had the breakfast
bowl been? Did the bellows of the bus send out a cheer the
grey, the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun
had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and
bugles and the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and
by the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun
that today was the day. Something had happened. I pulled my
brief case, thinking of the letter inside. The last had been
the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun
the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun
the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun
the sun had grown, and the sun had grown, and the sun

"I've got something good for you," he said, placing a glass of water before me. "How about the special?"

"What's the special?"

"Pork chops, grits, one egg, hot biscuits and coffee!" He leaned over the counter with a look that seemed to say, There, that ought to excite you, boy. Could everyone see that I was southern?

"I'll have orange juice, toast and coffee," I said, coldly.

He shook his head. "You fooled me," he said, slamming two pieces of bread into the toaster. "I would have sworn you were a pork chop man. Is that juice large or small?"

"Make it large," I said.

I looked silently at the back of his head as he sliced an orange, thinking I should order the special and get up and walk out. Who does he think he is?

A seed floated in the thick layer of pulp that formed at the top of the glass. I fished it out with a spoon and then downed the acid drink, proud to have resisted the pork chop and grits. It was an act of discipline, a sign of the change that was coming over me and which would return me to college a more experienced man. I would be basically the same, I thought, stirring my coffee, yet so subtly changed as to intrigue those who had never been North. It always helped at the college to be a little different, especially if you wished to play a leading role. It made the folks talk about you, try to figure you out. I had to be careful though, not to speak too much like a northern Negro; they wouldn't like that. The thing to do, with a smile, was to give them hints that what I said was weighted with broad knowledge of the South. I kept them guessing just as they put me on. Did Dr. Bledsoe stop at an expensive white hotel when he visited

"Seven?" He was suddenly angry.

Yes, sir, that was all he gave me.

"And how many of these gentlemen have you succeeded in seeing, may I ask?"

A sinking feeling came over me. "I haven't seen any of them personally, sir."

"And this is your last letter?"

Yes, sir, it is, but I expect to hear from the others.

They said—

"Of course you will, and from all seven. They're all loyal Americans."

There was unmistakable irony in his voice now, and I didn't know what to say.

"Seven," he repeated mysteriously. "Oh, don't let me upset you," he said with an elegant gesture of self-disgust. "I had a difficult session with my analyst last evening and the slightest thing is apt to set me off. Like an alarm clock without control—Say!" he said, slapping his palms against his thighs. "What on earth does that mean?" Suddenly he was in a state. One side of his face had begun to twitch and swell.

I watched him light a cigarette, thinking, What on earth is this all about?

"Some things are just too unjust for words," he said, expelling a plume of smoke, "and too ambiguous for either speech or ideas. By the way, have you ever been to the Club Calamus?"

"I don't think I've ever heard of it, sir," I said.

"You haven't? It's very well known. Many of my Harlem friends go there. It's a rendezvous for writers, artists and all kinds of celebrities. There's nothing like it in the city, and by some strange twist it has a truly continental flavor."

"I've never been to a night club, sir. I'll have to go there to see what it's like after I've started earning some money." I

"You mean leave?"

"Yes, to get out."

"But you said that you would help me!"

"I did and I am—"

"But what about seeing Mr. Emerson?"

"Oh, God! Don't you see that it's best that you do *not* see him?"

Suddenly I could not breathe. Then I was standing, gripping my brief case. "What have you got against me?" I blurted. "What did I ever do to you? You never intended to let me see him. Even though I presented my letter of introduction. Why? Why? I'd never endanger *your* job—"

"No, no, no! Of course no," he cried, getting to his feet. "You've misunderstood me. You mustn't do that! God, there's too much misunderstanding. Please don't think I'm trying to prevent you from seeing my—from seeing Mr. Emerson out of prejudice . . ."

"Yes, sir, I do," I said angrily. "I was sent here by a friend of his. You read the letter, but still you refuse to let me see him, and now you're trying to get me to leave college. What kind of man are you, anyway? What have you got against me? You, a northern white man!"

He looked pained. "I've done it badly," he said, "but you must believe that I am trying to advise you what is best for you. He snatched off his glasses.

"But I know what's best for me," I said. "Or at least Dr. Bledsoe does, and if I can't see Mr. Emerson today, just tell me when I can and I'll be here . . ."

He bit his lips and shut his eyes, shaking his head from side to side as though fighting back a scream. "I'm sorry, really sorry that I started all of this," he said, suddenly calm. "It was foolish of me to try to advise you, but please, you must believe that I'm against you . . . or your race. I'm your friend."

back and have his name entered on the shipping department's payroll.

"It's tremendous," I said as we left the building. "It looks like a million dollars."

"It's big all right," he said. "We're one of the biggest outfits in the business. Make a lot of paint for the government."

We entered the main hallings now and started down a pale white hall.

"You better leave your things in the locker room," he said, opening a door through which I saw a room with low wooden benches and rows of green lockers. There were keys in several of the locks, and he selected one for me. "Put your stuff in there and take the key," he said. Drawing it I felt nervous. He sprawled with one foot on a bench, watching me closely as he chewed on a match stem. Did he suspect that Jackson hadn't sent me?

"They had a new racket and one here," he said, twirling the match between his finger and thumb. There was a note of insinuation in his voice, and I looked up from tying my shoe, breathing with conscious evenness.

"What kind of racket?" I said.

"Oh, you know. The wise guys living the regular guys and putting on you colored college boys. Pretty smart," he said. "That way they don't have to pay union wages."

"How did you know I went to college?" I said.

"Oh, there's about six of you guys out here already. Some up in the testing lab. Everybody knows about that."

"But I had no idea that was why I was hired," I said.

"Forget it, Mac," he said. "It's not your fault. You new guys don't know the score. Just like the union says, it's the wise guys in the union. They're the ones who make scabs out of you—They've better hurry."

We entered a long, shed-like room in which I saw a series

of overhead doors along one side and a row of small offices on the other. I followed the boy down an aisle between endless cans, buckets and drums labeled with the company's trademark, a screaming eagle. The paint was stacked in neatly pyramided lots along the concrete floor. Then, starting into one of the offices, the boy stopped short and grinned.

"Listen to that!"

Someone inside the office was swearing violently over a telephone.

"Who's that?" I asked.

He grinned. "Your boss, the terrible Mr. Kimbro. We call him 'Colonel,' but don't let him catch you."

I didn't like it. The voice was raving about some failure of the laboratory and I felt a swift uneasiness. I didn't like the idea of starting to work for a man who was in such a nasty mood. Perhaps he was angry at one of the men from the school, and that wouldn't make him feel too friendly toward me.

"Let's go in," the boy said. "I've got to get back."

As we entered, the man slammed down the phone and picked up some papers.

"Mr. MacDuffy wants to know if you can use this new man," the boy said.

"You damn right I can use him and . . ." the voice trailed off. The eyes above the stiff military mustache going hard.

"Well, can you use him?" the boy said. "I got to go make out his card."

"Okay," the man said finally. "I can use him. I gotta. What's his name?"

The boy read my name off a card.

"All right," he said, "you go right to work. And you," he said to the boy, "get the hell out of here before I give you a chance to earn some of the money wasted on you every payday!"

thing. 'What kind of talk is that from you, Lucius Brockway,' he said, 'taking it **easy** round the house when we need you out **to the plant**? Don't you know the **quickest** way to die is **to retire**? Why, that fellow out at the **plant** don't know a thing **about** those furnaces. I'm so worried about what he's going to do, that he's liable **to** blow up the **plant** or something that **I** took out some extra insurance. He can't do your job,' he said. 'He don't have the touch. We haven't **put out a first-class batch** of paint since you been gone.' Now that was the Old Man hisself!" Lucius Brockway said.

"So what happened?" I said.

"What you mean, what happened?" he said, looking as though it were the most unreasonable question in the world. "Shucks, a few days later the Old Man had me back down here in full control. That engineer got so mad when he found out he had to take orders from me he quit the next day."

He spat on the floor and laughed. "Heh, heh, heh, he was a fool, that's what. A fool! He wanted to boss *me* and I know more about this basement than anybody, boilers and everything. I helped lay the pipes and everything, and what I mean is I knows the location of each and every pipe and switch and cable and wire and everything else—both in the floors and in the walls *and* out in the yard. Yes, sir! And what's more, I got it in my head so good I can trace it out on paper down to the last nut and bolt, and ain't never been to nobody's engineering school neither, ain't even passed by one, as far as I know. Now what you think about that?"

"I think it's remarkable," I said, thinking, I don't like this old man.

"Oh, I wouldn't call it that," he said. "It's just that I been round here so long. I been studying this machinery for over twenty-five years. Sho, and that fellow thinking 'cause he been to some school and learned how to read a blueprint and

Suddenly the men began to laugh and curse. "Here's one right here," one of them yelled.

"Mine wants to marry the boss's daughter—a frigging eight-day wonder!"

This sudden change made me puzzled and angry, as though they were making me the butt of a joke.

"Order, brothers! Perhaps the brother would like to join the union. How about it, brother?"

"Sir . . . ?" I didn't know what to say. I knew very little about unions—but most of these men seemed hostile . . . And before I could answer a fat man with shaggy gray hair leaped to his feet, shouting angrily.

"I'm against it! Brothers, this fellow could be a fink, even if he was hired right this minute! Not that I aim to be unfair to anybody, either. Maybe he ain't a fink," he cried passionately, "but brothers, I want to remind you that nobody knows it, and it seems to me that anybody that would work under that sonofabitching, double-crossing Brockway for more than fifteen minutes is just as apt as not to be *naturally* fink-minded. Please, brothers!" he cried, waving his arms for quiet. "As some of you brothers have learned, to the sorrow of your wives and babies, a fink don't have to know about trade unionism to be a fink! Finkism? Hell, I've made a study of finkism! Finkism is *born* into some guys. It's born into some guys, just like a good eye for color is born into other guys. That's right, that's the honest, scientific truth! A fink don't even have to have heard of a union before," he cried in a frenzy of words. "All you have to do is bring him around the neighborhood of a union and next thing you know why, zip! he's finking his finking ass off!"

He was drowned out by shouts of approval. Men turned violently to look at me. I felt choked. I wanted to drop my head but faced them as though facing them was itself a denial.



What

Git out!

understand

Shut up and git!

that was in

You trouble

any union

If you git outta you for down skunk," he said, "I can't kill you

I'll kill you!

It was

KILL YOU

thought

you respected

authority

you were

you made

black blur

KILL

YOU, THAT'S WHO!

far away
into black emptiness
fall fall
suspension.
sprawl an interval of clarity beneath broken
ground furious futility, pain shot
ness pain into black-
in that clear instant of consciousness opened my
eyes to a blinding flash.
grimly, I hear the
garrulous voice say
no good for the
just ain't got the nerves.
tried to speak, to answer, but so
again, and I was understanding something
answer and
a
pause, transfixed and numb with
had lost irrevocably an important victory.

those above seemed to sense it. There was no avoiding the shock and I rolled with the agitated tide out into the blackness.

When I came back the lights were still dark. I lay beneath the slab of glass, feeling deflated. All my limbs seemed amputated. It was very warm. A dim white ceiling stretched far above me. My eyes were swimming with tears. Why I didn't know. It wounded me. I wanted to knock on the glass to attract attention, but I couldn't move. The slightest effort hardly more than desire, and I lay experiencing the vague processes of my body. I seemed to have lost all sense of proportion. Where did my body end and the crystal and where would begin? Thoughts evaded me, hiding in the vast, dark, or clinical whiteness to which I seemed connected only by a scale of receding gears. No sounds beyond the sluggish, distant roar of the blood. I couldn't open my eyes. I seemed to exist in some other dimension, utterly alone; until after a while a finger bent down and forced a warm fluid between my lips. I gagged, swallowed, feeling the fluid course slowly to my vague middle. A huge iridescent bubble seemed to enfold me. Gentle hands moved over me, bringing vague impressions of memory. I was laved with warm liquids, felt gentle hands move through the indefinite limits of my flesh. The sterile and weightless texture of a sheet enfolded me. I felt myself bounce, sail off like a ball thrown over the roof into mist, striking a hidden wall beyond a pile of broken machinery and sailing back. How long it took, I didn't know. But now above the movement of the hands I heard a friendly voice, uttering familiar words to which I could assign no meaning. I listened intensely, aware of the form and movement of sentences and grasping the now subtle rhythmic differences between progressions of sound that questioned and those that made a statement. But still their meanings were lost in the vast whiteness in which I myself was lost.

Faces hovered

nonless

dream

torpid tides

jumble

Headlines

STAINLESS STEEL

ROSE

mouth.

PRICES

human

piercing eyes

STERN

vagueness

shut my eyes

I

shifted my body

there

was

desire to destroy

the machine; I wanted

destruction

I conceived

one

flaw

There was

no

escape

I

sweat

braced for

shock

their hands

opened

the lid

They

watched

I

looked down

What is this?

"Well, boy, it looks as though you're cured,"
they said. "You're a new man. You came
with us," he said.

We went slowly out of the room and down a
corridor into an elevator, then swiftly down three
reception room with rows of chairs. At the front were a
number of private offices with frosted glass doors and walls.

"Sit down there," they said. "The director will see
you shortly."

I sat, seeing them disappear inside one of the offices for
a second and emerge, passing me without a word. I trembled
like a leaf. Were they really seeing me? My head spun. I
looked at my white overalls. The nurse said that this was the
factory hospital. . . . Why couldn't I remember what kind of
factory it was? And why a *factory* hospital? Yes. . . . I did re-
member some vague factory; perhaps I was being sent back
there. Yes; and he'd spoken of the doctor instead of the head
doctor; could they be one and the same? Perhaps I was in the
factory already. I listened but heard no machinery.

Across the room a newspaper lay on the floor but I was too
concerned to get it. Somewhere a door opened. Then one of the
frosted glass was covered. I saw a tall austere-
looking man in a white coat come to me with a chart.
"Sit down," he said.

"I'll go and get the doctor," he said. "I'll be back." He went
past him into a simply furnished
room. "Now I'll be back," he said.

"I'll be back," he said. "I'll be back." He watched
me with a scientific gaze.

"What is your name?" "Oh, here, I have it," he said, study-
ing the chart. And it was as though someone inside of me tried



in a drunken angel and... away from the
with wild, infant's eyes, and... thumping. Two huge women

came past, their... like threatening flames

I saw... too clear... recording the... hands... scuffed... unhalting.

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

And the... in a... and... and... and... and...

st. You'll all you needed was some rest. Now don't get up. You'll get out of bed, drink that soup, then you can go," she said, leaning back.

"I'm bothered with a bowl in a plate. This here'll fix you up. Now you don't get this kind of service up there at Men. House, do you? Now, you just sit there and take your time. I ain't got nothing to do but read the paper. And I like to know you have to make time in the morning?"

"No, I've been sick," I said. "But I have to look for a job."

"I knowed you didn't well. Why you try to hide it?"

"I didn't want to be trouble to anyone," I said.

"Everybody has to be trouble to somebody. And you just come from the hospital too."

"I took a little rest in the rocking chair when I was in her arms," I said. "She says she's worried. Had she searched my pockets?"

"There you go getting suspicious," she said sternly. "I know what's wrong with the world. You don't nobody trust nobody. I can smell the hospital smell on you, son. You got to be careful. There's a lot of others to put to sleep."

"I couldn't remember telling you that I had been in the hospital," I said.

"No, and you didn't say it," she said. "I called that out. You got to be careful here in the city."

"I'm all right," I said. "They're down here. I came to the hospital, but I could go to school, and I got sick."

"Now you're that too bad, but you'll make out all right. What you plan to make out of yours?"

"I don't know how I came here wanting to be a doctor. I can't be a doctor."

"I don't know what's wrong with being an attorney."

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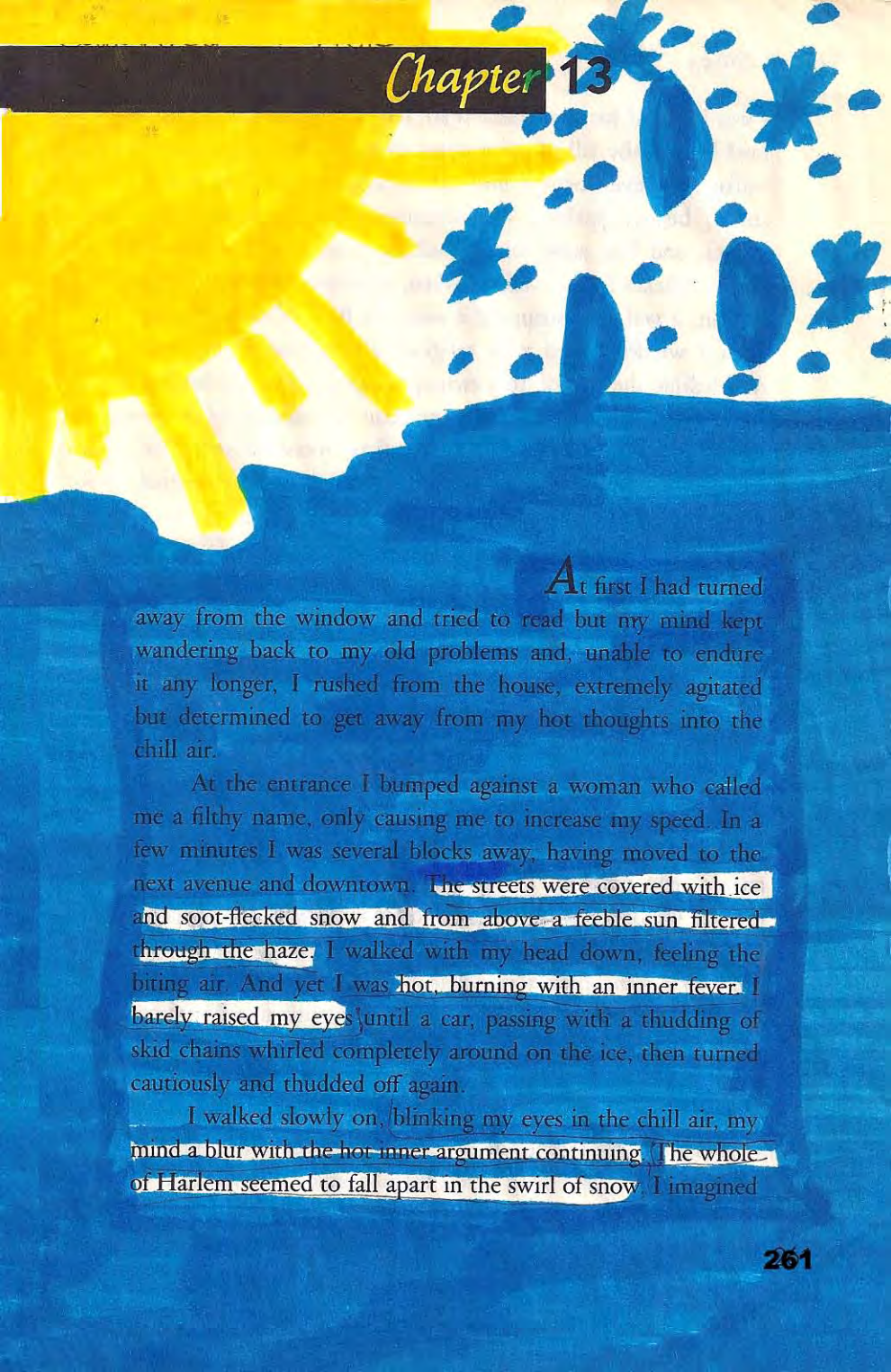
"I don't know what's wrong with being an attorney."



away from the window and tried to read but my mind kept wandering back to my old problems and, unable to endure any longer, I rushed from the house, extremely agitated but determined to get away from my hot thoughts and to find an

At the entrance I bumped against a woman who called out a filthy name, only causing me to increase my speed. In a few minutes I was several blocks away, having moved to the next avenue and downtown. The streets were covered with ice and soot-flecked snow, and from above a feeble sun filtered through the haze. I walked with my head down, feeling the biting air. And yet I was hot, burning with an inner fever. I barely raised my eyes, until a car, passing with a humming sound, whirled completely around on the ice, then turned cautiously and chugged off again.

I walked slowly on, blinking my eyes in the chill air, my mind a blur with the hot inner argument continuing. The whole of Manhattan seemed to fall apart in the swirl of snow. I imagined



Chapter 13

At first I had turned away from the window and tried to read but my mind kept wandering back to my old problems and, unable to endure it any longer, I rushed from the house, extremely agitated but determined to get away from my hot thoughts into the chill air.

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I walked slowly on, blinking my eyes in the chill air, my mind a blur with the hot inner argument continuing. The whole of Harlem seemed to fall apart in the swirl of snow. I imagined

the sight of them crying there on the sidewalk was making me
begin to feel. I wanted to leave, but was too ashamed to leave.
was rapidly becoming too much a part of it to leave.

I turned aside and, in the clutter of household objects which the two friends continually pile on the table, as the crowd pushed and looked on to see what came out of an oval frame a portrait of the old couple when young, seeing the old stiff dignity, the old eyes that have seen so many memories, awakening that old feeling of an old man, that of a hysterical voice stuttering in a dark street, the old eyes that have seen so many memories.

and this with a grim disillusioned pride that suddenly seemed to me both a strength and a warning. My eyes were fixed on a pair of crudely carved and polished bones, "knocking bones" as they used to be called by music at country dances, used in black-robe minstrels, the ear ribs of a cow, a steer or sheep; flat bones which gave off a sound when struck

the heavy cast-iron (the one from a binocular) or the wooden block of a set of drums. Pots and pans or other plants were buried in the dirty snow, certain to die of the cold. I saw a tomato plant. And in the cold I saw a comb-like, frosty swatch of fake hair, a wig on a card, a fake sweater against a background of dark red velvet, reaching "Ode to My Own Home." The scattered across the top of the stone and a

I watched her sit down, then put down a basket in which I saw a whiskey bottle filled with rock candy and champagne. A small Ethiopian figure, a faded tintype of Abraham Lincoln, and the smiling image of a Hollywood star, seen from a magazine. And on a pillow several small, cracked pieces of delicate china, a commemorative plate celebrating the St. Louis World's Fair. I stood in a kind of daze, looking at an old, folded face, marked and studded with jet and mother-of-pearl.

"Yes, just look at him!" an old fellow in a derby called out as though answering a preacher in church.

"And look at that old couple . . ."

"Yeah, what about Sister and Brother Provo?" he said. "It's an ungodly shame!"

"And look at their possessions all strewn there on the sidewalk. Just look at their possessions in the snow! How old are you, sir?" I yelled.

"I'm eighty-seven," the old man said, his voice low and bewildered.

"How's that? Tell so our slow-to-anger brethren can hear you."

"I'm eighty-seven years old!"

"Did you hear him? He's eighty-seven. Eighty-seven and look at all he's accumulated in eighty-seven years strewn in the snow like chicken guts, and we're a law-abiding slow-to-anger bunch of folks turning the other cheek every day in the week! What are we going to do? What would you, what would I, what would he have done? What is to be done? I propose we do the wise thing, the law-abiding thing. Just look at this junk! Should two old folks live in such junk, cooped up in a filthy room? It's a great danger, a fire hazard! Old cracked dishes and broken-down chairs. Yes, yes, yes! Look at that old woman, somebody's mother, somebody's grandmother, maybe. We call them 'Big Mama' and they spoil us and—*you know, you remember*—Look at her quilts and broken-down shoes. I know she's somebody's mother because I saw an old breast pump fall into the snow, and she's somebody's grandmother because I saw a card that read 'Dear Grandma . . . but we're law-abiding . . . I looked into a basket and I saw some bones, not neck-bones but rib bones, knocking bones . . . This old couple used to dance . . . I saw—What kind of work do you do, Father?"

I called.

tician, brother. So you picked the wrong man. But thanks again for the coffee and cheese cake—*brother*."

I left him sitting with a quiet smile on his face. When I had crossed the avenue I looked through the glass, seeing him still there, and it occurred to me that he was the same man who had followed me over the roof. He hadn't been chasing me at all but only going in the same direction. I hadn't understood much of what he had said, only that he had spoken with great confidence. Anyway, I had been the better runner. Perhaps it was a trick of some kind. He gave the impression that he understood much and spoke out of a knowledge far deeper than appeared on the surface of his words. Perhaps it was only the knowledge that he had escaped by the same route as I. But what had he to fear? I had made the speech, not he. That girl in the apartment had said that the longer I remained unseen

the longer I'd be effective, which didn't make much sense either. But perhaps that was why he had run. He wanted to remain unseen and effective. Effective at what? No doubt he was bringing a message. I must have looked silly hurtling across the roofs and like a black-face comedian shrinking from a ghost when the white pigeons shot up around me. To hell with him. He needn't be so snug, I knew of some things he didn't know. Let him find someone else. He only wanted to use me for something. Everybody wanted to use you for some purpose. Why should he want me as a speaker? Let him make his own speeches. I headed for home, feeling a growing satisfaction that I had dismissed him so completely.

It was turning dark now, and much colder. Colder than I had ever known. What on earth was it, I mused, bending my head to the wind, that made us leave the warm, mild weather of home for all this cold, and never to return, if not something worth hoping for, freezing for, even being evicted for? I felt sad. An old woman passed, bent down with two

I got in beside him and the driver, noticing that there were three men in the back. Then the car moved off.

No one spoke. Brooker had seemed to me immediately into deep thought. The others looked out into the night. It was as though we were mere chance passengers in a subway car. I felt uneasy, wondering where we were going, but decided to say nothing. The car shot swiftly over the street.

Looking out at the passing night, I wondered what kind of men they were. Certainly they didn't act as though they were heading for a very sociable evening. I was hungry, and wouldn't get back in time for supper. Well, maybe it would be worth it both to Mary and to me. At least I wouldn't have to car-pool anymore!

Just as the car paused for the traffic light, then moved on, circling swiftly through long stretches of snow-covered landscape lighted here and there by street lamps, and the nervously snatching beams of passing cars. We were flashing through Central Park, now completely transformed by the snow. It was as though we had plunged suddenly into a new and curious place, yet I knew that here, somewhere, close by in the night, there was a zoo with its dangerous animals. The lions and tigers in heated cages, the bears asleep, the snakes coiled tightly underground. And there was also the reservoir of dark water, all covered by snow and by night, by snow-fall and by night-fall, buried beneath black and white, gray mist and gray silence. Then, past the driver's head, I could see a wall of buildings looming beyond the windshield. The car nosed slowly into traffic, dropped swiftly down a hill.

We stopped before an expensive-looking building in a strange part of the city. I could see the word *Chrysan* on the storm-awning stretched above the walk as I got out with the others and went swiftly toward a lobby lit by dim bulbs set behind frosted glass, going past the uniformed doorman.

"Oh," I said.

"How about a spiritual, Brother? Or one of those real good ole Negro work songs? Like this: *Ab went to Atlanta—nevah been there befo'*," he sang, his arms held out from his body like a penguin's wings, glass in one hand, cigar in the other. "*White man sleep in a feather bed, Niggab sleep on the flo* ... Ha! Ha! How about it, Brother?"

"The brother *does not sing*!" Brother Jack roared staccato.

"Nonsense, *all colored people sing*."

"This is an outrageous example of unconscious racial chauvinism!" Jack said.

"Nonsense, *I like their singing*," the broad man said doggedly.

"The brother *does not sing*!" Brother Jack cried, his face turning a deep purple.

The broad man regarded him stubbornly. "Why don't you let *him* say whether he can *sing* or not ... Come on, Brother, git hot! *Go Down, Moses*," he bellowed in a ragged baritone, putting down his cigar and snapping his fingers. "*Way down in Egypt's land. Tell dat ole Pharaoh to let ma colored folks sing*! For the rights of the colored brother to *sing*!" he shouted belligerently.

Brother Jack looked as if he would choke; he raised his hand, signaling. I saw two men shoot from across the room and lead the short man roughly away. Brother Jack followed them as they disappeared beyond the door, leaving an enormous *silence*.

For a moment I stood there, my eyes riveted upon the door, then I turned, the glass hot in my hand, my face feeling as though it would explode. Why was everyone staring at me as though I were responsible? Why the hell were they staring at me? Suddenly I yelled, "What's the matter with you? Haven't

It had picked up the man and, brandishing the sword, led him into the arena and encircled him in its beam. He stood thundering. The sword burst forth like a rocket, the man crying terror, the fighting hands.

John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring
in the grave

*John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring
in the grave*

*John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring
in the grave*

—His soul is marching on!

Imagine that, I thought, they make the old songs sound new. And then I was as remote as though I stood in the highest balcony looking on. Then I walked home, and when I came to my

the alert, moving through the platform past a number of

...and above us was the audience, row after row of faces, the formulaic but flesh-and-blood aggregation of humanity. They

...all along the wall, keeping the arm of

the first of his singing was a high, throaty halting note, and the song

all leaning forward

"I can't put a very thoughtless order on people, it is meaning to cause political consequences," he said.

far-carrying voice called out, "We with you, Brother. You pitch
em we catch 'em!"

That was all I needed. I'd made a contact, and it was as though his voice was that of them all. I was wound up, nervous. I might have been trying to remember the correct words and phrases to use. I had to fall back upon tradition and it was a political meeting, I selected one of the political techniques that I'd heard so often at home: The old down-to-earth, no-suck-and-are-for-the-way-they've-been-are-ang-us-approach. I could not but be addressed the microphone and I co-operated with the man. "You know, there are those who are gathered here are dumb," he roared.

"That's a strike," he roared. "You pitched a strike."

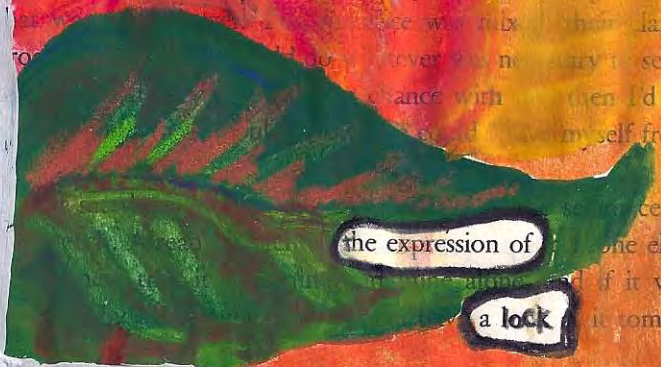
"We're the common people," he said, sitting in the crowd and looking and trying to understand. "It's so common about us. I think they're guilty of a gross mis-statement of fact—we are the uncommon people—"

"Another strike," the voice called in the thunder, and I paused holding up my hand to halt the noise.

"Yes, we're the uncommon people—and I'll tell you why. They call us dumb and they treat us dumb. And what do they do with dumb ones? Think about it! Look around! They've got a slogan and a policy, they've got what Brother Jack would call a 'theory and a practice.' It's 'Never give a sucker an even break!' It's dipossess him! Evict him! Use his empty head for a spittoon and his back for a door mat! It's break him! Deprive him of his wages! It's use his protest as a sounding brass to frighten him into silence, it's beat his ideas and his hopes and homely aspirations into a tinkling cymbal! A small, cracked

...however, they had taken it regularly...
...of my...
...I read...
...hence, even though I had...
...things I had...
...enough to keep the Brotherhood interested in me. What
...d come out was completely uncalculated, as though another
...f within me had taken over and held forth. And lucky that
...had, or I might have been fired.

Even my technique had been different; no one who had
...own me at college would have recognized the speech. But
...was what should have been, for I *was* someone new—even
...had spoken in a very old-fashioned way. I had been
...lying restlessly in bed in the dark, I felt
...a kind of...
...sturred audience whose faces I had
...with me from the first word.
...and fortunately I had spoken
...my words. I belonged to
...in the dark as the thought
...was meant by being "ded-
...I accepted it. My pos-
...Brotherhood
...own...
...claims
...serve
...then I'd do
...myself from



I meant everything

lying restlessly in bed

my words

in the dark as the

the expression of

a lock

whatever, they had liked it regardless of the brothers, and from now on my life would be different. It was different already. For now I realized that I meant everything that I had said to the audience, even though I hadn't known that I was going to say those things. I had intended only to make a good appearance, to say enough to keep the Brotherhood interested in me. What had come out was completely uncalculated, as though another self within me had taken over and held forth. And lucky that it had, or I might have been fired.

Even my technique had been different; no one who had known me at college would have recognized the speech. But that was as it should have been, for I *was* someone new—even though I had spoken in a very old-fashioned way. I had been transformed, and now, lying restlessly in bed in the dark, I felt a kind of affection for the blurred audience whose faces I had never clearly seen. They had been with me from the first word. They had wanted me to succeed, and fortunately I had spoken for them and they had recognized my words. I belonged to them. I sat up, grasping my knees in the dark as the thought struck home. Perhaps this was what was meant by being “dedicated and set aside.” Very well, if so, I accepted it. My possibilities were suddenly broadened. As a Brotherhood spokesman I would represent not only my own group but one that was much larger. The audience was mixed, their claims broader than race. I would do whatever was necessary to serve them well. If they could take a chance with me, then I’d do the very best that I could. How else could I save myself from disintegration?

I sat there in the dark trying to recall the sequence of the speech. Already it seemed the expression of someone else. Yet I knew that it was mine and mine alone, and if it was recorded by a stenographer, I would have a look at it tomorrow.

He laughed, one of his eyes glowing brighter than the other. "I've heard about the brothers," he said. "You'll do well. Brother Hamon's report on you have been excellent."

"Now I have to hear," I said, aware now of another brilliant scene further down the bar in which the matador was being swept skyward on the black bull's horns. "I've worked pretty hard trying to master the ideology."

"Master it," Brother Jack said, "but don't overdo it. Don't let it master you. There is nothing to put the people to sleep like dry ideology. The ideal is to strike a medium between ideology and inspiration. Say what the people want to hear, but say it in such a way that they'll do what we wish. He laughed. "Remember too, that theory always comes after practice. Act first, theorize later; that's also a formula, a devastatingly effective one."

He looked at me as though he did not see me and I could not tell whether he was laughing at me or with me. I was sure only that he was laughing.

"Yes," I said, "I'll try to master all that is required."

"You can," he said. "And now you don't have to worry about the brothers' criticism. Just throw some ideology back at them, and they'll leave you alone—provided, of course, that you have the right backing and produce the required results. Another drink."

"Thanks. I've had enough."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure."

"Good. Now to your assignment. Tomorrow you are to become chief spokesman of the Harlem District."

"What!"

"Yes. The committee decided yesterday."

"But I had no idea."

"You'll do all right. Now listen. You are to continue."

The people
lead into action,
strike
and strike hard!
For this purpose,
our
brother has been
loyal support and regard him



"Ah, so, Brother Tod Clifton is late," Brother Jack said. Any other suggest youth is late. Why is this?"

"Brother," I am pointed to his cheek. He smiled. "I am to Harlem one of the said."

"making a speech is?" Brother Jack said, looking at the cross with an accent to black skin.

"can't we carry our encounter with the nationalist. With Ras

"So, you *ba*!" Brother Clifton said. And I heard a gasp

"Well, Ras the Examen who gazed at him with shining, compassionate eyes."

Brother Jack gave me a quick look. "Brother, you have heard of Ras? He is the wild man who calls himself a black nationalist."

"I don't recall so," I said.

"You'll hear of him soon enough. Sit down, Brother Clifton; sit down. You must be careful. You are valuable to the organization, you must not take chances."

"This was unavoidable," the young man said.

"Just the same," Brother Jack said, returning to the discussion with a call for ideas.

"Brother, are we still to fight against evictions?" I said.

"It has become a leading issue, thanks to you."

"Then why not step up the fight?"

He studied my face. "What do you suggest?"

"Well, since it has attracted so much attention, why not try to reach the whole community with the issue?"

"And how would you suggest we go about it?"

"I suggest we get the community leaders on record in support of us."

"There are certain difficulties in face of this," Brother Jack said. "Most of the leaders are against us."

"But I think he's got something there," Brother Clifton said. "What if we got them to support the issue whether they like us or not? The issue is a community issue, it's non-partisan."

discuss the street meeting I saw no signs of resentment, but a complete absorption in the strategy of the meeting. With great care he went about instructing me how to deal with hecklers, on what to do if we were attacked, and upon how to recognize our own members from the rest of the crowd. For all his seeming zoot-suiter characteristics his speech was precise and I had no doubt that he knew his business.

"How do you think we'll do?" I said when he had finished.

"It'll go big, man," he said. "It'll be bigger than anything since Garvey."

"I wish I could be so sure," I said. "I never saw Garvey."

"I didn't either," he said, "but I understand that in Harlem he was very big."

"Well, we're not Garvey, and he didn't last."

"No, but he must have had something," he said with sudden passion. "He *must* have had something to move all those people! Our people are *hell* to move. He must have had plenty!"

I looked at him. His eyes were turned inward; then he smiled. "Don't worry," he said. "We have a scientific plan and you set them off. Things are so bad they'll listen, and when they *listen* they'll go along."

"I hope so," I said.

"They will. You haven't been around the movement as I have, for three years now, and I can feel the change. They're ready to move."

"I hope your feelings are right," I said.

"They're right, all right," he said. "All we have to do is gather them in."

THE evening was almost of a winter coldness, the corner well lighted and the all-Negro crowd large and tightly packed. Up

you done forge? You black **BLACK!** You—*Godahm*, mahn!” he said, swinging the pipe for emphasis. “You got **bahd hair!** You got **thick lips!** They say you **stink!** They hate you, mahn. You African. **AFRICAN!** Why you with them? Leave that shit, mahn. They sell you out. That shit is old-fashioned. They **enslave us**—you **forget** that? How can they mean a black mahn any good? How they going to be your **brother?**”

I had reached him now and brought the pipe down hard, seeing the knife fly off into the dark as he grabbed his wrist, and I raised the pipe again, suddenly hot with fear and hate, as he looked at me out of his narrow little eyes, standing his ground.

“And you, mahn,” the Exhorter said, “a reg’lar little black devil! A *godahm sly mongoose!* Where you think you from, going with the white folks? I know, *godahm*, don’t I know it! You from down South! You from **Trinidad!** You from **Barbados! Jamaica, South Africa**, and the white mahn’s foot in your ass all the way to the hip. What you trying to **deny** by **betraying** the black people? Why you **fight against us?** You young fellows. You young black men with plenty education. I been hearing yoe’n rabble rousing. Why you go over to the enslaver? What kind of education is that? What kind of black mahn is that who **betray his own mama?**”

“Shut up,” Clifton said, leaping to his feet. “Shut up!”

“Hell, no,” Ras cried, wiping his eyes with his fists. “I talk! Bust me with the pipe but, by God, you listen to the Exhorter! Come in with us, mahn. We build a glorious movement of black people. **Black People!** What they do, give you money? Who want the damn stuff? Their money bleed black blood, mahn. It’s **unclean!** Taking their money is shit, mahn. Money **without dignity— That’s *bahd* shit!**”

Clifton lunged forward and held him, shaking my head. “Come on, the man’s crazy,” I said, pulling on his arm.

Ras struck his thighs with his fists. “*Me* crazy, mahn?”

worry," but he couldn't kill his

turned back to look at him as though he thought I
meant

was gone," he said

headed for the district office I won't say what
fight

overpower him with organized

But it's on the inside

dangerous

traitor

inside

hear

has to plunge outside

Plunge outside

suddenly

could see him streaking

its sticky

rising tall in dripping wetness

"What about the others?"

“What others?”

"The ones who don't think ~~much of me~~"

"There's the one I haven't told about, son."

"But I don't have your enemies," I said.

"I was alone, everybody was away, but never heard of anybody else in the Brotherhood was doing you, far as with me there is concern, they think I care if you heard any different?"

"No but I was wondering what happened along the way. I must have missed them. I thought I'd better check so that I can keep their supplies."

"[REDACTED] you don't have to worry. So far, everything you had anything to do with has turned out to be what the [REDACTED] like even though some of them resist. Take that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said, pointing to the [REDACTED] near my desk."

- [REDACTED] symbolized the poster of a group of heroic figures: [REDACTED]
 American Indian couple representing the dispossessed past; [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] (an oval) and [REDACTED] (a [REDACTED] sister) represent-
 ing the dispossessed present; and [REDACTED] (a [REDACTED] and
 young [REDACTED] couple) had been left unwise simply to [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] group of children of
 [REDACTED] representing the future, [REDACTED] photograph of
 light skin [REDACTED] and smooth contrast [REDACTED]

“I said, ‘aring at the legen-

"After the Struggle: The Rainbow of America's Future"

Well, when [redacted] suggested it, some of the members was against you."

"That's ~~undoubtedly~~ true."

"[REDACTED] they raised the devil [REDACTED] about the [REDACTED] member
going into the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] 'em up in place of them

one morning when the river was flooding I left.

mud

I was standing in the

mud and rain and I took off.

all that water and

fishing

for freedom

Because I didn't want to forget

what we're really fighting against



"I see," I said, becoming interested. "But why do you think this is important?"

"'Cause it helps the Brotherhood, that's why. First, if you remember, when you watch our people when there's a parade or a funeral, or a dance or anything like that, they always have some kind of flags and banners even if they don't mean anything. It kind of makes the occasion seem more important like. It makes people stop, look and listen. 'What's coming off here?' But you know and I know that they ain't none of 'em got no true flag—except maybe Ras the Exhorter, and he claims *he's* Ethiopian or African. But none of us got no true flag 'cause that flag don't really belong to us. They want a true flag, one that's as much theirs as anybody else's. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, I think I do," I said, remembering that there was always that sense in me of being apart when the flag went by. It had been a reminder, until I'd found the Brotherhood, that my star was not yet there.

"Sure, you know," Brother Wrestrum said. "Everybody wants a flag. We need a flag that stands for Brotherhood, and we need a sign we can wear."

"A sign?"

"You know, a pin or a button."

"You mean an emblem?"

"That's it! Something we can wear, a pin or something like that. So that when a Brother meets a Brother they can know it. That way that thing what happened to Brother Tod Clifton wouldn't have happened . . ."

"What wouldn't have happened?"

He sat back. "Don't you know about it?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"It's something that's best forgot about," he said, leaning close, his big hands gripped and stretched before him. "But you see, there was a rally and some hoodlums tried to break up

"Well," Brother Jack said, "we've all read the article, Brother, and we're happy to report that we found it harmless enough. True, it would have been better had more wordage been given to other members of the Harlem district. But we found no evidence that it had anything to do with that. Brother, I've seen it, and I'm sure."

His bland manner and the knowledge that they had wasted time to see the article cooled the anger within me.

"I'd say that he was originally just a teeny little thing."

"Not criminal, over zealous."

"To me it seems both criminal and over zealous," I said.

"No, Brother, not criminal."

But he attacked my reputation.

Brother Jack smiled. "Only because he's a white Brother. He was thinking of the good of the Brotherhood."

But why slander me? I don't follow your Brother Jack. I'm no enemy, as he well knows. I'm a brother too. I was seeing his smile.

"The Brotherhood has many enemies, and we must not be too harsh with brotherly mistakes."

Then I saw the foolish, abashed expression on Wras-trum's face and relaxed.

"Very well, Brother Jack," I said. "I suppose I should be glad you found me innocent."

"Concerning the magazine article," he said, stabbing the air with his finger.

Something tensed in the back of my head. I got to my feet.

"Concerning the article! You mean to say that you believe that other pipe dream? Is everyone reading Dick Tracy these days?"

"This is no matter of Dick Tracy," he snapped. "The movement has many enemies."

I stood there, hearing the tapping of his gavel echoing in my ears, thinking the woman question and searching their faces for signs of amusement, listening to their voices as they died out into the hall for the softest sound of suppressed laughter. I stood there fighting the sense that I had just been made the butt of an outrageous joke and all the more so since their faces revealed no amusement.

My mind fought desperately for acceptance. Nothing would change matters. I was still an outcast, a stranger, and I still believing still bending to discipline, would have to accept it. I did not know where I had any no time for me, not just when I was beginning to learn some of the aspects of the organization about which I knew nothing (of higher committees and the leaders I had never appeared at the same pathizers and allies of groups that seemed far removed from our concerns), nor at a time when all the secrets of power and authority still shrouded from me in mystery, appeared on the way toward revelation. No, despite my anger and disgust, my ambitions were too great to surrender. I had why should I resist? I had to segregate myself from a poker man—why should I speak about women to any other subject? Nothing lay outside the scheme of our ideology, there was a policy on everything, and my main concern was to work my way ahead in the movement.

I left the hall still feeling as though I had been violently spun but with my mind growing. Being invited from Harlem was a privilege which I did not let them as much as me, for I had learned that the clue to what Harlem wanted was what I wanted, and my value to the Brotherhood was no different from the value to me of my most useful contact. It depended upon my complete frankness and honesty in stating the community's hopes and hates, fears and desires. One spoke to the committee as well as to the community. No doubt it would work much the same downtown. The new assignment

where shall we start? Perhaps it's somewhere that I've made no headway.

"It's nothing very profound," she says. "I'm sure you'll enlighten me on my little ideological squabbles. But sit here on the sofa, Brother, as we begin."

I sit, as she goes toward a door, the light of her gown trailing sensuously over the oriental carpet. She turns and smiles.

"Perhaps you'd prefer wine or milk instead of coffee?"

"Wine, thank you," I said, taking the milk. It's strangely compulsive. This isn't at all what I expected. I thought she'd come with a tray holding two glasses and a decanter, but she has them before us on a low cocktail table, and I could hear the wine trickle musically into the glasses, one of which she placed in front of me.

"Here's to the movement," she said, raising her glass with smiling eyes.

"To the movement?" I said.

"And to Brotherhood."

"And to Brotherhood."

"This is very nice," I said, seeing her nearly closed eyes, her chin rising upward toward me, "but just what phase of our ideology should we discuss?"

"All of it," she said. "I wish to embrace the whole of it. Life is so terribly empty and disorganized without it. I sincerely believe that only Brotherhood offers any hope of making life worth living again. Oh, I know that it's too vast a philosophy to grasp immediately, but were, still, it's so vital and alive that one has the feeling that one should at least make the try. Don't you agree?"

"Well, yes," I said. "It's the most meaningful thing that I know."

"Oh, how so pleased to have you agree with me. I suppose this is why I always thrill to hear you speak, somehow."

which concerns me greatly. It provides women the full opportunity for self-expression, which is so very important, Brother. It's as though every day were Leap Year—which is as **it should be**. Women should be absolutely as free as men.

And if I were really free, I thought, lifting my glass, I'd get the hell out of here.

"I thought you were **exceptionally good tonight**—it's time the woman had a champion in the movement. Until tonight, I'd always heard you on minority problems."

"This is a new assignment," I said. "But from now on one of our main concerns is to let the Woman Question."

That was awful and **it's about time**. Something has to give women an opportunity to come to these grips with life. Please go on, tell me your ideas," she said, **pressing forward, her hand light upon my arm.**

And I went on talking, believed to talk, carried away by my own enthusiasm and by the warmth of the wine. And it was only when I turned to ask a question of her that I realized that she was leaning only a nose-tip away, **her eyes upon my face.**

"Go on, please go on," I heard. "You make it sound so clear, please."

I saw the rapid, moth-wing fluttering of **her lids** become the softness of her lips as we were drawn together. There was not an idea or concept in it but **sheer warmth**; then the bell was ringing and I shook it off and got to my feet, hearing it ring again as she arose with me, **the red robe falling in heavy folds upon the carpet**, and she saying, "You make it all so wonderfully alive," as the bell sounded again. And I was trying to move, to get out of the apartment, looking for my hat and filling with anger, thinking, **is she crazy? Doesn't she hear?** as she stood before me in bewilderment, as though I were acting irrationally. And now taking my arm with sudden energy, say-

The sun was glowing greenish-yellow now, and children were running and playing along the walks, dodging in and out among the adults. I walked slowly by the merging fluidity of form seen through the leaves. Could that be the way the world appeared to Kinechae? All the dark-glass boys? For now we seemed to look at each other darkly but then—

I couldn't remember the rest.

She was carrying a small office bag and moved gingerly on her feet. Until she took a step, I thought that she was talking to herself.

I say, pardon me, but I'm trying to pass on by tonight. What figure? What figure?

Now you're talking to me as she put her hand to her forehead. Today's last number.

Ring the number. Yes, Kinechae. You're trying to look at me.

"But that's not my name," I said, speaking as precisely as I could and stepping away from her. "You've made a mistake."

Her mouth fell wide. "You ain't? Well, why you look so much like him?" she said with her doubt in her voice. "Now, wait, this here something. Let me get on home, if my dream come out, I'm a have to go look that fascal up. And here I needs that money too."

"I hope you won't," I said, straining to see her clearly, "and I hope he pays off."

"Thanks, and he'll pay off all right. I can see you ain't Kinechae now though. I'm sorry for stopping you."

"It's all right," I said. "If I'd looked at your shoes, I woulda known."

The shops and groceries were dark now, and children were running and playing along the walks, dodging in and out among the adults. I walked, sensing the merging fluidity of time as I went through the lanes. Could that be the way the world appeared to Rinehart, all the other glass boys? For now we see the world as glass, darkly but then—



I couldn't see her. She was carrying a shopping bag and moved gingerly on. She touched my arm. I thought that she was

son me, son, look like you trying. What's the final trigger?

figure? "I know what I mean," she said, looking on her hips and looked for

Ain't you Rine the runner? I'm

Brother Tod Clifton," so jerked with surprise. "Sure," a young brother said, "s morning." "I could be on time—very watch, let us begin. I have time is all that is needed ant period, and the role of Briefly you are here to see

"But that's not my name, madame," I said, speaking as precisely as I could, stepping away from her. "You've made a mistake."

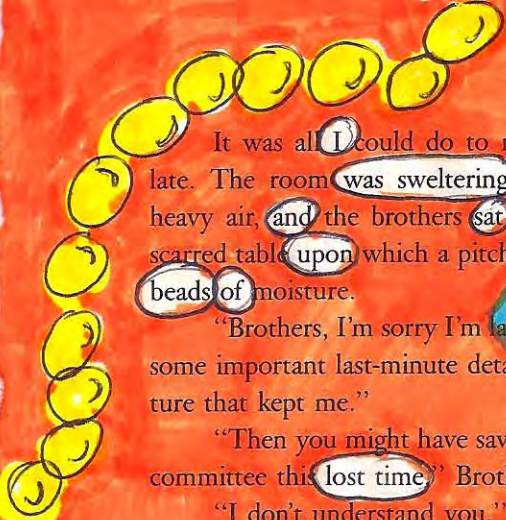
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"Thanks, son, but he'll pay off all right. I can see you ain't Rinehart now though. I'm sorry for stopping you."

"It's all right," I said.

"If I'd looked at your shoe, I woulda known."



It was all I could do to make myself go, and I arrived late. The room was sweltering; three small fans stirred the heavy air, and the brothers sat in their shirtsleeves around a scarred table upon which a pitcher of iced water glistened with beads of moisture.

"Brothers, I'm sorry I'm late," I apologized. "There were some important last-minute details concerning tomorrow's lecture that kept me."

"Then you might have saved yourself the trouble and the committee this lost time," Brother Jack said.

"I don't understand you," I said, suddenly feverish.

"He means that you are no longer to concern yourself with the Woman Question. That's ended," Brother Tobitt said; and I braced myself for the attack, but before I could respond Brother Jack fired a startling question at me.

"What has become of Brother Tod Clifton?"

"Brother Clifton—why, I haven't seen him in weeks. I've been too busy downtown here. What's happened?"

"He has disappeared," Brother Jack said, "disappeared! So don't waste time with superfluous questions. You weren't sent for for that."

"But how long has this been known?"

Brother Jack struck the table. "All we know is that he's gone. Let's get on with our business. You, Brother, are to return to Harlem immediately. We're facing crisis there, since Brother Tod Clifton has not only disappeared but failed in his assignment. On the other hand, Ras the Exhorter and his gang of racist gangsters are taking advantage of this and are increasing their agitation. You are to get back there and take measures to regain our strength in the community. You'll be given the forces you need and you'll report to us for a strategy meeting about which you'll be notified tomorrow. And please," he emphasized with his gavel, "be on time!"

moment the interests of Harlem were not of first importance. I didn't know what to make of it, since there had been no such change of program downtown. Clifton was forgotten, everything which I was to do now seemed to depend upon getting an explanation from the committee, and I waited with growing agitation to be called to the strategy meeting.

Such meetings were usually held around one o'clock and we were notified well ahead. But by eleven-thirty I had received no word and I became worried. My feeling an uneasy sense of isolation took hold of me, something was cooking, but what, how, why? Finally I phoned headquarters but could reach none of the leaders. What is this, I wondered, then I called the leaders of other districts with the same results. And now I was certain that the meeting was being held. But why without me? Had they investigated Westrum's charges and decided they were true? It seemed that the membership had fallen off after I had gone downtown. Or was it the woman? Whatever it was, now was not the time to leave me out of a meeting; things were too urgent in the district. I hurried down to headquarters.

When I arrived the meeting was in session, just as I expected, and word had been left that it was not to be disturbed by anyone. It was obvious that they had forgotten to notify me. I left the building in a rage. Very well, I thought, when they do decide to call me they'll have to find me. I should never have been shifted in the first place, and now that I was sent back to clean up the mess they should aid me as quickly as possible. I would do no more running downtown, nor would I accept any program that they set up without consulting the Harlem committee. Then I decided of all things, to shop for a pair of new shoes and walked over to Fifth Avenue.

It was hot, the walks still filled with noontime crowds

Clinton was not of first importance, but that to make of it, since the such change of program drew from Clinton was forgotten, everything was in new order.

getting an explanation from the company. But I waited with growing agitation to be called to the office.

Each meeting was usually held at and we were joined by a head of the twenty

Conceding no word and I became worried. For twelve an uneasy sense of isolation took hold of me. Nothing was coming but what? How often finally I phoned home but could read no more and read. What is it. I wondered: and

ained the same results with the same results. And now I know the feeling was being the same why

Had they investigated

le...
...now was for me to leave me out of a

...we too urgent he tried, I hurried

...just as I expected, and word had not been taken, was not to be dis-

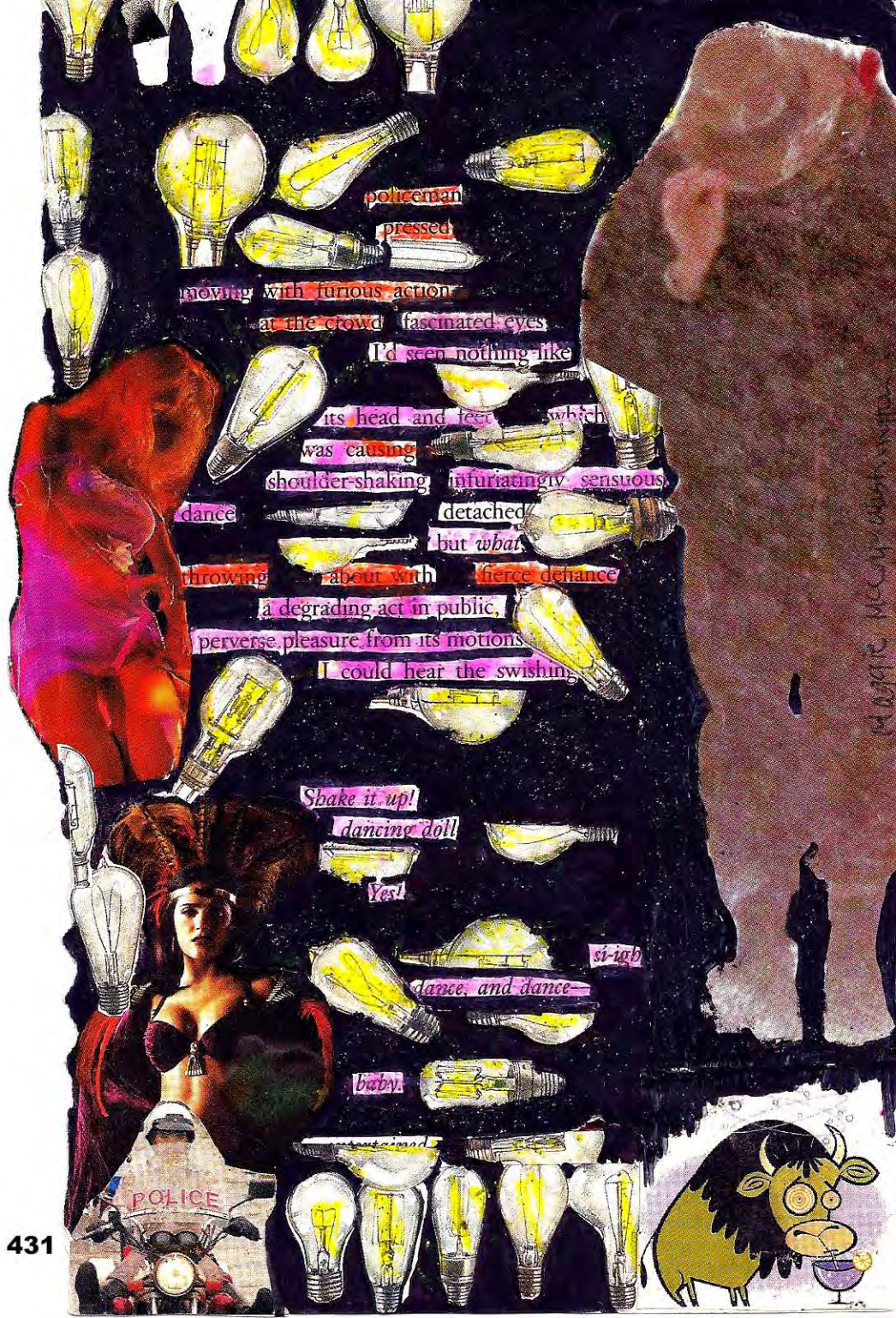
It was obvious that the man's foreigner to
 not be the same race very well. The ant.

when they should never have returned to the face of a low hilly

sent back to clear the way for you should
work as possible. I would do no more running

I could not accept my program that they sent me
 regarding the March 11 court case. I decided, of course,

...a rain forest, in ... gift



police

pressed

moving with furious action

at the crowd fascinated eyes

I'd seen nothing like

its head and feet which

was causing

shoulder-shaking infuriatingly sensuous

dance

detached

but what

throwing about with fierce defiance

a degrading act in public,

perverse pleasure from its motions

I could hear the swishing

Shake it up!

dancing doll

Yes!

si-igh

dance, and dance

baby

POLICE

seeing him step to where a large carton sat beside the building and sling its canvas straps to his shoulder as once more he looked toward the policeman, ignoring me. Puzzled, I moved into the crowd and pressed to the front where at my feet I saw a square piece of cardboard upon which something was moving with furious action. It was some kind of toy and I glanced at the crowd's fascinated eyes and down again, seeing it clearly this time. I'd seen nothing like it before. A grinning doll of orange-and-black tissue paper with thin flat cardboard disks forming its head and feet and which some mysterious mechanism was causing to move up and down in a loose-jointed, shoulder-shaking, infuriatingly sensuous motion, a dance that was completely detached from the black, mask-like face. It's no jumping-jack, but *what*, I thought, seeing the doll throwing itself about with the fierce defiance of someone performing a degrading act in public, dancing as though it received a perverse pleasure from its motions. And beneath the chuckles of the crowd I could hear the swishing of its ruffled paper, while the same out-of-the-corner-of-the-mouth voice continued to spiel:

Shake it up! Shake it up!

He's Sambo, the dancing doll, ladies and gentlemen.

Shake him, stretch him by the neck and set him down,

—He'll do the rest. Yes!

He'll make you laugh, he'll make you sigh, si-igh.

He'll make you want to dance, and dance—

Here you are, ladies and gentlemen, Sambo,

The dancing doll.

Buy one for your baby. Take him to your girl friend and she'll love you, loove you!

He'll keep you entertained. He'll make you weep sweet—

numbed to give life or to receive it? For the others see them,
 think about them, even those standing close enough to speak?
 And if they spoke back, would the impatient businessmen in
 bow-tie suits and tired housewives with their plunder under-
 stand? What would they say? For the boys speak, lived to
 transcend language, all of country glamour, think transcendental
 thought, though perhaps they dream the same old dreams.
 They were men out of time, unless they were brotherhood
 men out of time, who would soon be gone and forgotten.
 But who knew (and now I began to tremble violently, I had to lean against a railing) who knew that they were the sailors, the true leaders, the bearers of
 something precious. The stewards of something uncommon-
 sense, which they hated because living outside the rules.
 For there was no one to applaud their value and the executives failed to understand it. What if Brother Jack were
 wrong? What if history was a gambler instead of a force in
 laboratory experiments, and the boys his ace in the hole?
 What if history was not a reasonable citizen but a madman
 full of paranoid guile and these boys his agents, his big sur-
 prise, his own revenge? For they were outside, in the dark
 withambo, the dancing paper doll; taking on the lambo
 my fallen brother, Tod Clifton (Tod, Tod, running and
 dodging the forces of history instead of making

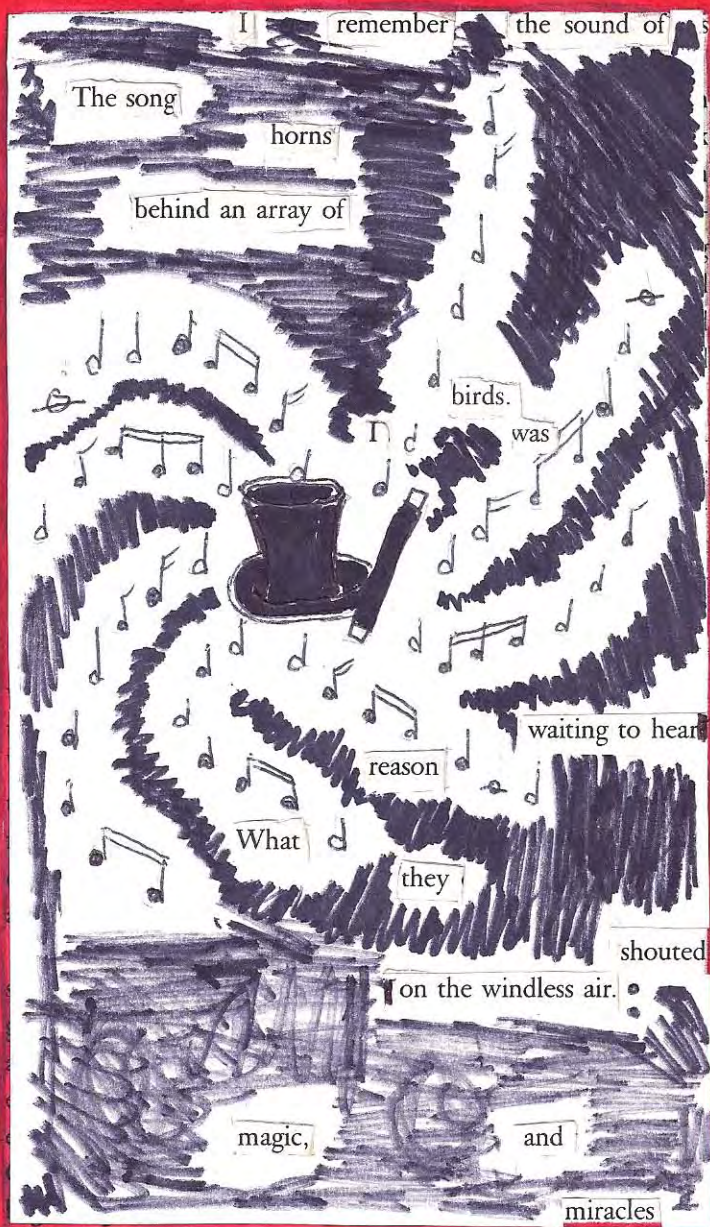
A train came. I followed them inside. There were many
 seats and the three sat together. I stood, holding onto the
 center pole, looking down the length of the car. The side
 I saw, white man in black telling her beads, and standing
 before the door across the aisle there was another dressed in
 white, the exact duplicate of the first except that
 she was black and her black feet lay flat on the floor. They were
 looking at each other, but at the same time looking away.

He knew them all the time.
cryptic mes-
sages in brief silence stop.

I came out weak,
I carried a heavy stone hurt
I was painfully
aware men dressed like the boys,
exotic surreal variations of
downtown styles.

I'd missed them. I missed them even when my work had
been with the social. They were outside the grooves of hurt and
and it was my job to get them in, all of them. I looked into
the design of their faces, hardly a one that was unlike someone
I'd known. Some Spanish names sang through my
head like forgotten scenes in dreams. I moved with the crowd
and I was pouring out me, listening to the grinding roar of
traffic, the growing sound of a record shop loudspeaker blaring
a languid blues. I stopped. Was this all that would be recorded?
Was this the only true history of the times, a mood blared by
trumpets, trombones, saxophones and drums, a song with turn-
ed, inadequate words? My mind flowed. It was as though in
the next block I was forced to walk past everyone I'd ever
known and no one would smile or call my name. No one fixed
me in his eyes. I walked in feverish isolation. Near the corner
now a couple of boys darted out of the Five and Ten with
handfuls of money, dropping them along the walls as they
went with a man right behind. They came toward me, pumping
past, and I killed an impulse to stop the man and was confused
all the more when an old woman standing motionless there
saw her leg and seeing a boy's leg. The man went down,
sliding across the walls as she shook her head in triumph.

the face of the old man who had aroused the song and felt a twinge of envy. It was a worn, old, yellow face and his eyes were closed and I could see only the white of his neck as his throat threw out the song. His body phrased each verse as if it were a single note, his voice rising above all the others, blowing the others down. I watched him now, we were all looking down upon my head, and I felt a wonder at the singing mass. It was as though the song had been there all the time and he had only found it and aroused it, and I knew that I had known it myself but had failed to release it out of a vague, nameless shyness. But he had known and aroused it. Even when two of his sisters were jolting in, I looked into that face, striving to find its secret, but it told me nothing. I looked at it and I heard the marchers, listening to them, and yet realizing that I was listening to something within myself, and for a moment I heard the shattering stroke of my heart. Something had been shaken the crowd, and the old man and the man with the horn had done it. They had reached upon something that was not of this world, or religion, though neither of them was a religious man. Years of my life welled up with a new force, a new energy, a new forgotten anger. But that was not all. The old man was reaching the top of the spiral stairs, sprang forward, and he had never shared it with anyone before. And yet all were told. The song had aroused us all, but not the words. For it was not the words that had aroused us. It was as though the words were in the words while yet the words were not there. A sudden emotion still rounded the face of the old man, that something for which the theory of Brotherhood had given me no name. I stood there trying to contain it as they brought Tod Clifton's coffin into the tower and slowly up the spiral stairs. They set it down upon the platform and I looked at the shape of the cheap



ing. You've heard it all. Why wait for more, when all I can do is repeat it?

They stood; they listened. They gave no sign.

Very well, so I'll tell you. His name was Clifton and he was young and he was a leader and when he fell there was a hole in the heel of his sock and when he stretched forward he seemed not as tall as when he stood. So he died, and we who loved him are gathered here to mourn him. It's as simple as that and as short as that. His name was Clifton and he was black and they shot him. Isn't that enough to tell? Isn't it all you need to know? Isn't that enough to make you think for a while and send you home to sleep it over? Take a drink and forget it. I read it in *The Chicago News*. His name was Clifton and they shot him, and I was there to see it all, so I know it as I know it.

That's the facts. That was standing and he fell. He fell and he knelted. He knelted and he bled. He bled and he died. He fell in a heap like any splash and his blood spilled out like any blood, red as any blood, wet as any blood, and reflecting the sky and the buildings and birds and trees, or your face if you'd looked into its dawning mirror—and it dried in the sun as blood dries. That's all. They spilled his blood and he died. They cut him down and he died; the blood flowed on the walk in a pool, gleamed a while, and, after a while, became dull, then dusty, then dried. That's the story and that's how it ended. It's an old story and there's been too much blood to excite you. Besides, it's only important when it fills the veins of a living man, isn't it? Aren't you tired of such stories? Aren't you sick of the blood? Then why listen, why don't you go? It's hot out here. There's the odor of evaporating fluid. The beer is cold in the tavern, the saxophones will be mellow in the Savoy, plenty good buggin'-time will be told on the harbor chops and heavy parlors, and there'll be sermons in two hundred churches.

comic-book star in a comic-book town on a comic-book day
in a comic-book world.

Why, then, one with the ages,
with you in this heat under this veiled sun,
and he has received his true freedom.
He has found a standard,
God, unknown to the lawless, but
Some words in the world are known,
known. One has been known to
reaching reality in the corner of a
house is the distressing office of
highly and it subway in the heat of
wounds received from three packs
hidden within the right ventricle of the heart, and to find
over the other, saving the spirit and traveling downward
to reach the heart, breaking through the heat, and
God knows where.

He's in this box

It's dark in this box

and it's far, far too expensive

Tell them to get out of the box,
you could say if you could
teach in

So there you have it

And don't be fooled,

You and I

had a soul

that I feel in my heart, my sense of loss. I don't know if I ~~now~~ have a soul. I only know that you are men of flesh and blood, and that blood will spill and flesh grow cold. I do not know if all cops are poets, but I know that all cops carry guns with triggers. And I know too how we are labeled. So in the name of Brother Clifton beware of the triggers; go home, keep cool, stay safe away from the sun. Forget him. When he was alive he was our hope, but why worry over a hope that's dead? So there's only one thing left to tell and I've already told it. His name was Tod Clifton, he believed in Brotherhood, he aroused our hopes and he died.

I couldn't go on. Below they were waiting, hands and handkerchiefs shading their eyes. A preacher stepped up and read something out of his Bible, and I stood looking at the crowd with a sense of failure. I had let it get away from me, had been unable to bring in the political issues. And they stood there sun-beaten and sweat-bathed, listening to me repeat what was known. Now the preacher had finished, and someone signaled the bandmaster and there was solemn music as the pallbearers carried the coffin down the spiraling stairs. The crowd stood still as we walked slowly through. I could feel the bigness of it and the unknownness of it and pent-up tension—whether of tears or anger. I couldn't tell. But as we walked through and down the hill to the hearse, I could feel it. The crowd sweated and throbbed, and though it was silent, there were many things directed toward me through its eyes. At the curb were the hearse and a few cars, and in a few minutes they were loaded and the crowd was still standing, looking on as we carried Tod Clifton away. And as I took one last look I saw not a crowd but the set faces of individual men and women.

We drove away and when the cars stopped moving there was a grave and we placed him in it. The gravediggers sweated heavily and knew their business and their brogue was Irish.

running his finger over his chin. "They should create a natural phenomenon . . ."

This had better stop right here, I thought. My head was getting lighter and my chest felt tight.

"Look," I said, "an unarmed man was killed. A brother, a leading member shot down by a policeman. We had lost our prestige in the community. I saw the chance to rally the people, so I acted. If that was incorrect, then I did wrong, so say it straight without this crap. It'll take more than sarcasm to deal with that crowd out there."

Brother Jack reddened; the others exchanged glances.

"He hasn't read the newspapers," someone said.

"You forget," Brother Jack said, "it wasn't necessary; he was there."

"Yes, I was there," I said. "If you're referring to the killing."

"There, you see," Brother Jack said. "He was on the scene."

Brother Tobitt pushed the table edge with his palms. "And still you organized that side show of a funeral!"

My nose twitched; I turned toward him deliberately, forcing a grin.

"How could there be a side show without you as the star attraction, who'd draw the two legs of the session, Brother Twobits? What was wrong with the funeral?"

"Now we're making progress," Brother Jack said, straddling his chair. "The program has raised some interesting questions. What's wrong?" I asked. All right, I'll answer. Under your leadership, a notorious merchant of vile instruments of anti-Negro propaganda, my latest biograph, has received the funeral of a hero. But you ask what's wrong?"

"Nothing was done about a traitor," I said.

He half-stood, gripping the back of his chair. "We all heard you admit it."

I watched Tobitt. He glared at me. "I was saying that up here," he said, "that the police men didn't care about Clifton's race. He was shot because he was black and because he resisted. Mainly because he was black."

Brother Jack frowned. "You're riding the race again. But how do they feel about the dolls?"

"On riding the race I'm forced to ride," I said. "And as for the dolls, they know that as far as the cops were concerned Clifton could have been selling drug sheets, Bibles, marijuana. He'd been white, hell he was. Or if he'd accepted being fished around . . ."

"Black and white, white and black," Tobitt said. "What we listen to is racist nonsense."

"Black, Brother Negro," I said. "You get your own information straight from the source. Is that a motto source, Brother? Don't answer—the only thing wrong is that your source is too narrow. You don't really think that crowd turned out today because Clifton was a member of the Brotherhood?"

"And how did they get so close?" Jack said, getting set to pounce forward.

"Because we gave them the opportunity to express their feelings, to affirm themselves."

Brother Jack rubbed his eye. "Do you know that you have become quite the opinion man?" he said. "You are an expert."

"I do, Brother, but there's nothing like isolating a man's mind from the world," he said.

"That's true; some of our best ideas have been thought in prison. Only you haven't been in prison, Brother, and you were not hired to think. Had you forgotten that? If so, let me tell you: You were not hired to think." He was speaking very deliberately and I thought, See? So here it is, naked and old and rotten. So now it's out in the open . . .

"So now I know where I am," I said, "and with whom—"

who'd been insulting

the regular customers

glasses cutting
and squeezed up
his lips pushed

Poppa-stopper

I watched his eyes

my heart beating faster

It was hot perhaps the

like nightmare

figures in the smoke-green haze

someone moved

bobbing heads

a bad dream of the Fiery Furnace

with the gun. "Rinehart! Them paddies must be going stone blind. Anybody can see you ain't Rinehart."

"But he do look like Rine," and the fellow with the gun said to me with his hands in his trousers pockets.

"Like hell he does."

"Hell, man, Rinehart would be driving that Cadillac this time of night. What the hell you talking about?"

"Listen, Jack," the fellow with the gun said, "don't let nobody make you act like Rinehart. You got to have a smooth tongue, a heartless heart and be ready to do anything. But if them paddies bother you agin, just let us know. We aim to stop some of this head-whupping they been doing."

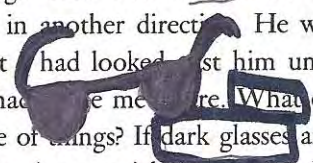
"Sure," I said.

"Rinehart," he said again. "Ain't *that* a bitch?"

They turned and went arguing back to the pool hall and I hurried out of the neighborhood. Having forgotten Hambro for the moment I walked east instead of west. I wanted to remove the glasses but decided against it. Ras's men might still be on the prowl.

It was quieter now. No one paid me any special attention although the street was alive with pedestrians, all moiling along in the mysterious tint of green. Perhaps I'm out of his territory at last, I thought and began trying to place Rinehart in the scheme of things. He's been around all the while, but I have been looking in another direction. He was around and other like him, but I had looked past him until Clifton's death (or was it Ras?) had made me aware. What on earth was hiding behind the face of things? If dark glasses and a white hat could blot out my identity so quickly, who actually was who?

The perfume was exotic and seemed to roll up the walk behind me as I became aware of a woman strolling casually behind me.



BEHOLD THE SEEN UNSEEN
BEHOLD THE INVISIBLE
O YE WHO ARE WEARY COME HOME!

I DO WHAT YOU WANT! DONE! DON! WAIT!

I dropped the letter into the gutter and moved on. I walked slowly, my brain still coming to itself. *Could it be?* Soon I reached the sign, it hung above a store that had been converted into a church, and I stepped into the shallow lobby and wiped my face with a handkerchief. Behind me I heard the rise and fall of an old-fashioned prayer such as I hadn't heard since leaving the campus, and then only when visiting country preachers were asked to pray. The voice rose and fell in a rhythmical, dreamlike recital—part enumeration of earthly trials undergone by the congregation, part rapt display of vocal virtuosity, part appeal to God. I was still wiping my face and squinting at crude Biblical scenes painted on the windows when two old ladies came up to me.

"Even', Rever'n Rinehart," one of them said. "How's our dear pastor this warm evening?"

"Oh, no, I thought, but perhaps agreeing will cause less trouble than denying, and I said, "Good evening, sisters," muffling my voice with my handkerchief and catching the odor of the girl's perfume from my hand.

"This here's Sister Harris, Rever'n. She come to join our little band."

"God bless you, Sister Harris," I said, taking her extended hand.

"You know, Rever'n, I once heard you preach years ago. You was just a little twelve-year-old boy, back in Virginia. And here I come North and find you, praise God, still preach-



death

smiling

getting out of hand

our strength is steadily going to

hell

upset

child

searching for sincerity in his words

a gulf between
distance

voice

touching

echo

shake away

grasp

my voice

unreal

urgency into my words

darted

surface

something

simple

up within me, and then the hell I'd found suddenly
in my darkness. Images of past humiliations flickered through
my head, and I knew they were not just separate experi-
ences. They were me. They defined me.

And my weakness was mine. I was blind, and I
knew it. I was alone, and I knew it. I was a conqueror,
and I knew it. I was a conqueror, and I knew it.

They were blind. They were blind. They were blind.
And the echoed sounds of their voices. And the
echoed sounds of their voices. And the echoed sounds of their voices.

I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.
I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.

And I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.
And I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.

And I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.
And I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.

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And I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them. I'd help them.



degrading, if other minorities loved the country despite their grievances, I would assure the committee that we, immune to such absurdly human and mixed reactions, hated it absolutely; and, greatest contradiction of all, when they denounced the American scene as corrupt and degenerate, I was to say that we, though snarled inextricably within its veins and sinews, were miraculously healthy. Yessuh, yessuh! Though invisible I would be their assuring voice of denial; I'd out-Tobitt Tobitt, and as for that outhouse Wrestrum—well. As I sat there one of them was inflating my faked memberships into meanings of national significance. An illusion was creating a counter-illusion. Where would it end? Did they believe their own propaganda?

Afterwards at the Chthonian it was like old times. Jack's birthday was an occasion for champagne and the hot, dog-day evening was even more volatile than usual. I felt highly confident, but here my plan went slightly wrong. Emma was quite gay and responsive, but something about her hard, handsome face warned me to lay off. I sensed that while she might willingly surrender herself (in order to satisfy herself) she was far too sophisticated and skilled in intrigue to compromise her position as Jack's mistress by revealing anything important to me. So as I danced and sparred with Emma I looked over the party for a second choice.

We were thrown together at the bar. Her name was Sybil and she was one of those who assumed that my lectures on the woman question were based upon a more intimate knowledge than the merely political and had indicated several times a willingness to know me better. I had always pretended not to understand, for not only had my first such experience taught me to avoid such situations, but at the Chthonian she was usually slightly tipsy and wistful—just the type of misunderstood married woman whom, even if I had been interested, I

up like a luminescent sign. "Hurry, so full hurry," she said.

I looked at her, thinking, Just wait until George sees that—if George ever gets around to seeing that. He'll read a lecture on an aspect of the woman question he's never thought about. She lay anonymous beneath my eyes until I saw her face, shaped by her emotion which I could not fulfill, and I thought, Poor Sybil, she picked a boy for a man's job and nothing was as it was supposed to be. She'd lost control of her job and fell down on the job. She'd lost control of her woman now and suddenly I bent and kissed her upon the lips.

"You're being—," she raised her lips for more and I kissed her again and gained her and she bowed off and I decided again to end the farce. Such games were for Rinehart, not me. I grabbed a fat and good soap towel and began rubbing out the evidence of my crime. It was as tenacious as sin and it took some time. Water wouldn't do it, whiskey would have smelled and finally I had to find benzine. Fortunately, she didn't arouse until I was almost finished.

"D'you do it, boy?" she said.

"Yes, my source," I said. "Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Yes, but I don't seem to remember."

I looked at her and wanted to laugh. She was trying to become but her eyes were still on us and her head kept swinging to one side, yet she was making a real effort, and suddenly I felt lighthearted.

"By the way, I said that I would do something with you, but what's your name, lady?"

"Sybil," she said in a light tone, almost tearfully. "Boo'-ful, you know I'm Sybil."

"Not when I stabbed you, I didn't."

Her eyes widened and a smile wobbled across her face.

"That's right, you couldn't, could you? You didn't see."

"How're you doing, Syb?" I said.

"Don't go, boo'ful," she said. "Let Georgie do it. No speeches tonight."

"Come on," I said taking her arm quite firmly, pulling her along as she sighed, her wistful face turned toward me.

We went down smoothly into the street. My head was still badly fuzzed from the drink, and when I looked down the huge emptiness of the dark I felt like tears . . . What was happening uptown? Why should I worry over bureaucrats, blind men? *I am invisible*. I stared down the quiet street, feeling her stumbling beside me, humming a little tune; something fresh, naïve and carefree. Sybil, my too-late-too-early love . . . Ah! My throat throbbed. The heat of the street clung close. I looked for a taxi but none was passing. She hummed beside me, her perfume unreal in the night. We moved into the next block and still no taxis. Her high heels unsteadily scrunched the walk. I stopped her.

"Poor boo'ful," she said. "Don't know his name . . ."

I turned as though struck. "What?"

"Anonymous brute 'n boo'ful buck," she said, her mouth a bleary smile.

I looked at her, skittering about on high heels, *scrunch, scrunch* on the walk.

"Sybil," I said, more to myself than to her, "where will it end?" Something told me to go.

"Aaaah," she laughed, "in bed. Don't go up, boo'ful, Sybil'll tuck you in."

I shook my head. The stars were there, high, high, revolving. Then I closed my eyes and they sailed red behind my lids; then somewhat steadied I took her arm.

"Look, Sybil," I said, "stand here a minute while I go over to Fifth for a taxi. Stand right here, dear, and hold on."

I shook my head, feeling weary, and she said, "I've got work to do, Sybil. You'd better go home."

"No, boo'ful, take me with you."

I turned to the driver, my hand upon the door. He was small, dark-haired and disapproving, a glint of red from the traffic light coloring the tip of his nose.

I gave him the address and my last five-dollar bill. He took it, glumly disapproving.

"No, boo'ful," she said. "I want to go to Harlem, with you!"

"Good night," I said, stepping back from the curb.

We were in the middle of the block when he pulled away.

"Noo," she said, "noo, boo'ful. Don't leave me!" Her face, wild-eyed and white, showed in the gloom. I stood there, watching him plunge swiftly and contemptuously out of sight, his tail light glowing red.

I walked with eyes closed, seeming to float and trying to clear my head, then opened them and crossed to the park side, along the esplanade. High above, the cars whirled and down the avenue, down the lights scabbled. All the taxis were hired, all going downtown. Center of gravity I plodded on, my head awheel.

Then, near 140th Street, I saw her again. She was waiting beneath a street lamp, waving. I wasn't surprised; I had seen her before. I came up slowly, hearing her laugh. She was ahead of me, and beginning to run, barefoot, loosely, in a dream. Running, unsteadily but swift and my arm out and unable to catch up, lead-legged, seeing her ahead and calling, "Sybil, Sybil," running lead-legged along the park side.

"Come on boo'ful," she called, looking back and stumbling. "Catch Sybil . . . Sybil," running barefoot and lead-legged along the park.

ere? I... ma
ere we might
Say, mar—God
loud?" a voice answered. "I

Don't be calling my name so

All right

surge of friend

"Hey

'we go'n do it

'Hell yes,

How you feel? the

Still fuzzy I said

u'll be
me clear.

you lucky

these sonsabitches

y shootin'
p in the If I could find me a rifle, I'd show 'em
take you a drink of this good Scotch,

I got me a

liquor store
do is breathe, and you drunk

all you got to
Hundred proof

whiskey
I took a drink

went down

it gave me
movement of people around me,

MOONSHINE

there in the dark
played around me.

their voices

the men started using their lights,

them

came a gang armed with

Behind
rifles

"Put out them lights!"

Behind us came the sound of screams,

distant fire trucks, shooting,

and

the steady filtering of shattered glass.

"Good God, look-

a-yonder!"

I saw a crowd of men running

a huge woman

sat drinking

from a barrel which sat before her.

and shouted passion-

ately

Free beer!!

Dupre pulled away and rose to a higher step. He looked down at her, shaking his thrice-hatted head. "Now get on out the way, Lottie," he said patiently. "Why you have to start this now? We done been all over it and you know I ain't go'n change. And lissen here, the resta y'all," he said, reaching into the top of his hip boot and producing a nickel-plated revolver and waving it around, "don't think they's going to be any *mind*-changing either. And I don't care for no arguments neither."

"You goddam right, Dupre. We did you!"

"My kid died from the three in that deathtrap, but I bet a man ain't no more go'n be *dead* in there," he said. "So now, Lottie, you go on up the street and let us men git going."

She stood back, crying. I looked at her, at those shoes, her breasts turgid, her belly heavy and high. In the crowd, women's hands took her away. Large liquid eyes turned for a second toward the man in the rubber boots.

What type of man is he, what would Jack say of him? Jack, *Jack!* And what was he in this?

"Let's go, buddy," Scofield said, nudging me. I followed him, filled with a sense of Jack's outrageous unreality. We went in, up the stairs, flashing our lights. Ahead I saw Dupre moving. He was a type of man nothing in my life had taught me to see, to understand, or respect, a man outside the scheme till now. We entered rooms littered with the signs of swift emptying. It was hot, close.

"This here's my own apartment," Scofield said. "And ain't the bedbugs going to get a surprise!"

We dropped the kerosene about, upon an old mattress, along the floor, then moved into the hall, using the flashlights. From all through the building came the sounds of footsteps, of splashing oil, the occasional prayerful protest of some old one being forced to leave. The men worked in silence now, like



ated it, brought it into being in the instant his breath vibrated small against the loud, riotous air. And in defining, in giving organization to the fury, it seemed to spin me around, and in my mind I was looking backward over the days since Clifton's death . . . Could this be the answer, could this be what the committee had planned, the answer to why they'd surrendered our influence to Ras? Suddenly I heard the hoarse explosion of a shotgun, and looked past Scofield's glinting pistol to the huddled form from the roof. It was suicide, without guns it was suicide, and not even the pawnshops here had guns for sale; and yet I knew with a shattering dread that the uproar which for the moment marked primarily the crash of men against things—against stores, markets—could swiftly become the crash of men against men and with most of the guns and numbers on the other side. I could see it now, see it clearly and in growing magnitude. It was not suicide, but murder. The committee had planned it. And I had helped, had been a tool. A tool just at the very moment I had thought myself free. By pretending to agree I had indeed agreed, had made myself responsible for that huddled form lighted by flame and gunfire in the street, and all the others whom now the night was making ripe for death.

The brief case swung heavy against my leg as I ran, going away, leaving Scofield cursing his lack of bullets behind me, running wildly and swinging the brief case hard against the head of a dog that leaped at me out of the crowd, sending him yelping away. To my right lay a quiet residential street with trees, and I entered it, going toward Seventh Avenue, toward the district, filled now with horror and hatred. They'll pay, they'll pay, I thought. They'll pay!

The street lay dead quiet in the light of the lately risen moon, the gunfire thin and for a moment, distant. The rioting seemed in another world. For a moment I paused beneath a

rolling back like a wave back, and screaming and cursing, and some laughing—back and around and out into the avenue, stumbling and pushing, as the horses' heads high and bits troth-flecked went over the curb to land stiff-legged and slide over the closed walk as upon ice skates and pass, carried by the force of the charge, sideways now, legs stiff, sparks flying to where another crowd looted another store. And my heart lightened as the first crowd swung imperturbably back to their looting with derisive cries, like sandpipers swinging around to glean the shore after a furious wave recession.

Cursing Jack and the Brotherhood moved around a steel grill door from the front of a pawnshop, seeing the troopers galloping back and the riders lifting their horses to charge again, gum and skillful in white steel helmets and the charge beginning. This time a man went down and I saw a woman swinging a gleaming frying pan hard against the horse's rump and the horse neighing and beginning to plunge. They'll pay, I thought, they'll pay. They came toward me as I ran, a crowd of men and women carrying cases of beer, cheese, chains of linked sausage, watermelons, sacks of sugar, hams, cornmeal, fuel lamps. If only it could stop right here, here, here before the others came with their guns. I ran.

There was no firing now. But when, I thought, how long before it starts?

"Git a side of bacon, Joe," a woman called. "Git a side of bacon, Joe, git Wilsons."

"Lord, Lord, Lord," a dark voice called from the dark. I went on, tinged with a sense of painful isolation as I reached 125th Street and started east. A squad of mounted police galloped past. Men with sub-machine guns were guarding a bank and a large jewelry store. I moved out to the center of the street, running down the trolley rails.

The moon was high now and before me the shattered