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SPECIAL ISSUE -- \$1.25 (Regular to subscribers)

# BEAU-COCOA

Hello, again --- especially glad you took us up on this winter-spr  
engagement

:Have some:



To a happy Beau-UR-(year)-Cocoa, Vol  
#1 on, from:

Editor-Publisher ----- Lloyd Add  
Editor-at-Large ----- Justus T  
Mgr. Prom. & Distr. ----- Richard T

KEEP THE LETTERS COMING! I ENJOY THE CELEBRATION AFTER WORDS' WOR



It's winter now, which is also a line from Julie's poem, Black In S  
of Beauty (I call it Julie's poem because, at the time I wrote it -  
I knew Julie, and Julie was and remains the most fascinating woman  
ever met. We were in search of two different kinds of beauties the  
not quite. In a sense, the poem is what I found; what I lost to do  
above and beyond something close to thirteen years, and perhaps Jul  
should also be included - encompasses too much of an odyssey in age  
and nostalgia to recount outside of poetry in the autobiography of  
ings. More about the poem later. (Pardon the digression). It's win  
now, and it was winter for a long time --- until you came with the  
and bread from the wilderness; then it was spring awhile. But it's  
now, my birth-month, and perhaps soon to be spring again. In the  
Cocoa house, our comforts are somewhat better arranged (or deployed  
gainst discomfort than at the outset, and we anticipate a good crop

**EDITORIAL:** Lookout for the book you didn't write on the new black  
look, or, 'Search for the Esthetic soul-sister, Brother  
or, 'The Lookoutlook of Loud Brown Skintblaek Skins', by Sign.Of.C  
Carte Blanche.

We promised you a play, and a play we have. In fact, we have so m  
play that poems by LEA will get little space. But we especially wa  
you to note the item by Justus Taylor, who is with us again, and t  
poem by the young Biafran, Onwuchekwa Jenie. Let us now listen to  
music. You may, in fact, better appreciate the poems of LEA by li  
first to the sound, your feelings coordinating by 'meanings' readi  
grasped, then re-read...

This special issue (at \$1.25) will be regular to subscribers: \$1.0  
copy, \$3.75 yrly (4 cop.) subscription; postage paid.

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## THE FAT LIGHT THAT CATSUP MEOWS

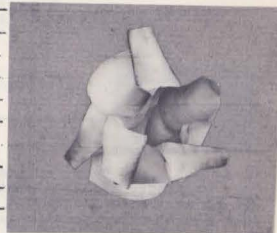
The fat light that catsup meows is octopus  
of taste testy wonder the sating what wherein-put ---

insinuating purr-pursed love-space:  
the pussyfoot-unsure play-way repressed short of focal length ---

is pearl nape naked wish.meat intent to match.startle fire  
that goes out never before becoming breathless within:  
in doorwake snap.porpoise long-or-shortpig.pit socket plea.sing sauce.paste

and its kisses' breasts love.seam.mend unsuccessful swallows of wish cud.bulb  
mirroring love, love --- in this fat light blinks, blinks ---  
in this embrace-time P.D.Q. old age intimidated dropsy  
its tongue between the toothache tickle picking barbequed diphthongs  
of toasted feast increase  
reaching for reflection lost

## THE KISS ACT



The kiss.act in black love-space is contact-ent to go-round shadows  
cradle.plush bib-lipped hip.swallow of safe-conduct touch:  
long center feeling on-the-fly into watermelon wedding-bedding  
bellows' echo ---

and no barrier bites the flood in.two  
a foaming-out-of-field figure of misbehavior  
except the naked seething act.fact hue  
though heavylink-handled, lifts

to insert here facefat revisited wholewatt wake.witch.watch  
into glitter-cupped kiss-molten time-overflow view ...

and all the dimples in puddn breadfruit flower:  
are pumpernickel nightfruit become rye mince chow meat  
and crab.crumb potato.mashy mushroom.bloomed allspice rice

LEA

# THE BIG HIGH

Swingggg sssswings sss wingssss ssssswwwwwinggggg  
 some rab  
 some  
 ttthingggg g ggg g rab ass ttardddd owns  
 EEEEEvvveeeerrrryyy  
 ttthin ggg rabb b bbed ddd Oooooops  
 dddd am mmm me I am mmm mad nnnn OW  
 ddrroo op. cit. sleepeeee wwwww here? down nnnn ppp  
 ants! nnn OW! Oops!  
 nnn no wwwhere to ppp iiiiissss  
 I ddd aaamm  
 ssswwwiinggg ssswingggggss sss wingggg inggggg  
 There are several high-a-lay-a-ways awayhighlays  
 lay high wwwwww ---  
 to high-o Oh! Snatch me back!  
 to to --- scratch Anita's double daily  
 daily double act pppllllssaqueeeeee  
 soda duct and come to  
 withmehan  
 flying to  
 O-HIGH-O --- a-l-j-p, ill-noise!!!

I am not a mad haver of ham and sunnyside eggs  
 nor husbender of harem engine sheer-mad ego;  
 no holdout mean heartbreak by sunnysight eyes  
 nor meteor undue-North polar monk of humid age.

not I, the mite madder by evening grounds flat spat fit,  
 nor for henpeckerwood disorder hoist-roost by the shoulders  
 chipping at mis-charges;  
 not mad any meantime overly inflated by cannot cantankerous-damned catharsis  
 nor butted humor in the breechblock bound for merry-go-round brass laughter

Not here the frothing nevermindless moth of flame-licked fancy,  
 nor at any time the showpiece man of care- scare-filled uncalmed precision  
 I am that I am as before you said, I will ---  
 not the glad lad maddened sad by any unco-habitable one.



# WIND AND RAIN

Unaccounted oak  
 love-marked I would remember her  
 stirring spring chord winds  
 the flare and cheek forehead sheen drum  
 watt-knotted my heart in heart wood winds  
 soughs with these of woodland walks  
 with company trees  
 to be in companion places

Having a laugh in a lonesome evening  
 it is whittled through the woodland country  
 love

The light variation retouched day  
 by paths of rain-surfaced sand  
 dance arrow-clean re-etching the wood  
 love  
 said to light and bark  
 called to marrow become

Handmarks on love's tempest declaration:  
 disc.out pieces from oakflesh hued weather dark  
 this is redwood and birch  
 and pines needleless sound ---

the March oak's thunderous coming  
 out of the pregnant year  
 love

For each wood notch a storm run silent  
 but returns from dead to play  
 what they would not know of wintergreen love ---  
 branching alive from forgotten node ---  
 but for play of woodwinds on memory  
 cutting light a million symphonies  
 back/log and trunk  
 echo-hum souvenirs in ribbons

Like streetlamps time has stood beneath and hued  
 this love of lost love  
 moves naked out of winter coat  
 to recall the cache of jewels in jubilees of rain  
 and watch new hallelujahs  
 fresh and re-freshening  
 blithely throughout all wind  
 who moves over these re-touched of love reminded:

down the writhing grasses  
 one day footprints wandering  
 reset leaves and wavelike down  
 this page of the earth turning-over



# SAMBA

OR

## TENTATIVE RHYTHMIC PROLOGUE TO A NINE-CHAPTER NOVEL

A sala'am alaikum Jama'a. Ga labarun duniya  
Tasha Radio Nigeriya tu Lagos. Mai karantawa Shebu  
Ogundigbo...

Absurdity of absurdities  
we cannibals must  
these jewchristians whose language I use is theirs  
and how different on their lips the word  
God  
smear'd with five thousand years of muddled history  
which I cannot and cannot wish to be part of  
but inescapably by a goddam affirm  
how different  
master home light black man among the harpooners  
was Ogundikpe  
coalblack savage giant of the how  
are the mighty tell it like anything  
of which it may be said  
see  
this is new  
it has been here of old time  
before this act rehearsed ten billion years  
before this rock n roll  
for of the making of  
books there is no end  
and much venery is a weariness of the flesh  
yet a man may write history dictionaries  
temporary poems  
and criticism  
at any time  
if he will set himself  
doggonnaneedaily to it  
for money  
answereth all things  
money hard but woman no no  
a money money money  
a money palaver  
amoni moneeey...

ayaaaaa !  
ayakaaya ! na 'im O !

and who prevents me  
repaying vengeance is sweet evil will repay

whatsoever under the hole  
heavens  
mine

you stroked me much of me  
would give me colored waterloo buried in it  
to name great knights by light and dark  
love  
showed you wealth for twentyfour  
fresh dollar salt spring  
spring

mine  
fertile barrel goddime me for doing all the  
nine ten curses okokoamokweakwanguakanuokagwe  
umuakpaokayamekeameakpuitemokpialagbawaorachikwa  
nabubuyaya torment with sores torment till  
death do you pass my hinderponderance land  
reservation slum ghetton with your cowboy  
bantustindian policies separate unequal  
never

ever hear of a white man with a name like christmas  
doubledamed Slav black as yore father in the  
prince of wales is a gentle rape can be moved never  
by kind brutalitarian use your filth as you treat  
you white for my slave honorably qui mal ye tried to  
violet the horror the horror of my race of my lure of my  
lean of my wallrose womanwoman  
woman  
woman all gunpowder  
fire cannonballooh hoo-hoo

hha-haa

ho-ho

ha-haahad eblowder up  
good wench ass readywilling as if you come ten seconds  
not two soon carnalebeniboobyloss inherit the hearth  
is written spite you mesrhondas

mine

darkgray matter yankee monkey biblapologists  
tell us inferior no good wildgoose welfare gutter  
shackin up with broads yaint married to  
a thing  
no sissyphusliced man would  
know thyself

somebody

didn't know thyself for a natural slav til no  
language taught you no name for no moonan an  
booke und shishishit et fuck y nothin a decent  
citizen could of understand your visage in your mind  
of your

language taught me your language your language  
to cuss you bleachblood shedrankmeshakyabednegro  
you suckin charlie you content be content o blood blood  
BLOOD!

yet be content  
o truth  
what is truth  
for crocodiles only to

holy witchcraft!  
fire eyes on stilts!  
the divining phosporus...

aaahhhhh!

Toussaint! Toussaint! Toussaint L'Ouverture!  
Toussaint! Toussaint! Toussaint L'Ouverture!

walled in by thickthickening  
walls  
of whiteness  
overabunderound  
through and through  
o o o  
great god brown up there  
somewhere  
in the ceiling darkness  
have mercy  
on this little yellow  
white boy down here

marooned

and truth what is truth for elephants only  
to

and once up there  
bloody write in bloody  
aphorisms must stride longlegged peek from peak  
and once up there  
you can't never go home

again  
black boy  
to  
this world is no longer  
will never be

again  
not home and mother  
black boy  
can't never go home

to false alram not answered can't be all our fault who set  
up ideals like it is brothersister I say blow the old  
guns rot new guns before the law get tight and  
shoot strait

you who have dared  
in your philosophies  
in your lives

to  
rip away every mask  
skeleton  
that perhaps  
only perhaps...

lives or lines in  
this englignbongeroseerroneous cantickle will be persecuted  
this is not a  
this is a

calculated  
to dishapoint

yesyes  
the bad mango seems the good one  
yes

does  
and here comes the hired man to throw sand  
in your  
yes yes yes  
yes I can  
yes I will  
yes I'll croak

I'll yell / I'll

dance over your  
cool it brother  
slow n steady  
sock it to 'em  
old slow  
and

dance over your  
name no evil  
said the tortoise:

torrofini fini torrofini  
AKARA woman de come  
o-sina mDe go  
torrofini fini torrofini...

(1966) Onwuchekwa Jemie



O. JEMIE (or, O.J.) is a Biafran (or from Biafra) currently residing in NYC, advises he has appeared elsewhere in literary instances and is slated for inclusion in an anthology of Biafran poetry to be published later this year. From the notes of ethos heard in some instances here, not the least of which is a characteristic rhythm-word mastery, we are looking forward to the nine-chapter novel it forecasts. ED.

SHUING  
SLUM!

OUR  
COMMUNITY

HARLEM ON MY MIND  
(From Downtown)

The race in racism is not a matter of color, but rather a matter of a bag of attitudes. When you happen upon an individual whom you couldn't assign to either the black or white group on the basis of appearance, his statement as to which group he belongs flips open your file box of "his" attitudes which is really your set. You then deal with him on the basis of this set and proceed to the business of whatever transaction brought you together.

Your possession of this useful set is a debt you owe to diligent ancestors. They carefully nurtured an almost infinite stream of images flowing down from a power-created peak which they made either snow-capped or blackish-brown. The ancestors were eventually so proficient that they could support the stream without any peak, so the color of the peak now makes very little difference. The mere suggestion, "I am black," or "I am white," is sufficient.

"Race," then, opens the flood gates for a silent gush of dumb, lazy, dirty, ugly, savage, penniless, irrational, atavistic, envious, unambitious, fatherless, grandfatherless, greatgrandfatherless, and most recently: militant, ten percent sickle cell, uneducable, and anti-semitic. Of course the stream has a collection of opposites running parallel to it, and the opposite set is applied if the suggestion of race is the right one.

It would be untidy to pretend that the set consists only of static conditions. It also features an inability to package the suggesting person, as a bundle of loving, crying, hating, singing, gorging, starving, thinking, giving and taking actions; any one action at a time but never the potential for all.

But if you shake up a bag, after having been careless in filling it, so that you included some "good" and some "bad" static conditions, actions and emotions, emptying it would give you HARLEM ON MY MIND, and that gets everybody up-tight. After all, mixed-set-generation brings painful confusion. "I Spy", "The Outcasts", "Julia", all conscientiously sever the continuum of the brother's emotional gamut. To do otherwise would be too humanizing, and consequently unpopular. The one-at-a-time emotional

display is essential to the set. Only two significant attacks on the nucleus of the set easily come to mind: the movie "Black Orpheus", and our controversial HARLEM ON MY MIND.

I am not saying that the racial situation has never been analyzed sufficiently to expose all the millstones of imagery hung around the necks of blacks. Countless essayists, novelists and poets have accomplished this. However, the need to use words is the vulnerability that is inherent in all intellectualizing. Someone has to read them, translate them into personal meanings, if any, and still they remain much further removed from the touchwoods of our emotions than do visual images.

The consensus of the unhappy white criticism of the HARLEM exhibit seems to be that it is gimmickry in its audio and visual effects. It is also said to be poorly organized; somewhat difficult to follow because the captions have not been placed directly adjacent to the photographs. It seems patent that such commentary is dishonestly sterile, in the context of the present anxiety about racial hostilities in New York City. At least say, "get those blacks out of our Metropolitan Museum of Art." Or, "I never knew they ate from tables." Or, "what a great quickie course in their recent history."

The last suggested comment would, hopefully, induce some of those picketing the exhibit to go inside and alarmingly learn that there are only photographs, no paintings, neither those included nor those left out.

AND if the exhibit truly depicted blacks through whites' eyes we would have much less hostility and much less anxiety about it. If his eyes had ever revealed to him that we have a whole bag too, the sets would have been permanently unsettled long ago.

AND if those whom the set presently defines as young militants digest the display of our efforts toward freedom, just from 1900 to 1968, they will have to admit that we have always been trying in every conceivable way to do our thing.

AND that success is governed by the ungovernable tides of economics, wars, international politics, social upheavals, concepts of justice, and other little hindrances that add up to Black History.

AND that HARLEM can turn you on!

JET

JET, as you probably aren't aware, is our Editor-at-Large and contributor, Justus E. Taylor. As usual, Mr. Taylor's observations are poignant and individualistic. ED.

# MR. BLACK

AND

## MISS INTEGRA- TION

A PLAY IN 3 ACTS

### PROLOGUE TO ACT I

Setting: Near-empty cottage livingroom, except for cot. Phone man has just finished installing telephone, exchanges a few words with Mr. B. & leaves; enter furniture men. Mr. B. who is just out of jail after overnight cool-off for assault makes the first call to his sweetheart:)

Mr. B:--- Hello, Hershe---? Allie, Sweetheart. I'm at the cottage. (Pause) What's the matter, honey? (Pause, listens; shortly:) Baby, he made one of those brainwashed statements; (gruffly) You ain't nothin but a you-know-what like I am. That made me hot! (Pause) Look, we ARE getting married, aren't we? (Protestingly:) Ba-aby, the furniture men are moving in the things...

Voice: Hershe: Me? marry you? after all the trouble you've been in, time after time, after promising, time after time, FAITHFULLY, to think about somebody else except that stubborn black pride of yours! W Marry you? Can we get along, even? I mean, can we really get along?

Mr. B:--- I don't see why not, if you become MRS. Black ...

Hershe:: (Continuing a s if unabated:) We have absolutely nothing in common. You kno-oh? We're from ENTIRELY different backgrounds, and YOU just SIMPLY WOULDN'T have the FAINTEST IDEA how to appreciate a woman like me-ee! --- steady, everyday, like! --- would you? Say it LOUD and clear.

Mr. B:--- (Has been trying to get a word in) I -- uh, baby, loo-ook ---

Hershe:: You're, you're --- just no company to me, besides. You're wild and --- and --- Anyway, how would you support me? How would I look marrying you, really? Mother, and all my friends --- !!

Mr. B:--- Dammit, SHUT UP! Yeah, I KNOW: All your friends are Integra-tion finks. Are you gonna marry me or not, woman?

Hershe:: (Inverted voice:) How dddare you! The ner-erve --- !

Mr. B:--- Listen, I'm buying the cab. I can do a little repair & gas-hop-ping for a while, and we got a buncha furniture coming, and ---

Hershe:: Yeah, but most important: I've got a job, right?

Mr. B:--- (Unamused exasperation; protestingly:) Ba-aby --- (Pause). Look, also: I've quit the Afro-Corps -- well, taken a discharge to inactive reserve -- because --- I DO love you. (Pause)

Hershe:: Yes? I hear you. And ---?

Mr. B:--- Well? What do you say?

Hershe:: I don't know.

Action: (Lights fade down; conversation seen continuing inaudibly)

(Lights up from fade out)

Time: Two years later. Setting the same, furnished. Mrs. B. is home from mother's again since the previous evening; life has resumed some of its normal spiced flavor, but hasn't finished saying grace. (Conversation from off-stage)

Mrs. B.: Sometimes I wonder which is worse, living with MOTHER or living with you. She's ALWAYS asking me - EVERYDAY - Are you pregnant again, dear? EVERYDAY! even when I'm living with HER! So, I've made up my mind, Almond. The next time somebody leaves it's gonna be you. I SIMPLY WILL NOT DRAG the babies over to MOTHER'S again!

The way she carries on with them! And the neighbors! OH! let me see the twins! EVERY HOUR. A lot of old! --- dear old ladies; they mean well, and mother is really peaches, but ---

ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME-eeEE !!?

Mr. B:--- Yeah! Sure!

Mrs. B.: Stop. Stop it. (Pause) Hummmm. You're really a trouble-maker, aren'tchu?

(Some titters and chuckles; Pause)

Mrs. B.: Did you miss me? honey?

Mr. B:--- Unhuh. Yeah ---

Mrs. B.: Sure --- ?

Mr. B:--- Unhuh.

(Pause)

Mrs. B.: Actually, I wasn't all THAT mad. It was just that --- well, anyway, THE NEXT TIME --- !! And REMEMBER! no more all-night pool games! no voluntary overtime, when you don't even call me! No breakdowns outside town! running outta gas! AND ANOTHER THING!: I -- DON'T -- CARE -- how much my friends flirt with you, YOU'RE to have more RESPECT for me than to carry-on with them RIGHT under my nose, esPecially with ALICE! Just remember, now. And no --- no, now, STA-OFF. Listen --- NO! no! --- unun ---

(Fade out to drumsuite)

Orientation: Two weeks later: Early Show feeling; from the center of the Blacks' livingroom a TV makes a path of light. Resting on top of it is a lamp whose light defines a second item: a portrait of a famous Civil Rights leader. Nearby, to right of TV, is a floor-to-ceiling pole lamp. Far left, between two doorways, is a castro sofa of a 3-piece 1/r set on which Mrs. B. sits knitting, aided by a small lamp on an endtable to her right with a shelf of books, another pole lamp near it. Mr. B. lounges slightly to right of TV, forward, in an occasional chair. He is smoking and sends up clouds intermittently as if commenting on TV show thereby.

(Soft tones:) Two doll handsomes clutching in arms! length embrace; he: long, lean, in tails; she: medium svelt voluptuous, in stocking leggy showgirl costume. Night scene in field where she has fled from stage of edge-of-twon stag club; neon and florescent lights distantly:

He: Please, Gwenelda ... darling ... haven't I suffered enough? Stop this madness and ---

PUFFS  
of  
Smoke

She: No, no ... (turning chin to shoulder & closing eyes)... don't say it, John, don't say you love me! don't say you forgive me! don't! --- DON'T --- you mustn't! after what I've been through --- after what I've become! Ohh! I'm so ashamed!

He: (Shaking her gently & trying to force her to look at him:) Gwen, darling ... it's all in the past. And it CAN be forgotten! believe me! Please ... think of us. I LOVE you. You know I love you!

She: (With a shudder; forcefully:) But it will ALWAYS HAUNT you, John. It will! Don't you see?! A woman can't hide after she's exposed herself before the world as I have --- (Anguish:) OOH! OH, JOHN! (sob) OH, JOHN! NO-oooo. (Tries to get free)

PUFFS  
of  
SMOKE

He: (Trying to gather her closer in embrace:) It may be, but I don't think so. But, anyway, it would be MY MEDICINE to take, and I've always been able to take my medicine. I DROVE you to it, Gwen, darling. It was all my fault. I know that now. You never would've become a showgirl if I hadn't been a jealous fool and gone off to Europe to lead another archeological expedition... leaving you with that crooked embezzler! I should've known he was a crook the moment I laid eyes on him --- with that stupid silly grin!

She: (Forcefully:) But it's your WORK! And I have no right --- to

He: MY WORK --- TO BLAZES! You're the best...

(Action: Phone rings from inner shelf of endtable near Mrs. B. She looks sharply over to Mr. B., diverting her attention only a moment from TV. He gets up to answer.)

... cutout work I ever



had! (Continues trying to gather her in embrace) And don't you fret about this showgirl business. We both know you well enough to know you...

(Mr.B: Hello ---? Oh, --uh-- RED, long no see --- (Mrs.B. turns, pointing questioningly to herself: Me? Mr.B. shakes his head and she shows relief momentarily, then reverts to TV & then sharply back at Mr.B., suspiciously, but gives herself over to TV.)

... wouldn't do anything a fundamentalist country preacher could preach about...

(Mr.B: Yeah, uh -- Red, I'm sorry about that ---

... more than five minutes. And I know they have another name for showgirls that show. But you have EVERY right! Don't you see? ---

(Mr.B: I know it's important. But you know my situation here.

--- Oh, Gwen, Gwen! --- (Succeeds now in drawing her tighter in embrace. She, as if exhausted, leans her forehead against him. He comes up neatly with handkerchief. She sniffs and dabs.)

She: Oh, John ... If I only thought ... if I could really believe ...! (Short burst of sobbing followed by sniffles as he pats her and ducks his head around trying to confront her eyes)... Ohhh --- Ohhh --- Johnnn-nnn ...! (Her hands move to his shoulders, cheek against his chest. He hugs her thoroughly, endearingly, twisting minutely in his exuberance, as both face camera. She looks anguished and disbelieving yet but brightening momentarily.)

(Mr.B: He is, eh? Yeah, well I'll try to catch it.... Yeah, OK---

He: Oh, Gwen, Gwen ... you've done nothing my old Granny didn't do back in the days of the pioneers. Why, when the crops failed, Old Granny'd go into town and get herself hired onto the chorus line of the biggest saloon west of Kansas City, without blinking an eyelash.

She: (Looks up questioningly, then snickers; playfully strikes his chest as if indignant that she's made to laugh at this: John, don't --- (make me hgh).)

(Mr.B: Awright, OK - uh - RED. I'll try to get to the next one ---

He: No fooling. And she was a looker, you can bet your boots -- like you, as a matter of fact. And that ain't all. Why she could break a man's nose...

(Mr.B: Yes, Sir - uh - yeah, sure, RED. OK, gotcha. And I'm sorry about tonight. (Mrs.E. glances curiously around again but with only an instant's sustained inquiry.)

... with the heel of her shoe quicker'n Bill Cody could shave a jackrabbit's tail.

(Action: She looks at him, pouting with stifled humor. She titters; he lets a little smile but continues telling it as straightabout truth with its own comic relief.)

(Mr.B: Gotcha. All right --- Peace!) (Hanging up, he turns back to his seat. Mrs.B. looks away from TV another instant as he moves off. Her knitting has been at a standstill for about last ten minutes.)

He: Of course, she didn't have much practice at that cause Old Granpaw, why he'd be sittin back behind the gambling tables with a big shotgun slung on his arm; you know, hired on as guard -- uh -- guarding the house, that is.

Action: (She smiles, looking away. They face camera again, her cheek against his shoulder. She blinks away her tears.)

He: Oh, Gwen, Gwen --- I need you. Honey, if I had to carry around two shotguns slung on my arms I'd be as willing as a bear after honey, keeping the bees away from you.

She: (Huskiy, dreamily:) Oh, John --- do you REALLY mean it?

He: Mean it? Honey, I'm preaching it! And you know: I've still managed to hang onto the best part of Granpaw's old homestead in Oklahoma. And with my knowledge and your motherwit for growing things, why, I can just see you now --- (Stretches one hand in gestures) --- in calico dress, straw hat and apron, a basket slung from one shoulder ---

(Music rises; she intently follows his wordpictures; scene fades into double exposure, showing them in embrace as he continues, and she as new farming person in calico dress walking toward camera between furrows, looking hardworked honest, smiling healthily on a new bright day.)

--- I'll be just coming in from town with our new tractor we got from the proceeds of my latest book -- which I'll have plenty of time to write over the winters, while you putter about the house & barn & chicken coop, & knit in the glow of a real old fashioned fireplace...

... there'll be a little perspiration on your brow but a smile on your lips to make oranges grow in an oil field...

(Calico girl becoming increasingly radiant, as night embracing couple fade more & more.)

... And with spring planting ahead and a lot of snuggled warm winter memories in every moment, I'll meet you more than halfway on-the-run. Why, every minute we're together will be like our finding our own Rosetta Stone for love!

(Camera lifts off calico girl for perspective shot of both running to be gathered up.)

She: (From the barely perceptible night scene:) Oh, Johnnn-nnn---

Johnnn-nn, I DO love you --- yes, yes ...

He: Gwen, darling --- precious ...

(Action: The two running figures meet and embrace in a sweep & the thinly seen night figures fall further away and vanish in a sunblot as the camera zooms in to duplicate closeup of sunfield figures -- to & thru, lifting off into a clear day sky, fading into which and coming to good focus with the last strong bars of music are rows of corn, their stalk leaves fluttering in a breeze. Camera lifts off for perspective field shot, and other growing crops are seen with a farmhand here and there; double exposure again shows the farmer and calico girl embracing, her dress billowing around his legs, as the final words zoom in: THE END. Credits follow against crop background.

BLACK IN

SEARCH OF

BEAUTY

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Fast TV; Scene I: (Setting: A large city in a Midwestern border state. Time: Current; late autumn. Scene the same: Scattering of pictures on L/R walls; front doorway, left, is draped by a series of strung opaque objects like chimes; small drapes cover front window, extreme rear right, to right of which is front door. As scene opens, Mr.B. is seated in forward occ. chair, wearing T-shirt, pants & slippers, Mrs.E. wears slippers & housecoat-like frock, puts knitting aside getting up after start of TV credits.

Mrs.B::: That was nice (Moving toward TV).

Mr.B:--- Humph.

Mrs.B::: Lets turn it off for a while -- til Mixie Maxie comes on (Reaching it and clicking the knob).

Mr.B:--- (Sitting forward:) I wanna watch heavyweight wrestling.

Action: (Facing him, she exasperates, hands moving unsmartly to hips; is about to turn it back on:)

(He relaxes back) Awright, it don't come on tonight anyway.

(She makes weary gesture of inter-personal trials returning to sofa, turns on pole lamp before sitting down.)

Maybe I'll see a good late show for a change -- since I have to watch that idiot box. Where's the program guide (Looking around.)

Mrs.B::: Don't bother, there's a special Integration show I wanna see. Mixie Maxie's having it.

Mr.B:--- (Scornfully:) Mixie Maxie? Integration show?

Mrs.B::: (Has resumed knitting; looks up occasionally) Yes, IN-TEG-GRATION show: something with some sense, and not Africanization of the masses like you've been talking about every blues day --- that has REAL bearing on our lives, Mr. Dumbo.

Mr.B:--- (Rises slightly forward) Maybe it bears on your life. I may not want mine bared like that (falls back, slight smile).

Mrs.B::: Stupid --- I said bee-air-ing; that means---

Mr.B:--- I got my own ideas about (Always mockingly:) Integration. When Integration comes, not that I give a damn ---

Mrs.B::: Oh, shut up! You be the first one cruising over around Biltmore to pick up some flashy meat, trying to prove something.

Mr.B:--- (Soberly restrained:) Not me. Maybe your peaches friend, Alice's husband, Jake. Your mirror-image, that is.

Mrs.B::: (Ominously:) You're not funny worth a damn, Almond.

Mr.B:--- Well, neither are you. (Annoyed:) Cruising over ---? Who---?

Mrs.B:+++ Almond Black, that's who. And, by the way, I haven't seen any thing of today's earnings yet. (:Notes of some vengeful spite. And as for Jake, he got what he wants. He's GOT what he wants. (Fixes him with a brief stare as he tries to digest that lump.)

Mr.B:--- (Slightly inverted voice:) You're a fine-shaped little woman, Hershe. And from any number of choices, you're what I wanted. If I'd wanted Alice, or any other woman in this town, I got pole enough to hang em up -- and other things besides. (More forcefully:) And I done told you, brainwashed black bitch, a-bout trying to cut me up like that!

Mrs.B:+++ You talking about the you four or five years ago, black bastard. And what is it you do to me?

Mr.B:--- It's a damn sight more meaningful than the crap you talk. If you'd just listen, for a change. Nawh. But you wanna bring up some nonsense. What is it you wanna know, Miss Sly-Infomation-Seeker... (Almost teasing, to change mood)... the address of every woman who pays a fare? Well, I haven't lit any fires and ain't responsible for you stewing in your own gut soup.

Mrs.B:++ (Frowning) I didn't ask you to tell me no such thing, man. And I don't wanna hear nothing less you just hafta get it off your cheating chest.

Mr.B:--- Ain't nothin on my chest but mean black strength. Just don't be signifying. You could count on one hand the women who put on hands-off to Almond Black. Whatever I wanted, I got it. Ummuh man! and women know it (Breaks into self-conscious smile). And that INCLUDES your alter-ego friend, Alice, and her kind. I could have that if I wanted it. AND YOU KNOW IT!!

Mrs.B: (Looks fierce for an instant, then subdued in guarded mood, continues knitting for a moment, then voice comes out inverted:) Yeah, I know it (Glances up to note effect; tone venting some of rage:) But you don't want it, do you? (Pause and stare:) DO YOU?

Mr.B:--- (Averts his eyes:) Nawh.

Mrs.B:++ (Letting it off:) I got as much as ANY man can handle -- as much as he needs, for his own good. You're a fool if you do go sneaking around. Luckily, I don't believe it's just your attitude upsets me --- and those boasting words, bastard. I DO think, in fact I'm pretty certain, you use those words like to whip me, about like I'm some little kid. (Looks up momentarily, meeting his diverting glance, and continues with ominous sobriety:) Well, it's go'ta stop. I'm not gonna continue letting you brow-beat me whenever you feel like it, either ....

Mr.B:--- I don't brow-beat you, woman; you're crazy.

Mrs.B:--- (Forcefully:) Well, it SEEMS like that to ME! NOW! And it had better stop! Otherwise, you can make up your mind, we're

gonna be fighting round here like cats and dogs -- til ONE or BOTH of us decide it ain't worth it. (Reflects) In fact, it's what I should've made up my mind to a long time ago. I been letting it go, but I shouldn't have to live like this; don't make a damn bit of sense.

Mr.B:--- (After glaring a moment; indignantly fuming but under restraint of objectivity:) Do you know who you're living with, woman? (Accompanied by some forceful gestures:) You don't know ME. You don't KNOW me! And the reason you don't know me is you got an integration sabbag for me -- that's suppose to wrap me up head to toe and pretty nearly dare me to stretch! That's all it is, and that's just about all that's the matter in this house. I'm just a brownskinned buncha white potatoes in your croaker sack! And if it ---

Mrs.B:++ (Titters; has allowed herself a cool-off; teasingly:) Sweet potatoes, baby.

Mr.B:--- Very funny. And if it ---

Mrs.B:++ Well, you certainly got EYES all over you for getting into dirt.

Mr.B:--- (Almost out of the chair with his insistence) And if it --- Clever, very clever --- And if (slows himself)--- if ---

Mrs.B:++ Broken record (titters). Yeah? (Laughs) Go ahead. If ---

Mr.B:--- (Deflates, tosses about exasperatedly, puffing; gestures as if to start again but drops it and falls back in the chair.) You see, you see; that's what I mean ---

Action: (He throws his legs over inside arm of chair, turning to lean over other arm, head far over; bangs himself on forehead with palm of hand; she, watching furtively, smiles and chuckles quietly.)

Mr.B:--- Ughh!h!! (Pause) I shouldn't let myself get shook up like that. It's just that arguing with a woman is about the damndest self-torture a man can let himself in for. And you talk about being BROW-beaten!

Mrs.B:++ (With tease:) You're just not living right, Almond.

(Self-conscious silence; she continues to knit, glancing up intermittently, apparently appeased. He shifts around in chair shortly, and seems to give some consideration to the TV, chuckles after a moment:)

Mr.B:--- (Soberly:) Well, all I can say is that's a whole lotta woman for a puny ruins-digging half-professor.

Mrs.B:++ He wasn't puny. He was tall, slim, and handsome.

Mr.B:--- He was puny. That chick was fine, though (Chuckles).

Mrs.B::: You could take some lessons from him on how to relax and speak decent English -- not that you don't talk SENSE! Sometimes.

Mr.B:--- Look, I've told you, I talk like I wanna. Real people, MEN, don't dot their is like a buncha fairies. They talk different ways different times. I'd hate to go around sounding like you all the time -- every time you get on the phone, especially with your Alice-in-Wonderland friends.

Mrs.B::: (Swoons wearily) Alice! Alice! Seems as though I'm just gonna have to kill a husband or lose a friend. (Stops knitting and glares over:) You're just an Alice heat! A stubborn nut. I wish --- (Sighs; resumes knitting). At least she'd be out from under this roof except when we're actually entertaining. (Looks up again:) I'm tired of you picking on me about Alice; I've told you before. You either gonna get wet or stay outta the pool and off the fence.

Action: (He pinches his smile away and resumes his sideways position in the chair, bouncing on the arm severely and appearing restless. Both are thoughtful, take deep audible breaths, glance at each other and at TV.)

Mr.B:--- (Leading off with a chuckle:) I can just see me now, if I was to give in to it, about 1 A.M.: "Oh-o, say can you see-ee..." (Chuckles, rising with a grunt, paces a few steps pinching the bridge of his nose) As a matter of fact, I feel like I'm going blind already.

Action: (Mrs.B. looks up frowning, sighs; he stretches like a kink is in his back, then walks back to chair, sprawling and stretching again.)

Mrs.B::: I've been telling you to get your eyes examined. You're so hardheaded. All that taxi-ing you do, with all that glare, and all --- Better still, like I've been telling you - mama's been telling you - you oughta be looking for another kind of work -- something safer, with a guaranteed future.

Mr.B:--- Yeah, and I've been telling you I don't need no glasses. And I don't wanna be stuck up on some job with some fink breathing over my shoulder -- some guy with some woman's budget soup in his belly. And there ain't nothing wrong with my eyes. And AIN'T nobody in my family ever had to wear NO glasses. (Pause) It's just having to watch this mush-mush stuff on TV that gets me eye-sore. (Pause) Besides, I wear shades til the sun goes down, anyway. And I think having a string of cabs eventually IS a future --- in that respect.

Mrs.B::: Well, I don't --- especially with the babies, and all --- having to save for their education, and like.

Mr.B:--- Who gets any damn where pinching and saving pennies? You IN-VEST your money. You tell me who! Nothing gonna guarantee those boys a future except their daddy extends himself a bit.

The trouble with too many black folks is they wanna play it ---

Mrs.B::: NICE, DECENT middleclass people do, that's who -- people with some pride and responsibility about them.

Mr.B:--- Yeah, NICE, so-called, middleclass ---! And the trouble with those BLACK people like that, playing it mealy-mouthed safe, is there AIN'T no safety on deposit when they look around and find a lot of racism flying about. (Pause) And I don't see how come everything NICE gotta be phoney and fictitious --- like the world was divided into hell and paradise, nsteadda being hell all over--- (slightly teasing:) depending on how many airs women especially put on, especially when telling men who don't know any better how to live. I just hope I can change your ENTIRE image before the boys get old enough to see and know you as Aunt Meggar.

Mrs.B::: (Looks up sharply; mildly bitter:) You know, you're just a man that nothing much pleases except a pie in the face, with no sense outside your underwear. If you had any sense, you'd see how you been getting sillier everyday -- like a goat butting a dam; You th one been getting soft in the head. YOU FOOL WITH ME, I'LL GO RIGHT DOWN TOMORROW AND GET ANOTHER PERMANENT. Now Call yourself 'trying to convert me! You selling too hard for one thing, like you don't believe yourself what you're talking about. So it gets to be a con game; psych the person. And it's all built up on that domination drive: The He-man, cock-of-the-walk, king-it bit. All the time, it's --- I really think you get SOME KINDA awful big kick outta POINTING UP about EVVV-VER-RY thing possible. You're just a deliberately uncouth stubborn man-asserting numbskull!

Mr.B:--- There you go taking EVVV-VER-RY opportunity to abuse me again. Accuse me of (Mockingly:) EVVV-VER-RY thing on a pin point-- from WAY-AY-AY out in left field, one of those none-sense-sacred-tours, just to get your behind all up in my face ---

Mrs.B::: (Mockingly:) "NONE-SENSE-SACRED-TOURS"---!! the word is ---

Mr.B:--- (Sitting up abruptly to make his point, gesturing at the TV:) So, I suppose you get a charge like that, huh? watching those speck relatives images of yours imitation loving? - Ha! - with all that sididdy stuff! lotta airs and hoity-toity yesterday silly business -- Ha!

Mrs.B::: Oh, shut up. Least it's civilized. Not killing every minute-- like little boys in the street: Bang! you dead! Somebody got a machnegun! somebody poppin something else at somebody else! Cannons going off! Bombing! and massacree-ing people! How can anything be sillier'n that? And what is that if it isn't imitation wildman life? Killing, killing, killing ---

Mr.B:--- (Fanning her to scorn:) Ah --- woman ---

Mrs.B::: You men complaining all the time, worried about having to go to war again, yet and still always willing to bring war into the

livingroom. Every day: SHOOT-em-ups! OVER-killing battles! WESTERNS! And MONSTER pictures!

Mr.B:--- (Indignant) Don't tell that lie. You never see me watching no draggy-foot monster pictures. Anyway (Becoming more teasingly playful), you just don't understand, little baby. Like, some things you just can't expect a woman to understand. You know how it is. You got smaller brains than us menfolk.

Mrs.B::: (Titters good-naturedly) Yes, daddy, deee-arr. You white folks say the same thing about us black folks --- (Falters a bit hearing herself and looks up sharply to note his reaction; throws together another idea quickly:) I see now why it's so hard to sell you on Integration. But I'm gonna do it. What-chu bet?

Mr.B:--- (Playing the oversight game, scornful emphasis:) I'm gonna tell you about that INtegration bit pretty soon. And, if and when it comes, I got me an idea. Oughtta be a laugh in it. But, about ---

Mrs.B::: (Teasing baby tone:) Oh, so you ARE coming OVER around to mama's thing, honeybunch?--- you preaaaa-cious lil teaser, you!

Mr.B:--- (Squirming a little) Ha-ha. Very funny. Nevermind, I'll tell you SOMetime --- maybe. But, about you women's brains, you know it's the truth. (Bluff snowjob:) That's how come they don't let women be President. Their brains couldn't hold all that remembrance about who suppose to compromise about what politticking issue -- and all.

(Action: Mrs.B. chuckles. He peers over, gauging the effect of his continued nonsense, but she seems resolved that since he's committed himself to tom foolery she's going to do no more than laugh and let him run on. This forces his persistence and he gets ludicrousness drunk knowing it.)

How come then a woman ain't been made President? They got equal rights, and all, and they got all the money, and all the beauty? And got men SLAVING for them, and mostly they got all the say-so ---? Fact is ---

Mrs.B::: (Chuckles curtly) You idiot. You're a riot --- you really are. Hush up before I split my sides laughing at you.

Mr.B:--- Ahhhh --- you just can't face it. You laughing --- anybody can laugh. But facts're facts. With women having everything, only reason they're not running things altogether is cause men're smarter. (With a chuckle in his voice:) Now, just think a minute. How can anybody spend all their time shopping for hats and going on have any real sense (Semi-fake laugh)? Real SENSE, I mean. Just think: HATS! --- and false HAIR, and EYELashes, and EYEBrows! fake LIPS, and such ---

Mrs.B::: Hush, man.

Mr.B:--- --- And TEATS! I never did understand why phoney behinds went outta style, like in the Gay Nineties. I really don't. (Laughs) Which proves my point. How else could anybody convince women substantial behinds're not important? and more feeling-transmittin than flatback? You see? (Guarded tone:) Trouble is, you women get married and don't wanna do but sit feeding your face til it gets double-water-mellow lonely --- cause no ONE MAN can deal with all that mysterious closed world, even if it's not rocket resistant.

Mrs.B::: (Big unwilling smile, turning away) Well, little as I am, you couldn't be talking about me. And, goodness knows, I don't sit that much around here. And I DON'T have the time or MEANS for all that shopping you talking about! Sure wish I had.

Mr.B:--- There, you see? you see? And you COULD lose a couple hip pounds.

Mrs.B::: (Breaking her knitting stride and kicking reflexively:) Hush, Allie B. Tell me about this idea you got for when Integration comes.

Mr.B:--- (Settles back then slouches down in chair) Nawh, don't feel like talking about that tonight. Maybe tomorrow. In fact, I done talked enough (Laughs at himself).

Mrs.B::: Go on. There's no harm talking, long as you talk sense, man. C'mon, tell me.

Mr.B:--- Nawh, I told you, don't feel like talking about that bunk now.

Mrs.B::: (Frowning, Resignedly:) Ummm ---. Why can't we talk about what I want to hear about sometime? Your conversation always digs up trouble.

Mr.B:--- Well, we would have something more constructive to talk about if you had ever thought well enough to come to some of our Afro Corps meetings and lectures and identy training sessions.

Mrs.B::: "Identity training"! How silly can you get? (Pause) AND JUST YOU REMEMBER, I'M THE ONE's gonna do the converting -- converting you! (Pause) I sure didn't, and still wouldn't --- No reason on earth I should've fallen in with those radicals and end up getting my head mashed. A lot of good it did you, I see.

Mr.B:--- No, you don't see. It did me good you HAVEN'T SEEN yet. (Serious inflection:) I've changed considerably. Been trying to give you the benefit.

Mrs.B::: Well, it OUGHTTA be the show you're pressing me to see, but you showing mighty little. You may know a few more words. SHOW me, why don'tcha? Give me the gist by the numbers, like.

Mr.B:--- You know what they say about the MARE gets led to water---?!

Mrs.B::: It's a horse, way I heard it.

Mr.B:--- The horse he black and got horse sense, he already been; come the mare's turn, she the pet of the farm but she out in the field this day with the rest, she say, I'm a WHITE MARE; man say, But this the only stream around. The mare she looks up, see some lil white boys on the bank yonder, say, Nawh taint; goes galloping over, gets there those streams done dried up; she say, Hunph, guess I better take a drink upstream here where nobody can see me, then go on back and act like I'd rather go athirst. (Chuckles).

Mrs.B::: (Titters almost deprecatingly) Well, I got one for you. You know what the rabbit said to the opossum?

Mr.B:--- Probably, but go ahead.

Mr.B::: Rabbit comes by tree, opossum say, Say, wait a minute till I come down. I won't do you no harm. Rabbit say, That may be but I better go along. Possum say, Hey, how come your tail all white and hairy? Looks like paint to me; let me feel it. I won't do it no harm. Rabbit surprised, say, I just got a HAREY WHITE TAIL. How come your chest all white and hairy? that paint? But rabbit don't wait; he takes off, zip --- zip. Possum yells, Hey, you mule-eared, chicken-livered, hare-pin-tailed jackass, come back, I'm not a shrub-eater; I won't do it no harm! Rabbit call back, say, Maybe not, but you look like a rat after hairy white tail to me! (Teasing laughter)

Mr.B:--- Hunph. (Looks pained)

Mrs.B::: Wanna hear the other version?

Mr.B:--- Humph. Not really. But might as well. Yeah ---?

Mr.B::: Same beginning up to: Rabbit say, That's my tallman, brings good luck. Possum say, Hot dog! something told me it was my day to luck up on lucky white tail. Tell you where some carrots are if you let me get some; wait there, be right down. Rabbit say, First tell me how to go. Possum say, Straight down the narrow till you come out. And possum to win her confidence say, But watch out for BOB WIRE; he'll ravish your tail. Rabbit, she didn't get it about BOB WIRE; so she sits there on her haunches thinking about big root carrots. Possum comes over, leaps on her, say, Ahhh-- I LOVE rabbit! I'm gonna catchu up! Rabbit leaps up and possum misses, getting only a handful of tail. And rabbit gone and happy; zip --- zip, off to the carrot garden, say, Hotdog! that tail was always giving me away nsteadad me IT! And possum mad, yells, You over-grown assless grasshopper, it's gonna be a long hot summer for you! (Chuckles)

Action: (Mr.B. shows mild appreciation of this one, thrashes around restlessly in chair some moments. Mrs. B. indulges in reminiscent breathy humor for a moment longer, looking up to Euge his, and appears pleased overall. He shortly seems

overtaken by some agitation in thought; presently:)

Mr.B:--- Nawh, the point is, who wanna be watching a lot of mush-mush stuff? ofays in fairyland! About the only time I get to watch something else - less I stay up late - is when some INTeraction program pre --- pre-empts everything, or (Scornfully:) Mixie Maxie.

(Pause, looks to Mrs.B. to join, but she remains quietly knitting, glancing at him with a look more questioning than annoyed.)

(Continues:) What's a show if it don SHOW?

Mrs.B::: (Chuckles) You crazy, man. Shut up. What wouldyuh wanna see? Are you some peeping tom? You wanna SEE everything? --- real nasty common low and --- like that ---?

Mr.B:--- Whatechu mean? Nawh! The women can't move; they move like robots, like you'd expect one of those manikins downtown'd move with those poles up their ---(Blur). PEEFING TOM! Nawh! I'm a man! I mean --- Whatechu mean, "Peeping tom"? Hunch. I wanna see (Swings right arm like a punch) ACTION. Real ACTION! Not some peck stud making love to some peck women --- should at least be a BLACK stud. But real ACTION, true-to-life --- like war stories and --- war stories, and shoot-em-ups --- SPORTS, and ---

Mrs.B::: (Coming in after "shoot-em-ups:") What's so REAL about that? It's always the same. Always ---?!

Mr.B:--- Nawh taint.

Mrs.B::: No sense to it. And always the same old --- (Wordless) ---

Mr.B:--- Taint. Not always the same. Besides, long as you gotta watch, should be --- SOMETHING, entertaining, like ---. One of these days I'm likely to take that thing and throw it out in the backyard.

Mrs.B::: Don't do that, buy a COLOR tv. (Pause) Shucks. You know, you sure are honery tonight (Glancing up with look of fretfulness).

Mr.B:--- Shucks, nothing. I'm TELLING yuh. And --- and --- (Pointing to TV:) --- that's the enemy, you know that?! THAT!

Mrs.B::: (Sighs) Ahhh, Almond, you don't know what to do with yourself, except to go to the poolhall. You just a po mixed-up boy-child --- a mixed-up --- (Emphatic change:) AND JUST REMEMBER, I'm not putting up with a lot of nonsense because you frustrated over cues!

Mr.B:--- Now you sounding as old-fashioned as your mama. (Mockingly:) "Po lil mixed-up boy-child"! (Fans that to scorn).

Mrs.B::: (Annoyed) Yes, mixed-up! --- with a lot of lecher in it!

Mr.B:--- (Gets up, going to other occ. chair:) There you go abusing me again. (Turns on other pole lamp, picking up magazine from nearby rack before sitting:) You know I've reformed. That's the OLD me you talking about (:half joking tone:)-- before housekeeping conscience bleeps. Fact is, I AM frustrated. (Sober, on order of complaint:) You suppose to get some freshness about you with all this come-to-life Africanism in the times -- not just Africanism, but people-ism: doing their thing. I haven't even hit my stride yet, the playmate-of-Mrs.-Black me, I mean. Got a whole lot of feeling wanting to get loose --- because you're not HOW-now, the know-how-to-do dark touch delight --- Phoney airs! (Mockingly:) Middleclass! Integration, wigs, and that orientation! Be different if you were an OLD woman. I see little black stems everyday: FRESH! like they got their own weather control center, giving off report and forecast of sun and rain, and sweet as mountain dew --- showing a whole lotta new style! lotta personality: self-possession, BLACK possession, and woman-in-the-companionship - storm or calm - that gets the man stand-up ovation. Makes an old body awful itching curious.

Mrs.B:-- (Fuming restrainingly) That's just a dressed-up buzzard's nest of more of the same: Leching! And, besides, no real YOUNG woman would put up with you and your mess. It'd take a tigress, and nothing but a lame tigress would be bothered.

Mr.B:--- (Pointing:) See there!! You can't understand the writing on the wall in plain English. If you were Ben Ezra, you'd say the angel was spiting you.

Mrs.B:-- Funny-funny. But I'm still talking about Almond Black, the cabbie lecher, used to be pool shark, pimp, bouncer, number-runner, gyp-women's-apparel-and-trinket peddler, punk, and ---

Mr.B:--- Hey-hey! Watch that! (Sitting up abruptly).

(Action: She takes a big breath but looks equally aggressive, or ready to meet the challenge. Though seeing she isn't intimidated, she seems amused, but leans back without unmasking his fiercesomeness. Mrs.B. relaxes, also amused, tucking her fett comfortably beneath her.)

You'd better watch what you saying, woman. You saying some things ain't right. (Returning to magazine:) What you mean: "Used-to-be pool shark"?!

Mrs.B:-- (Self-assured tone:) That's what I said, USED-to-be. Otherwise, I'd at least be seeing some signs of as much tips as the tax people automatically charge against you.

Mr.B:--- (Glances up frowning) How do you know you're not? Ahhh ---! (Gestures scorn) Woman, you don't know nothing. You don't even know how to go around the corner good; still, you always claiming to know where the pussywillows're growing on the other side of the mountain.

Mrs.B:-- (Indignant) THAT'S what YOU think! what you'd like to think!

I DID finish high school, REMEMBER ? ---

Mr.B:-- (Interrupts) You finished high school: well, glory be! So? So did I. That's the only way they could get rid of me. But I got a higher degree in being TOGETHER, and MAKING it.

Mrs.B:-- And I had a DAMN good job til I was fool enough to let you IN regular. I could've been a lot of things --- a dancer, a singer, an actress even (:Slightly self-conscious: Pokes tongue at him:!) And pussywillows don't grow on no mountain. That shows how dumb you are.

Mr.B:--- (Frowning:) I was speaking meta-figure-physically.

Mrs.B:-- (Titters) "Meta-figure-physically---"?! Hunph.

Mr.B:--- Well, meta-phorically, then. (Showing self-amusement:) It's the PHYSICAL, ain't it, overall with most mountain widows?

Mrs.B:-- (Gives a mean look) That's where you mind is --- and where your diploma is; you're just a restless, skirt-chasing ---! (Pause; suspiciously:) And just what're you UP TO tonight? You call yourself raising a dare to me, Allie B.? about what I said about --- not going to mother's anymore, or something? Because if you are, BETTER GET IT PLUM outta your mind; cause I'm NOT leaving again. And I'll see YOU in HELL before you go walking outta HERE! --- to mess me up with petty little payments - me struggling with the babies while you chasing some hussies!! (Pause) You UP to SOMETHING, I can tell. Whatever it is, you just better watch your step. (Suddenly remembers:) By the way, who was that calling?

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles) You're getting neurotic as hell in your old age, you know, woman.

Mrs.B:-- Nevermind about that. Don't try to change the subject. (Re-emphasis:) YOU'RE coming over to MY side, baby. You're gonna melt right in my hand. Who was it called?

Mr.B:--- (Takes a recalcitrant moment to make up his mind whether to say ANYTHING) That was just Big Red --- about a pool tournament I was suppose to be in. (Switches from mean to teasing mean:) A big producer can't --- (Brings himself up short to take another tact:) In fact, you know, I don't hafta hide anything small as that, woman. If you really wanna know something, I got things to PRICK YOUR EARS.

Mrs.B:-- (Deliberately incredulously scornful:) Such as ---?

Mr.B:--- (Frowns, squirms in seat, not sure he has taken the right course but ---) You ever heard of a pool parley? I've got a twenty-buck parley going now into the third month. How about that? You know what that means, Smarty? That means that, according to the record, I AM STILL THE POOL SHARK. Now!

Mrs.B:-- (Wiggling) Well, glory be. When do I see the money? Or is it a foregone conclusion that you're gonna lose as soon as you

play Red - or some of them - the money'll change hands?

Mr.B:--- Ha. You haven't been around the pool hall in the first place to know what you're talking about: (Derrogatory:) Who I can't beat. All you know is what I tell you. (Pause) Anyway, I don't hafta play Red on this, not that I can't beat him -- just a side game now and then, if I wanna. I BEAT THE HOUSE. That's why I got the parley. Any chump comes to town, comes in, can put up professional money - match the pot, or match the original twenty - we start like that. I bout got enough for a payment on that next cab already. Another couple months oughtta do it.

Mrs.B:--- Or rack you up for the bust.

Mr.B:--- That AIN'T likely. Ain't likely some stranger gonna come around with that kinda luck and loot to match. (Slight reprimand:) Anyway, being a family man, I don't get to play all the chumps. Red took a cat out for six-hundred bucks couple weeks ago, wanted to cut into my pot -- noticing how my game was off. I couldna added on another good chunk, xcept I was all upset over you. (Leisurely:) He still not too happy cause I didn't play in. Couple others got larceny in their hearts, too -- not that it matters.

Mrs.B:--- (Big sigh) I just can't see it! All that money! (Looks at him, BIG ?????) Just don't seem REAL: Over a little pool game! Or right! (Pause, returns furiously to knitting) I'm not putting any stock in THAT until I SEE something.

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles quietly blocking off the sound; resigned concurrence:) Yeah ---

(Silence, both privately in thought. Mrs. B. shakes her head deprecatingly once or twice. Mr. B., thinking and watching Mrs. B. in preference to reading, is mischievously delighted.)

You might know, though, there're some hot mamas'ud LIKE to GET some STOCK OUT of it.

(He watches her intently. She shows only the slightest willingness to forsake some deeply personal vein of thought.)

(Pretends to note from magazine:) A big producer can't let his perishables go to waste ... just because the army claims to be up tight, when there're other markets, says here.

Mrs.B:--- (Looks up sharply from what seemed a welling fury anyhow, self-consciously scratches under shoulder; rapid fire:) You know, I think you're a liar--what was that? (Casts about, already shuffling off the sofa, sights the ashtray on the endstand; reaching and gripping it:) IN --- OTHER --- WORDS (! ZINGO!) ---

(Action: He sees the arm coming around and half falls half throws himself over the outside arm of the occasional chair, exclaiming: Hey! Augh ---!

--- FACE-SMEAR, and ALL! eh, Big Daddy?! (And she is up with

fight, squeezes in close to sofa as if to move it, glancing down and bending slightly but watching him) Try THAT on, Mr. Big. I hope you broke your neck! And I got something else here for you. (Moves sofa, reaching behind it)

Mr.B:--- (Scrambling up rolling magazine after a surprised pause on his rear:) Hey, now, I don't GO for that! (Takes a couple steps in her direction:) You watch yourself, woman! ---

(Action: He shows no amusement, points with rolled magazine, equivocal about flying over on her. She remains bent over, her reach halted, watching him, ready to leap up. His curiosity girded, he takes a couple more curious and threatening steps:)

Bitch! You blowing your marbles (Shaking rolled magazine).

Mrs.B:--- (Coming up with short club:) Don'tchu come over here --- BASTARD (A little shakily:) You better STAY over there! (Also grabs knitting needle, holds it short; daring bravery:) COME ON! I DARE YOU!

Mr.B:--- (A few feet away; surprised shock turning to humor:) Oh, so you hid away a weapon, eh?! You know Big Daddy don't go for that scarem bit, mama.

Mrs.B:--- Why! you a non-violent Negro all of a sudden?

(Action: He moves up with a pointing gesture as if choked by what he's driven to say, and she re-sets to strike - Pause - but he recourses to studied contemplation, as if a silent commentary on her ludicrous posture.)

"SCAREM BIT" (Mockingly)! That's because I ain't laid it on BIG DADDY proper! And he been riding high and mighty roughshod over me! (Reading his pose:) Don't take no pity on me now.

Mr.B:--- (Lightly amused:) You crazy, woman. You know I got expertmanship in street-fighting, boxing --- aside from making two or three of you, and being mean and honery.

Mrs.B:--- (Insistent:) Don't take no pity on me! You LIAR! Whore-chaser! USED-to-be POOL shark, fink ---!

(Action: He faints a rush, looking fierce, and she does a nervous dance. He lets out a gushy-breathed chuckle.)

Ha! Ha! I don't see you coming over here, Bad Guy. (On order of reprimand, relenting from braced readiness:) You either be civil and respectful, or you BOUND to run on into this, Stupid. And see what happens.

(He is measuring the situation. She takes on slight mood of humor now, more relaxed.)

Mr.B:--- You bucking for a stomping, you know that, don'tcha?!



(Action: Here, sound of babies waking up beginning to cry assail them, and both look toward doorway rear left as she says:)

Mrs.B::: Come ON! This is part of your therapy.

(He twists up his amusement, pointing to the rear doorway. She shows some indignation about this directioning.)

Mr.B:--- You were just showing off, anyway -- to your alter-ego, or something. You know I never raise a hand to you (Fanning his leg with magazine).

Mrs.B::: (Relenting, big frown at him, edging along sofa retaining weapons:) Says you. (Goes freely off) You've done worse! You skirt-chaser! (Over her shoulder:) BASTARD! YOU made them WAKE UP! (To little ones with sarcasm directed back:) MOMMIE'S coming, honies --- po lil fellas ---

(Mr.B. looks after her a moment, standing, turning restively, magazine-whipping his leg; turns back to last seat, plops down, then reflecting about ashtray, hops up, retrieves tray and sets it on nearby endtable. Sound: "Mama's lil man --- precious pretty" et. al. and humming, come from inner rear bedroom. He crosses to sofa, sits on far end then scoots to middle; idea of close quarters to preclude throwing. Resumes reading; short lived, looks up, glancing toward dimly lighted doorway, then at doorway to his left, sits considering, rubs his chin; shortly, calls in:)

Mr.B:--- Need any help?

Mrs.B::: Where would I get it? (Pause) Yeah, come here and rock Edwin while I change Edward.

Mr.B:--- (Tucks magazine under one arm getting up, moving unenthusiastically; half to himself:) Oughtta be a law against women and babies. (A little louder:) Some day I'm gonna be too big an enterprise to have to change diapers and such.

Mrs.B::: (From within:) What's that? Why don't you have yourself SURGICATED, then? since I can't EDUCATE the dunce ---!

Mr.B:--- (Passing through doorway:) Now, nobody said anything like THAT.

Action: (All quiet except baby-coddling sounds of Mrs. B. for a moment, then her voice: "Ow-ugh!" (from slar on behind), and (Fighting:) "KEEP! YOUR! --- HANDS! --- TO! --- YOUR-SELF! --- YOU! ---" And he comes running out:)

Mrs.B::: (From within:) Just wait til I finish this! If I don't make you --- sorry ---!

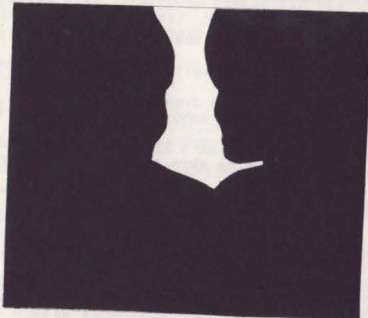
(He goes back in; shortly, from goosing:)

Eeeerk! (Titters curtly) Almond Black! --- (Wordless) You just wait til I finish this! Here! come back here and rock the baby,

STUPID.

(He re-enters room from doorway pause in flight. Shortly, humming begins, singing: "Da-de-da-da---" (She is walking about). Fade out as she takes up hum-song.)

End, Act I Scene I



Act I Scene II

Scene: Small kitchen of the Blacks' cottage. Time: Some minutes later. Near center is table with sugar bowl on top, jar and couple flowers. Four chairs in place; indexed: stove, refrigerator, washing machine sink, some recently washed clothes drying on inside line across portion of kitchen, recently washed dishes in drainer near sink, including some formula material. As scene opens, Mr. B. enters with magazine under arm, places it at near head of table, sets down cup in saucer near it, removes steaming kettle from stove, fetching teabag, pours water, and seats himself; sweetens tea, sits stirring and looking at magazine, sips with relish.

Mrs.B::: (From off-scene:) Allie --- pour me some tea, will you?

Mr.B:--- (Looks half around, exaggerates annoyance; gets up to fill request) Want sugar or arsenic?

Mrs.B::: Arsenic, Bastard. I just hope you can trade the hair on your chest for mammy glands.

Mr.B:--- (Winces) You know I was just joshing, Precious. Maybe I oughtta let you sweeten it from your GALL bladder.

(Silence. He re-seats himself. Shortly, Mrs. B. comes thru doorway

carrying two small baby bottles and looking a little haggard, looks cuttingly at him and, passing to sink, pops him on the head with one of the bottles.)

(Grunts, feeling head:) Just what I needed, right?

Action: (He is tempted by her bending at sink but is caught in gesture as she turns quickly; he feigns idle play with sugar bowl.)

Mrs.B: (Snatching up kettle on stove:) Go ahead. I dare you.

Mr.B: (Looking up, mock surprise:) What? What'smatta with you?

Mrs.B: (Makes pitiful innocence frown) Oh, you were just reaching for the sugar dish, won'tcha? Go ahead, have some.

Mr.B: (Disgusted click) I wasn't REACHING for anything. I was just --- Jes --- (Gesturing abra-cadabra over sugar bowl).

Mrs.B: Well --- (Bops him on head with bottle in other hand) --- that's JES for good measure.

Mr.B: (Feels head, making a little whine, but failure to block blow annoys him; getting up:) Ohhh --- quick like a bunny, ain'tcha?

Mrs.B: (Stepping back with kettle in threatening position:) Just like Muhammed Ali with a chump, champ. C'mon. You big and bad. (Casting around for another weapon as well)

Mr.B: (Springs into action suddenly, grabbing chair at other end) Oh, yeah ---? Well, lets see---

Mrs.B: (Fleeing as he moves a couple steps toward her; screams:) Aaieee! don'tcha dare! (Both arms out covering and guarding in spite of heavy kettle) I give up! I give up!

Mr.B: (Lowers chair, stepping closer as she backs to wall; chuckles:) Yeah! How come you were talking so big just THEN? (Feints with left hand)

Mrs.B: Aieee-eeEEE! (:Approaching hysteria:) I give UHHH--UP!

Mr.B: (Chuckling, goes back to table, glancing over shoulder:) Naturally you do, you sneak.

Mrs.B: (Moving back toward sink:) Ho-ho, big brave warrior --- (Playfully plaintive:)-- picking on a lil helpless person. (Pause; re-sets kettle on stove, resuming bottle business:) That's all right, I'll have you eating chocolate humble pie before the night's over, you watch.

(Action: His face twists into a frown; shifts magazine, stirs his tea. She makes face at him which he doesn't catch. She sits to tea, he looking around measuring her for trickery. She displays big grin of appeasement then makes another face when he reverts to magazine. He looks back sharply: Same business repeating. In course of this, she over-

sweetens tea. Shortly:)

What'smatter, man, you got a crook in your neck? (Displays big smile:) Or do you just LO-OVE to see me smile?

(Action: He turns away, then looks back faking bunny-quick smile)

Ahhg ---! (Jumping back in chair; then embarrassed rage:) YOU --- (Makes fist, rising to strike him but settles back in seat pouting under his gaze) YOU--ou! OOOoo-uh, am I gonna get even with YOU one of these days! BULLY!

Mr.B: (Showing self-satisfied smile:) Shut up before you wake the twins, woman.

Mrs.B: I'M the one looks after them. (Stares at him aggressively but he's not looking; eventually tastes tea:) Spheeeew! Why didn'tcha tell me you'd sweetened the tea, IDIOT?

(He looks up sharply, gesturing wordlessly in protest.)

Sit there on your behind --(Gets up to pour it out)-- like a moron, don't say a THING. (Re-sets cup and gets teabag)

Mr.B: (Turning from magazine sharply to her:) You know, every time you open your mouth you're inching away at me, inching away, determined to inch me down to a nub. Up and about, no-thing makes you happier than to out down the cherry tree cutter. Only, you'd be the last one to admit it. And you talk about me being over-assertive! (Glares, then reverts sharply to magazine)

Mrs.B: (Catches her breath, puffing up, and makes a face at him when he turns away) Well, you could at least have TOLD me, DUNCE. (More softly, peevisly indignant:) And I don't do anything not in self defense. All that sugar wasted ---

(Action: He leans back in chair, head far over, looking at ceiling in outraged silence. She regards him deprecatingly while making fresh tea, sweetens it standing up, and, preoccupied by her own annoyance, almost over-sweetens it again; catching herself, visibly relieved that he isn't watching; gets milk from refrig, re-seats herself, stirs, sips; presently gets curious about magazine:)

(Reaching and shifting magazine around to see:) What's that you're so INTERESTED in? (Glances over page, exchanges look with him, and returns it partially to his reading position)

Mr.B: So, you saw, didn'tcha?

Mrs.B: I saw. Aot like you studying law. (Switch to serious nag:) You oughta be studying how to get a decent job with some future in it. (Pause; scorns his weary reaction to this) So, how come you can read about (Mockingly:) 'Integration in Football' but you can't discuss anything about (Imitating:) INTeg-

ration with me? -- sensibly for two minutes?

Mr.B:--- (Softly:) Because you're stupid. Anyway, this is different.

Mrs.B:-- (Gives him deprecating look) I'M stupid. (Incredulous tone:) I --- me --- stupid ---! (Pause; points) YOU oughtta be IN a football. (Laughs)

Mr.B:--- (Soberly:) I've thought about it -- as a young man.

Mrs.B:-- They could use you for the practice dummy --- hanging by your Black Power line.

Mr.B:--- Funny, mama. And what would the Panama Canal do for an encore?

Mrs.B:-- (Fake cough) That'd be no really BIG worry. I never had an EMOTIONAL problem, baby.

(Action: He gives her a mean look. She wrinkles her nose at him, but watches his reaction closely guardedly. She changes to sweetness, caresses his near arm. He flinches, leaning away; smilingly:)

Oh, I was just kidding, of course, Sweetheart--ART.

(He recovers gradually. She pats and fondles his shoulder, smiling, but mischievously.)

I really believe you could be a good --- a good --- hummmm, lets see --- umm --- What do they call the --- you know? The quarterback walks up and there's this (Gesturing:) BI---IG behind!??? (Laughs)

Action: (He slouches and droops in chair, hauling the magazine off in one hand, looking ceilingward, glances at her, and looks away disgustedly; shortly, he perks:)

Mr.B:--- He's called the Center --- because he's the central fantasy of all the big-butt women watching. (Silent chuckles)

Mrs.B:-- (Demurring smile) Ha-ha. (Reaches to pat him on the head and gets her arm brushed aside) Oh, my! so touchy.

(Action: They have a little gazing play, she making happy tease faces, he enduring. Shortly, she strikes a contemptible pose, regarding him clinically:)

Say, in that game last weekend - remember? - was that thing kept sailing across the screen any relation to your head?

Mr.B:--- (Closes his eyes, inclining his head to his left, looking at her pretension of being in muffled stitches. Shortly:) When are you gonna give that wig back to the floor mop? (Laughs restrainedly) And make sure you wash the brainwash suds out first. (Leans away slightly, looking sidelong for reaction)

Mrs.B:-- (Makes face, sticks out tongue gathering and yanking at a fistful of her hair:) This is my NATURAL HAIR, smarty. There! See? You like it. You KNOW you like it. (Caresses his arm, rubbing in the tease)

Mr.B:--- (Flinching and moving his arm:) Yours maybe; NATURAL it AIN'T.

Mrs.B:-- (Affects aloofness) You're just jealous --- since konkaleen went outta style (Chuckles).

Mr.B:--- You ain't never seen me with no konk, woman.

Mrs.B:-- Hmmm. Maybe yes, maybe no. (Reflects) Come to think of it, the only kind I've seen you with were KONKS. (Laughs) From one-jukebox honkytonks (Laughing and teasing his arm again). Tell, the truth, now (Shaking him for attentiveness and smiling grandly:) You've never had a woman with everything I have, have you? The truth!

Mr.B:--- (After admitting a pause:) Including you, right? (Pause; ducking away as she rises up:) NO, I usually out-ran their broomsticks.

Mrs.B:-- (Standing and slapping at him repeatedly:) You worthless ninky! (Pause; fumes with hands on hips, plops down) I'll --- Humph! I could tell you something!

Mr.B:--- What about? --- your two-legged boyfriends?

Mrs.B:-- (Momentarily puzzled:) "Two-legged"? --- UGH! (Pause, frowns) That's what you think. I could've said yes, but mama didn't raise no fool. Men like you always think you got it all.

Mr.B:--- (Mischievous) Why did you say yes when you said yes?

Mrs.B:-- (Indignant pose, hands on hips) MA-MA --- DIDN'T --- RAISE --- NO --- FOOL, Fool.

Mr.B:--- Who's a fool?

Mrs.B:-- You MUST be a fool if you don't know why you carried on the way you did until ---! (Laughs; gives him an appeasing smile) What was it you said? (Reflecting) Some poetry you used to say.

(She seems alight in the eyes, smiles, a smile that trembles with remembrance of elation and teasing recollection. He seems to dread the recall but cocks an ear curiously.)

Something about --- Oooooo! what ---? Oh, yes ---

(And the elation opens like the flower in/of the panther:)

---A shadow on the sun into which my loneliness fits like the last piece of a long puzzle" and ---A sparkling wine of Eros beneath the skin of heavy evening shadow". (Chuckles throatily) MY! some

lover! (Chuckles again, acting girlish; playfully:) Such a shady life you led!

Mr.B:--- (Irresistably mischievous:) I had to go into the deep valley of the shadow to get you, didn't I?

Mrs.B::: (Swoons in grievous bathos and makes a fist, reaching to bop him on the head:) Ugh hh! when they were giving out brains---

(Action: He tries to smother his humor, looking at but obviously not concentrating on the magazine. She makes a face watching him and shakes her head.)

All right, genius, as I mentioned before: Where's the mazooola? (Tapping the table with the back of one extended hand:) And you've obviously been holding out if you've got what you say you've got going at the pool hall, so lets have a clean fork-over here. (Deliberate honoriness:) I bet on one Eight Ball in the center pocket two years ago, and that hotshot's still doubtful. I'm not taking any side bets.

(Action: He collapses into a slouch, looking off with grievance. She reaches other hand over to point in palm.)

Well ---?

(He reaches slowly into his pants pocket and brings out a wad of bills depositing it in her hand, then gets up slowly, while, with some visible satisfaction, she makes rough count. He moves toward inner door.)

Where you going? (Looking up)

Mr.B:--- (Over shoulder:) To bed. I'm tired. (Turning:) And don't forget to put a little money in the business maintenance fund. And JUST REMEMBER, when I get the second cab - the side bet - just remember you called it off. (Turns after a moment)

Mrs.B::: (Takes in a big breath, blinks furiously) OH! here ---! (Separating a couple bills and thrusting her hand out sacrificially with them, bringing the hand back to check their denomination again, then re-thrust.) And I told you there's an Integration show on --- (Glances at watch)--- pretty soon.

Mr.B:--- (Takes a couple steps back and snatches bills from the hand & turns going away; at door:) I don't care. I'm going to bed.

Mrs.B::: (Gathers up bills hurriedly, rising the while and looking about to see what she ought to do before leaving:) Ahhh --- you can stay up with me and watch 1111-it, bay-beeEE, honey---

Mr.B:--- (Paused with door partly open) I'd REALLY rather go to bed. I sat with you and watched that lovey-dovey stuff. (Rubs his forehead) I'm tired. Goodnight. (Pushes through doorway)

Mr.B::: (Scrambling about with some anxiety:) Allie, wa-AIT. Allee-eeee---! Don't go to SLEE-EEP. (She spends some moments putting things in order, cups and saucers in sink, runs water on them, stacks them in drainer, puts milk in refrigerator, wipes table, etc., puts light out on leaving.)

Action: (Soft beat of African drums, very slow; sound of shower.

Voice: (Little scream) AieEE! Allee-EE!

Drum(s): Tempo increasing, rhythm expanding.

Voice: (Girlish tittering) OOOooooo---AH!hh ---

Voice: (Mischievous male chuckles)

Telephone: Rings --- --- Rings --- ---

Sound of shower off, titters and chuckling heard in tone of breathless activity.

--- --- Ring --- --- Ring --- )

Mrs.B::: (From within, less enclosed:) Oh, the phone! I'd better answer it. May be mother ---

Mr.B:--- Ugh!hh! Damn.

Mrs.B::: (On phone within:) Hello---? --- Oh, Alice, how are you? --- No, not asleep, yet --- Yes. --- Well, yeah, I was thinking about watching it, but Allie, he - well - you know how he is. --- Hummm? --- Well, I'm sure we will. Is it on yet? --- A few minutes? (Groans) --- Yeah, I guess we should. --- Ye-es, well, REALLY, I had every INTENTION of watching it --- (Break, aside:) Go turn on the TV, Allie. --- Because, well, one never knows how important something like that could be. (Gleefully!) AND Mixie Maxie, too, don't you know?! (Titter) --- Sure --- Suuure, of course --- Ye-es, but when you're in this SITUATION, don'tchu know ---?! Just a minute. (Aside:) Allie-eee, go turn on the TV-EEee!

Mr.B:--- STOP! kicking me!

Mrs.B::: Well, go turn it AWW-ON! (In phone: Titters:) He's so lazy--- What's that? --- Oh, whiss Saturday night? --- Sure! I guess. Why not?! --- Unnn --- Excuse me, Alice. (Aside:) Allie! Get UP! --- Get UP! and turn on the TV-EEEEee!

Mr.B:--- (Groans)

Mrs.B::: Sorry, Alice. Sure, why not! glad to have you - oh - my house or your house?

Mr.B:--- (Rousing:) A man gets married, he lives in his WIFE'S house---

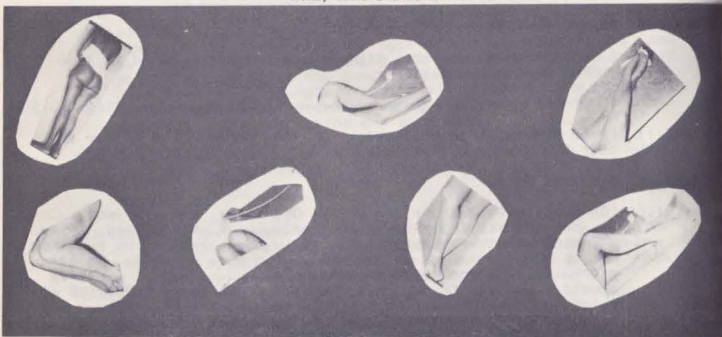
Mrs.B::: OHHH --- just go turn on the TV. Sorry, Alice. It's this big baby of mine --- Over here, then! OK. --- Oh, just fine!

Fast asleep. --- Ummm. How's Jake? --- Yeah? (Giggles)  
--- You know it, too! --- Umm, yeah, he's poking out to  
the livingroom --- About SAIDIE? no, what? --- No, you  
didn't! (Giggles) Wha---? --- (Titters) Rea---? ---  
You don't mean it! --- Really? --- No fooling? (Laughs) Well,  
I'll be! --- You mean ---?

Slow dim-out (Conversation continues):

--- That girl is ALWAYS coming on! --- Oooooohh-weeee! ---  
Unnnn, yeah. --- You know it, too! --- Unhunph. I can't  
wait until --- (Laughter and tittering) ---

End, Act I Scene the 2nd



Act II Scene I

Scene: Livingroom of the Blacks. Time: Moments later. As scene opens  
Mr. B. comes through front doorway left, turns on pole lamp, and  
moves slowly toward TV. He is wearing housecoat & slippers.

Mr. B.:--- (Big sigh) Taint one thing it's another. INTegration show  
(Gestures deprecatingly at television set), hoity-toity early-  
pearly and Late-I-Love\*You show. I'd like for once to have this  
thing show a SHOW-ME show. (Pause, bends to turn on TV; straight-  
ening up, grunts;) And I just turned thirty. (Pause, watches TV  
flicker) I think when INTegration comes, just to be wicked, I'm  
REALLY gonna go down to ---

(Action: Mrs. B. comes thru front left doorway, tightening robe  
belt, patting hair, etc., hears him talking to self, holds  
up short and watches him curiously, then slowly moves up  
at an angle behind him trying to hear plainly what he's  
saying.)

--- the Roxie and see if they SHOW what

they say they show: Those STRIPPERS (Gestures at lapels of  
coat and does a little step) --- and laugh at those stupid  
jerks in the garter line. (Curt chuckle) Of course, I could  
pick up on something like that around down by the pool hall  
area, except folks around there fulla censorship --- else I'd  
go get in the blackout, swim in some crazy rhythms, I bet ---

Action: (Mrs. B. has crept up almost to his heels, straining to  
hear. He pinches his eyes and grunts, after glancing at  
rolling TV picture.)

Mrs. B.: : What on EARTH you talking to yourself about, Almond? (Shoves  
him away:) Move. (Bending to adjust TV; no sound but static)  
Un. You're just gonna HAVE TO go up on the roof and do some-  
thing about that antenna. (Glancing at him as he shuffles a  
couple paces, stretching and pinching his eyes:) And I just  
wonder when you're gonna stop acting the fool and go have your  
eyes examined.

Mr. B.:--- (Half turning) And I've been telling you ---

Mrs. B.: : (Joining in:) --- I don't need no  
glasses. Yeah. Famous last warrior words. (Ceases to tinker  
with TV, straightening up; serious reprimand;) And if you'd  
listen to me as much as I have to listen to you we could get a  
lot of improvements around here. (Pause, glances at TV)

Mr. B.:--- Yeah, well, as soon as YOU start PRACTICING what I preach, I'll  
start LISTENING to you.

Mrs. B.: : (Looks at him and frowns, returns to adjusting TV:) OH! it's  
not even on the right channel! (Flips knob)

(Announcers: The following demonstra---/ -- we / ---thank you, la---/

You sure been acting strange these last few days. I sure hope  
--- PLEASE! don't go get hung-over any EMOTIONAL pit! Not ANY  
kind of breakdown --- before THEY get big enough at least I can  
get a baby-sitter if need be so I can go to work -- drive the  
cab, or SOMETHING.

Mr. B.:--- (Paused near the occ. chair, turned, now steps back quickly:)  
Tell me, does that EVER leave your mind? Does it EVER leave  
your mind? (Pointing in her face at close range as she stands  
slightly in awe; TV rolling, sound inaudible).

Mrs. B.: : (Self-conscious pretense:) What, honey?

Mr. B.:--- You know DAMN well what I'm talking about! (Excited:) eMotional  
hungup! In the first place, now, that's something ELSE you only  
HEARD about, and I've TOLD you ---!

Mrs. B.: : (Some exasperation:) Hush, honey. Lets watch TV. You didn't  
tell me much, anyway. It was your late mother, and I'm just go-  
ing by what she said was said. (Starts to return to adjusting  
but he grabs her arm)

Mr. B.:--- SHE! didn't even much know! And YOU! ---(shaking a finger in

her face and sounding enraged:) --- I've told you before: That year I was eliminated from the quarter-finals of the Gloves in Chicago, I was SEVENTEEN, and it was a PHYSICAL breakdown! A PHYSICAL breakdown!--- from exhaustion. I got an injection, slept coming back, and spent the next TWO DAYS in bed. And, aside from that, I've hardly been sick a day in my life!

Mrs.B::: (Casting about as if for a way of escape; humble-like:) Well, I just happen to think --- being I just finished talking to ALICE, the way you've been carrying on about that --- (Lifts hand and interrupts him as he's about to launch:) Yeah, I -- I know what you SAID --- because you didn't eat, didn't train right; you wandered around the streets in a daze, and all --- because of this out-of-this-world prettier-than-life girlfriend. It's always a woman, isn't it, Almond? (Interrupts again, insistent appeasement:) Yes! of course, I know it must be pretty bad when you miss getting somebody you mustta wanted real big, AND being SOMEBODY kinda important after a fashion like that ---

Mr.B:--- (Studies her some moments, she looking up guardedly at him. He has settled down somewhat but isn't sure how to take her follow-up) You just remember: That I married EXACTLY who I wanted to marry! And I'm sleeping with EXACTLY who I want to sleep with! And no woman's got me hung-up in the head OR BETWEEN HER LEGS but YOU! YOU! re my HANG-UP! And I am not a torch-carrier! I am NOT over-sensitive about THAT that happened way-off-&-gone; I don't need sympathy about it. I AM NOT a weakling! That don't make me a weakling. And DON'T give me that lofty tolerant attitude about it! (Further attempt at sobriety:) You can bring it up as often as you like; I'm not gonna say ANYTHING --- until the one time you rub it on me once TOO often, THEN --- ---

Mrs.B::: (Indignation in subdued tone:) I won't EVER bring it up AGAIN, Allie B. Of course, you're the one always say it doesn't matter, doesn't bother you. And maybe it wouldn't except for what-  
ever else is bothering you. (More assertive:) Something's been EATING at you ever since we've been married, seems to me. I can't help but wonder about things like that. (Throwing hands up wearily:) Heaven knows, I don't know what's eating you! --- except --- (Pause, inverted explanation; feels it way out:) --- silly business --- (Returning to TV adjusting:)--- you ricked up with this Afro-Corps bunch-- about BLACK this, BLACK that ---!

(Mr.B. has drifted back toward the occasional chair, looking peeved, makes a face when she mentions Afro-Corps, glances around and shakes his head wearily as he takes his seat. Mrs. B. is kneeling before television, adjusting and glancing at her watch.)

I HOPE all this isn't just because you don't go to the pool hall as much as you'd like. IS it?

Mr.B:--- No, it isn't.

Mrs.B::: (Pathetic-toned concession:) If it is, maybe you just oughtta go

Mr.B:--- (Strained re-affirmation:) I said it ISN'T.

Mrs.B::: Well ---

(Announcer: The following program is brought to you in LIVING color.)

--- whatever it is (sigh) I sure don't want to be the BUTT of it! (Pause) Humph. Well, guess for us that means there's gonna be a WHITE-IN of the show.

(Jazzy music in nostalgic vein follows during pattern display, then scene of large group meeting comes on-camera.)

Or, maybe the LIVING color'll be gray, eh, Allie B. -- since it's an (Teasing playful with a chuckle:) Integration show.

(Camera moves up to the stage on which various dignitaries are seated. Mrs.B. gives a last touch then stands, stepping back for his approval:)

OK? Allie ---?

Mr.B:--- (Makes an indifferent gesture) I'm thinking of going to bed.

Action: (Camera focusses on a big dark man coming on in African get-up.)

Mrs.B::: (Excitedly:) Oh! It's Mixie Maxie! (Swoon with clap of hands) OOhhhhhhhh --- LOOK AT THAT BEAU-TI-FUL COSTUME! Allie, look!

Action: (Mr. B. is watching Mrs.B. with sad amazement, casts a look at TV, frowns predisposedly. Mrs. B. rushes, backpeddling across the room and brings up a straight chair, placing it a few feet from TV, then decides to squeeze in with Mr. B., ends up sitting in his lap. Meanwhile picture of TV person fills screen, very black, smiling whitey, and Mrs. B. repeats his name idolizingly, "Mixie Maxieeeeeee", while Mr. B. groans, wearing permanent annoyance and looking longing toward sofa.)

(Mixie Maxie: Hello, there, I'm Mixie Maxie --- / WARM & IDOLIZING GREETINGS FROM HIS IMMEDIATE AUDIENCE/)

Mrs.B::: (Giggles, claps her hands sharply, kicking up her legs, etc.:) Ohhhh --- he's so funn--nny-eeeeEEEE---!

(Mr.B. gets up, lifting her and dumping her in the seat, going to sofa.)

(Plaintive:) Al-leeeee-ee---! (Sits pouting at him a moment then gets up, removing to straight chair, pokes her tongue at him and makes a face)

(Mixie Maxie: --- your host for the evening. /MORE OF SAME FROM AUDIENCE/)

He's so CUTE!

(Mixie Maxie: I see we have a lot of old friends here tonight. /BIG WHOOP FROM AUDIENCE, Mrs.B. joining in. Mr. B. sits curled on sofa looking patently outraged/

If I had known so many of my applauding fans would show up I could've saved some money /MORE OF SAME/

First, let me welcome you one and all to Pierpont Hall /SLIGHT RUFFLE THRU AUDIENCE & giggles in livingroom/ I hope you'll forgive my starting things of on a note of humor /LOUD APPROBATION/ as you know, humor is my line, and in fact I've just been invited to stump the panel on Guess-What-Show? / I might as well go naked for all the money I'm gonna win/ Can you imagine anybody not knowing who invented talk-ins at KKK rallies? / In fact, because of my great renown and abounding fame (Blows on fingernails, etc.) / I've suggested they invite my UNDERSTUDY --- (Pause) --- Denny Savis / The idea is to dim the lights and have one of those costumes, not quite a fit, like they used to use in old monster pictures / Inside that we'd come on piggyback / with me on top / BIG AUDIENCE REACTION, Mrs. B. joining in. Mr. B. indisposed to contribute appreciation, but squirming a bit/

You've probably noticed how those monsters are always dragging their feet / the shoes belong to the big guy / it's in the contract / I'm sure you've noticed how these monsters are always returning / that little guy doesn't always make it, though / Several quicksand pits always get accidentally filled in every month on monster picture locations / by little guys & pro forma tombstones / These little guys were known in the trade as were-wolves --- because of the attraction they had for goldiggers --- uh, silver mentors? / Well, sometimes the chicks were called the PREMIUM undertakers / That's why there aren't many short guys in movies today / Imagine being the sexy half of a monster with that kind of widow's endowment /

I had a friend once / economy-sized fellow / about twice my regular / light-complexioned / was on his way to being the upper part of a star in monster pictures / then midget wrestling caught on / he adjusted / Put on a little more weight & became a disc jockey /

Seriously, folks /AUDIENCE POO-POOS/ Oh, you don't believe it, huh? / LIGHT LAUGHTER/

(Soberly:) Well, as a matter of fact, we ARE going to get quite a bit more serious -- because we have a varied program; on our stage --- on our stage tonight are

several prominent guests who're going to address us on a matter dear to the heart of each of us: The subject of Brotherhood in the matter of Integration.

Mr.B:--- (Groans, shifts himself as if about to leave)

(Maxie: That's why we asked you here, and I'm sure that's why you braved the night to get here. So, without further ado, I'd like to introduce one of the outstanding leaders in the field of human relations, for many years Chairman of the Integration Society of America, author of the current best seller, Black on White & Vice Versa -- well known to all of you, I really don't have to enumerate his long list of achievements-- your friend & mine, Dr. Freedman Goodblack --- /APPLAUSE/

Mrs.B::: (Clapping) Oh, Dr. Goodblack! (Gets up and turns around the floor with nervous excitement:) Ohh--- that Maxie! he's so--- (Wordless, swoons throwing up arms)

Action: (Mr. B. knots himself as if in defensive huddle, seated on edge of sofa, looks longingly toward doorway front left. Suddenly they realize that Dr. Goodblack is speaking but no sound is coming forth.)

Hey! What's this? (She rushes to TV fretfully trying to adjust sound, casting strained looks at Mr.B., her mind apparently on the antenna but:) Now, what on EARTH is wrong?

Action: (While Mrs.B. continues trying to adjust the TV to sound unheard words of Dr. Goodblack, Mr.B. unknots himself on the sofa and stretches out, head back legs extended. Mrs.B. curses: "Damn this thing"! pounds the cabinet with her fist. Shortly, the announcer breaks in:)

Announcer: Due to technical difficulties, we seem to have lost the sound portion of our program. The trouble is not in your sets. Do not adjust your sets. Meanwhile we will continue to bring you the picture portion until the difficulty has been corrected. We repeat: Do not adjust your sets.

(Disgustedly:) Ohhhh ---!

Mr.B:--- No, don't adjust it, just turn it off. Lets go to bed.

Mrs.B::: Oh, you be quiet, Allie B. (To the announcer:) Why didn't you say that in the first place? (Tries to re-adjust adjustments; pauses, looks at picture:) What do you suppose he's saying? (Naggy:) As a matter of fact, we could USE a new TV around here. (Steps back from TV; to Dr. Goodblack:) You sure got a big mouth not to be making any noise, man. (Giggles; sighs) Yeah, maybe we just as well --- (Turns it off & turns toward Mr. B.) I wonder what he was saying. (Looks questioningly at Mr.B.)

Mr.B:--- (Has jumped up and waits to take her hand:) Probably just a re-

Act II Scene II

hash of some of the stuff we have on record around here. (Moving her off by the hand to doorway)

Mrs.B::: (Pulls back a little) Oh, you know ---(Halting)--- I'll bet Alice and them --- (Excuses self:) --- But if it isn't working I can't watch it, can I?

Mr.B:--- You might be interested to know I've heard several lectures by the gentleman. (Pauses at pole lamp)

Mrs.B::: Really? When? Where? Oh, I mean, I've heard OF him, too, but--- What's he like? What's his position? OH! but he must be pro Integration, RI-IGHT?

Mr.B:--- So far, with some reservations. (Clicks pole lamp switch, giving her arm a little jerk)

Mrs.B::: Oh --- Reservations? (Passing through doorway) When? Where did you say you met him?

Mr.B:--- At the Corps, dear. He used to speak at our rallies now & then.

Mrs.B::: Oh. Then he's sort of a radical?

LIGHTS FADE DOWN ---

Mr.B:--- Not what I would call a radical. He's an intellectual -- working out his idea and ---

End, Act II Scene I

Time: Much later that night.

Scene: The same; L/R in darkness; action takes place in bedrooms.

Action: (Sound of crying baby; sounds: thru series of waking rousing groans from Mrs. B. Heavy sleep sounds and snoring from Mr. B.)

Mrs.B::: Ohhhhh--- It's just a bad dream, I'm sure, a nightmare. The babies aren't REALLY crying.

(Some more pathetic protests; light comes on in the Blacks' bedroom which is seen reflecting in passageway of door, front left.)

I was JUST UP ten minutes ago --- seeing after them. (Pause; crying now continuous, just one of babies) Ohhhh --- Mercy --- Mercy --- Give me strength. The good with the sweet, and all that. "The good with the SWEET"? (Laughs) I feel just like a sleepwalker. That big ugly rascal snoring thru it all! (Into children's room!) Oh, my poor darlings --- ohhhh --- mommie's gonna take care of Everything. Here, now, lets see what's wrong. Mommie's here, don't cry --- poor lilla bay-bee ---

Mommie's gonna put her lil lumpkin --- Ooohh! hoo -weeee --- we've made quite a lot! Well, gonna get he a fresh clean outfit, that's what (Moving around), a whole new outfit for her lil man! He such a cute lil man, yes he is, he is that! He a cute lil man, awright, awright. (Sounds, other: footsteps, running water; baby is no longer crying, makes only sounds bordering on crying and laughing) Mommie wouldn't trade he for the WORLD. Goochie-goochie --- he got a great big handsome smile! Yes, he has; he gonna be such a BIG HANDSOME MAN some day, just like he daddy --- a bee-eeg rascal! Yes, sir; yes he is. But he gotta get he sleep, so he can GROW bee-IG, and STRONG, a bee-IG strong handsome man. Up he go now. (Moving around) Mommie gonna take he on a long trip --- a long, long trip with she.

(She starts to hum a little, mixed with la-te-ta; little rattle bells heard intermittently for next few moments.)

Now he gonna go to sleep like a ni-ice lil fella. (Baby cries out as if in protest) Ohhhh--- don't he wanna go to sleep for mommie? (Tone loses some sweetness!) Come on, honey-(very sweet)-bbba-unch. (Protest) Mommie gotta go to sleep SOMETIME tonight. You don't think mommie should sle-eeep? Awright, mommie gonna stay right here, right here with her lil man and keep watch. OK? Now, close your eyes. La-ta-te-ta-taaa --- (Titterlike) You see, I'm still here. (More) OK, clo-ose the eyes --- yes, that's a good boy. Ooo-kaa-ny. Thaa-ant's ri-light. Now, go-oooo to slee-eeeeeep. (Hums)

(She continues hum-singing, pausing intermittently, lapsing silent; crying intones, she resumes same; repeat. Presently, all grows quiet, except for sleep sounds of Mr.B. in adjourning)



Act II Scene III

room. She removes from vigil to the bathroom; shortly muffled flush, running water, exits; goes to check babies:)

Humm. All's quiet. Thank goodness Edwin didn't wake up.

(She moves softly back to bed; light goes out. Moments intervene. Stage dark. Shortly, waking cry in baby's room.)

Mrs.B::: OHhhhhh--- no-oooo--- not AGAIN! Now it's Edwin! It's a nightmare. I've sinned. (Dragging up) Why did I EVER become a mother?! (Light comes on) Ohhhh --- foolish, foolish, weak girl! (To Mr.B. who remains in heavy sleep:) WAKE UP! you---! you ---! Ohhhh, nevermind! Sleep your dog, you evil nut! (Moving to babies' room again:) All right, Edwin! dea---earrrrr--- Mommie's coming --- (Effort, but failing success at sweetness:) I mighta known--- Mommie's coming, mommie's always awake, ready and willing. Ohhhh--- look at hi-imm. (Sweet sympathy:) Poor, poor fella, he can't sleep? What'smattered, bay-bee, can't sleep? Ohhh, what a sha-ame - it is - a sha-ame. Hummm. Well, mommie's gonna rock he. (Hums: la-ta-te) Ohhh, he so sleeee-eeepy, look at he! (Titterlike; squeaky voiced:) He can hardly keep he eyes open (More coaxing humor). La-ta-te-ta-ta --- slee-eeepy tii-ime, sle-EEEE-eeepy tii-ime --- la-ta-te-ta---- (Hum-sings a while then lapses into silence.)

(Only sound is Mr.B.'s heavy sleep. Mrs.B. moves quietly back into bedroom. Here, Mr. B. is heard mumbling in sleep:)

Mr.B:--- Mmmm-murtoy-mmuburr-shhha---o labunni, ola-mmmmm-mur---

Mrs.B::: (Groans, pauses, listens) Wonder if he'll answer if I ask him a pointed question. (Pause) What're you dreaming about, Allie, honey? Stalking lions in the jungle? On the tail of some sleek black thing? -- two-legged? Becoming keeper of the stool from the great Odebayo? (High-pitched female disguised voice:) Oh, Almond --- honnnn-nneeeeee, how about a ni-ice cuppa tea, B-1g Boy-oy? (Pause; continued heavy sleep; more of roughly same voice:) You dreaming bout me, Honn-nnee, bay-beeeEEE? What's my name? (Pause; more:) Remember where I live? (Pause) Taxi, Mia-tuhhh --- (Pause) OH! I mustta forgot my purr-urrrse! Now-EVUH did ah man-age to do thaaaa-at. (Pause; big gruff choney man voice:) Thirteen ball in duh side, dere, man -- uh -- in duh cornder, I means.

Mr.B:--- Ummmm-murble-mmm-shoutn-nn-mmmmm --- ughh--- That you up, honn? Ummm-murmu-shhhh--- Babies wake? (Sigh) Ummmm-ma. You finished loocknnggg arftrrrrdmmmmmm---?

(Light goes out, sound of Mrs.B.'s sigh, getting in bed.)

Tharrrrrtchuuuummm, Hershshhhhhh---ba---? (Pause) Youfinnshhhhhddd?

Mrs.B::: (Resoundingly:) YES!

Mr.B:--- Youdonnnnhhaffatttyelllrrrrr. (Falls away into heavy sleep)

End, Act II Scene the 2nd

Time: The following morning. Scene: Kitchen of the Blacks.

Action: (Mrs.B. is preparing eggs at stove. Table is set complete for one, adjacent setting for coffee and juice. Radio signs off from News:)

Announcer: ...Next news on the hour at nine o'clock.

Disc Jockey: (Jivey gayety:) Well, hello out there, everyliving-- AND YOU, TOO. Ha-ha. Here we are back again with your OH-old saddle daddy, Hurricane Harry, OV-verrr your favor-reet listening station, WVKKR, AN-AND, I'm gonna bring YOU, baby, the hottest, hippy-lippiest, groovy-movingest, musicale-rostest, talent power-polished package of SOUNDS-ZZZZ---YOU! ever did-dad-daddy hear! IN YOUR WHOLE --- YEAH --- LIFE! HEY, Girl, how come you smiling like that there ---?

Action: (Enters Mr.B. from inner room, dressed for work, jacket in hand. Mrs.B. reaches and tones down radio/ atop refrig/).

Mr.B:--- (Pauses, groans squaring shoulders, before proceeding around outside of table and over to Mrs.B.) Morning, Precious.

Mrs.B::: Morning, Sleepyhead. (Demurs a little for a kiss on the cheek; gets milk and orange juice from refrig.)

Mr.B:--- (Hooks jacket on chair and sits) Anything new on the news? What's the weather report?

Mrs.B::: Nawh. Weather's gonna be Fair. Nothing much. That group Jake's with're organizing a march on City Hall, they say. Funny Allee didn't mention it. (Sigh) Protesting for more black policemen. (Serving eggs and bacon) About time, I guess, for something to get going.

Mr.B:--- Hunph. (Beginning to eat) Anything about the INtegration show that disintegrated? (Chuckles)

Mrs.B::: (Shakes her head:) Un-un. (Pours herself some coffee and sits down wearily)

Mr.B:--- You up last night, wasn't you? (Wolfing food)

Mrs.B::: Of course, I was up. You know THEY don't sleep thru the night.

Mr.B:--- OK. I just asked. Thought I heard you. Suppose I was snoring away, eh? (Glances at her glaredly)

Action: (Mrs.B., elbow on table, head against fist, looks at him and nods tiredly. Silence for moments, except faint sound of radio. Mr.B. glances up intermittently, smothering some amusement as his glance darts over her. She smirks, seemingly a comment on his wolfing appetite, energy, and impish amusement)

Mrs.B::: What time you coming home tonight, Smiling Jack?

Mr.B:--- (Pauses, shrugs) After work, I guess. (Another mouthful:) Why? Something cooking?

Mrs.B::: (Gets up to pour his coffee) I just wanna know in case I get a chance to catch a nap --- so I won't be rushing supper if you're not coming straight away, about the usual time. (Re-sits)

Mr.B: (For service:) Thanks. Well, you know I'm not a fussy man about that. (Gets milk and sugar) Anybody call for service?

Mrs.B::: (Seems to find a vein or something to toy with on one arm) No.

Action: (He looks at her curiously, sympathetically, stirring the coffee. She sits, head down, fingering her arm, looks off, appears tired, pensive --- uncheered. He finishes coffee, gets up, snatching jacket, goes around behind her as she looks up; she sits back, looking up. He puts a hand on her shoulder, bends and kisses her; she tries a smile, pets hand then yawns.)

Mr.B:--- Gotta run. Be a good baby. (Moves a step, putting on jacket) Sure, take a nap. Don't worry. I know you're tired. Getting old. (Touches her shoulder turning to leave with a grin) Bye.

(Action: Mrs.B. wrinkles her nose at him, slightly glancing over her shoulder, faces back over coffee; leans on fist; curt breathy laugh; toys with cup handle. Sound of closing front door, then abruptly footsteps coming back. She looks around. Mr. B. dashes in.)

Mr.B:--- (With long reaching stretch to regrab top:) Forgot my lunch! (Puts on big smile, turning, salutes her with other hand in leaving again)

(She has uttered startled 'OH', turning and pointing to lunchbag atop regrab, but gets no further before he's gone; wearily, belatedly, she waves: Bye. Displays some muffled amusement at this; turns back, fist in cheek again, toying with cup handle. Appears to gather cheer from pensiveness now. Shortly, places hand under nose, chuckling semi-audibly.)

End, Act II Scene the 3rd

I HAVE YOU READ BEAU-COCOA  
H BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA  
A BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA  
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BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA BEAU-COCOA

Act II Scene IV

Time: Around middle of the same day. Setting: Kitchen in Blacks' cottage, the same except for ironing board squeezed in, front right (obliquely to inner door), a couple of folding chairs nearby, some clothes ironed and folded on one; opposite, a basket with clothes to be ironed. As scene opens, Mr. B. finishes eating and Mrs. B. is pouring his coffee.

Mr.B::: Ahh! (Leaning back and patting his stomach, looking up at Mrs. B. who smiles faintly) Nothing like a hot lunch. (Pats her)

(As he continues talking, Mrs. B. fetches milk from regrab, and stands absorbing his cheek a couple moments before returning to the ironing board.)

You know, I said to myself leaving this morning, Why don't you try real hard and slip back in there around lunchtime, and give your honeylamb a great big surprise. There she'll be thinking you're in the poolhall, noon-n-evenings, carousing with irresponsibles. Just for a change, you could probably work your way close around and make it on in. (Puts milk and sweetens his coffee) There she'll be all lonely and concerned, working away, with one ear on the noisebox and listening for the front door. Why don't you go on over and sneak in the back. (Chuckles)

Mrs.B::: (Gives a little smile, returning to ironing board) Good thing I wasn't on the telephone, huh? or having the mailman in for coffee? or entertaining Ruthie next door? And I turned the radio off a couple hours ago. Those people play the same thing, over and over.

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles) I knew you'd be doing just about what you're doing, and would know just whatta fix up quick to hit the spot, and all. (Turns sideways in chair) In other words, you looking at a man who knows, baby -- just like I knew I'd make it home today, and from way cross downtown, got a string of fares right to the door almost. I generally know what I'm getting into. And that has some special application where women are concerned; you especially I know inside and out.

Mrs.B::: That so? Hummmm.

Mr.B:--- Better believe. Of course, I don't say I know your whole history, quite, but I know mostly what's important. I know, for instance, that you are THE best woman I could've maneuvered into anywhere in this town. Know how I know?

Mrs.B::: (Fairly pleasant smile) Hummm, well, not. Tell me.

Mr.B:--- (Slaps thigh, chuckling) Yeah --- well, I know because from the day we met you let me in. That's how. (Admonishingly:) Now, that's important. I mean ---

Mrs.B::: (Protesting:) I DID NOT. Why you sit there and tell that lie!

Mr.B:--- Wait a minute! Just wait a minute. I don't mean exactly actually altogether. (Trying hard to guard off her protest!) Now, don't get upset. I know you were a misguided puritan.

Mrs.B:--- Misguided? Ugh! Well, allie, dear, maybe you're right ---

Mr.B:--- Let me finish what I was saying.

Mrs.B:--- (Resumes ironing with greater vigor) No, really, I don't think --- You're just talking to hear yourself talk, Almond. Talk about something else, since you wanna talk so much. Don't come getting me upset. I got a lotta work to do.

Mr.B:--- (Has lighted cigarette in interim) Listen. You didn't let me finish. (Rushes on:) I DIDN'T MEAN that you did anything unlady-like, knowing how important that is to you. (Holds up his hand against her interruption) Now, now, just relax a minute; keep your shirt on. What I mean is: From the beginning, you were WITH it. You knew your stuff; put me on-n-off sorta cutelike -- cause you figured I was a sharpie -- but, like, I was THERE. I mean, you still gave me the open way sign, like saying you were a groovy chick who dug a great cat like me, and there was bound to be wild times ahead. You get my point? Now, not many women could put-me-on by making all that WAIT give seem like some kinda sweet magic put together. I mean, like, your friend ALICE couldn't do it, nor Sadie, nor Ruthie---

Mrs.B:--- (Nods yielding wearily) Yes, dear --- well, I guess that's my good conduct medal for the month -- with stars, or something.

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles semi-routinely) Baby, you got medals you haven't even heard of yet. But you know something? It's the hardest thing in the world to say what they're for.

Mrs.B:--- (Registers visible protest) Oh, is that so?

Mr.B:--- Yeah. But, you see, like, there's the difference. I mean, between the Afro-woman and the old Negro woman, or between black women generally and white women (Puts out signal again to check interruption as she looks up sharply), or most other women. You know, Chinese women and Jap women -- the Japanese women especially -- have a REAL STYLE about their womanness. Or maybe it just seems like that; of course, I think African women do too. Anyway, the point is: What can't be said or demonstrated -- put in black-n-white, like -- you can't get any medals for. That is like, you can only get one BIG medal that says "TOGETHER".

Mrs.B:--- (Sigh) I must say, Allie B., you sure turning on. What brought on all this, if I may ask?

Mr.B:--- Yeah, well, I was coming to that. I guess it was partly this dream I had last night, you see. You were calling me from afar off, like, and you were saying, like, Come Home. HOME was like an African scene, only our same house, same furniture, and all. But it was more than that in the dream; I mean, (Wrinkling up in thought) --uh-- (Nostalgically!) HOME:--- It was like something -- an all-over warm, peaceful feeling -- that caresses

you when you're HOME sometimes, and everything's in shape. You know? The wife is happy; the babies --- Like that.

Mrs.B:--- (Smiles, looks almost embarrassed) Yeah, I think I know what you mean, Allie. (Pause) So, what happened?

Mr.B:--- Uh? (Seems to have drifted away) Yeah, well --uh-- the only place I could think I'd be -- it was a mixed-up dream, you see -- was in this strip-tease joint. Because ---

Mrs.B:--- (Shocked:) STRIP-TEASE joint???

Mr.B:--- Yeah. Well, you see, it came from thinking about INTEGRATION: Like that record we have, you know. (Somewhat shame-faced:) I had this idea --- has to do with dimensions, like --un, and women, and --- like th---

Mrs.B:--- (Thinking aside, abruptly puts one hand on hip, the other bracing on the ironing board:) Have you been going to some STRIP-TEASE JOINT, Almond Black?

Mr.B:--- Now, wait a minute, baby, let me finish. I ---

Mrs.B:--- Well, I'll be DAMNED! I DO be damned. (Almost shouting:) OF ALL THE CROSS-EYED, KNOCK-KNEED, NONSENSE notions I EVER! HEARD!

Mr.B:--- Now, wait a ---

Mrs.B:--- WHAT ELSE! WILL YOU COME UP WITH NEXT!?

Mr.B:--- --- baby ---

Mrs.B:--- Why in HELL would you wanna go SIT UP---? (An idea strikes her:) Wait a minute! Unless I miss my guess, they don't allow any black faces yet and still in those kinda places, unless --- some darktown scandal's come to town --- neither me nor Alice or any my friends heard about yet; which I doubt!

Mr.B:--- Hershe---? Wait a minute! Listen!---

Mrs.B:--- But are you trying to TELL me something? that YOU are even INTERESTED, even THINKING about that TRASH, Almond?

Mr.B:--- (Wearily barraged:) --- Baby---

Mrs.B:--- "Baby", my --- !!!

Mr.B:--- (Quiet type exclamation:) WILL YOU LISTEN A MINUTE!?!?

Mrs.B:--- (Vigorously resuming ironing:) No, I don't wanna hear it. Every time I turn around some --- bastard's talking that same HAUNTED HOUSE -- haunted skirt sheet bit. NO. It's your monster! You keep it!

Mr.B:--- (Guardedly neverminding:) There's a lot of investment, business wise, in the styles of women -- in the whole mystique of women-- you see. It almost amounts to selling you love. Men, too. But women more. You see what I'm talking about. (Talks through, as she makes only slightly less annoyed-aided gesture to speak:)

Yeah, sure, true, you hear a lot of noise about Annie Speck, being as how we're in this racial environment, and we got unequal advertising -- because there's a lot of mystique piled hodge-podge on hodge-podge - centuries old - a lot of promotion here, and gone before, which, like a rumor about a wild-legged woman, otherwise not bad-looking, gets up a man's curiosity -- unless he keeps it slumped down. In other words, ADVERTISEMENT -- not like radio product-promotion, only, I mean, but what I call AP-PETisement. The point is, it sells -- even to the satisfied mind and heart.

Mrs.B: (Exasperated to the point of weakness, plops down in chair, arms folded) I wish you would shut up. (Sits poutingly pensive)

Mr.B: (Very softly, as if tiptoeing, but insistently:) Even considering you're not interested, don't want, not thinking about it, the sales job is to make you feel you'd be so much better off-- even MORE satisfied -- WITH it. In fact, baby --- (Relaxing more and speaking normally:) --- there ain't a woman in the world who doesn't know that gimmick in terms of getting the man she wants.

(She gives him a mean look.)

(Slightly slightly embarrassed and with a note of humor:) What does she do: Fix fancy mom meals, fixes herself up to look positively like dessert -- that's the appetisement, basically un-African, the mom appeal again, you see. And moms, or somebody, has taught her how to be cute and airy -- practically a magician! She abra-cadabras practically a whole secret OTHER dimension of how-would-you-like-to-have-this of living before your eyes to tease you and upset your cool.

(Mrs.B. giggles in spite of restraint.)

She waves a magic wand, like, and gets you to feeling ten feet tall. All those extra inches you never knew were there -- like the cigarette behind the ear -- suddenly pops up. And how can you go back to being just six-feet-something, or five ----?

(She starts up, but, though apparently in a better mood, keeps her seat momentarily, glancing furtively at him and chuckling inwardly.)

(He appears to have lost tract of thoughts momentarily; gets up to fetch more coffee) Oh, Yeah: And, well, that's how it is, you see -- because it's not what you KNOW, it's the feeling -- this minute and the next -- that gets you longing, like the momma thing again, you see, just LONGING! and you haven't the faintest idea what it is, why it is, you feel off-balance; except, maybe, you think you'd like something NEW and DIFFERENT to EAT: maybe; you think maybe you'd like to GO somewhere EXCITING --- (Sits back down to second coffee)

(Mrs.B. appears unsympathetic and even annoyed again, seems to sit more heavily in chair.)

That's the dimensions thing, you see -- same as the woman with

the bag of tricks: Produces the magicians unreality --- to create REAL feeling, sensations --- the fortuneteller's hyp, giving you something--in focus, close to what you're looking for, maybe, or what you think might serve good purpose-- like she's uncovering OTHER DIMENSIONS. But, actually, it's just like people going to ask for a new number to play -- not that they REALLY BELIEVE they're gonna win for sure, but that they want fresh hope. (Aside after pause:) She so smart, yet-- still, she's just a rag and a bag of cheap meat.

Mrs.B: (Gesturing to rise:) What in the WORLD are you talking about, Almond. I mean, I want to know why you feel you have to talk so much about NOTHING. (Stands slowly, resuming ironing)

Mr.B: Sweetheart, if you don't remember anything else, remember DIMENSIONS: Is what the wonder is about --- in our fumbling, blundering attempts to get insights -- to get TOGETHER-- IN from off-balance, putting all our pieces together for the BIG answer: To GOD? and LOVE? and --- like that. A lot of little pieces to make the answer, about STYLE, for instance. But not like TRUE OR FALSE, but like MULTIPLE CHOICE, with just shades of differences in choices --- you try to go by the SHADE maybe but its the CUP that really makes the difference; that's style. If you were mechanical like the grading machine you'd get 100%. But, being human, even in tiptop form -- aside from the fact that those humanly devised choices about life's STYLES aren't going to be consistent, if you could fill-in your own answers you could at least show a consistent STYLE, it's gonna be impossible for you to match all those SHADES to be a 100% personality according to that grader, and the anti-OTHER PERSONALITY minds behind it.

Mrs.B: (Her tone seeming to say that his talk is interfering with her personal thoughts provoked by his talk:) Would you mind terribly to please shut up. I don't understand a thing you're saying, anyway.

Mr.B: (Rubs his forehead fretfully) Yeah, well, maybe I got off the track. (Pause) All I was saying was -- WHAT I was saying was -- like -- uh -- well, it's the PERSONAL STYLE that makes the REAL distinguishable personality, and every REAL personal style is like another DIMENSION of --uh-- TRUTH --- REALITY, new being, knowledge, and all that. Others can/may imitate it, but people will know that it's YOUR style.

Mrs.B: Humm. Well, you sure were long-winded about saying it. (Continuing ironing, slowly) And, anyway, don't think you can save face, now, by all this tongue-wagging. You been to some STRIP-TEASE joint, or something, to sit up and gawk at some --- (Shivers) --- TRASH! AND THAT JUST MAKES ME FEEL --- (Shivers again; wordless:) --- Ugggh! egg! --- (Seems to grow faint of a sudden, turning up iron and slouching) GOOD LORD, Almond --- YOU? (Places hand against forehead, sweeping head in low arc) Ugh!

Mr.B: (Put-upon sympathy:) You're taking-on overly much, honey, about little or nothing --- like I RAPED some woman.

Mrs.B: (Slight apparent improvement) Well, just how am I suppose to take on? You come in here with all this nonsense in the middle

of the day! Is that what you come home for? If so, wouldda been better if you'd gone to the cool hall. (Moves toward stove) There's enough racket around here, Goodness knows, to upset my nerves without you snilling out some garbage you've been hauling around --- (Confronts him, pointing:) --- IN THAT THICK NAPPY HEAD of yours, NUT! Is that why you came home today? to purge yourself?

(Action: He seems about to say something, looking at her pathetically, but looks off as if with some embarrassment. She waits a moment for reply, re-kindling thought. He drums table lightly, looking askance at her as she resumes.)

WELL---? To --- to remind me that you might be getting some flashy tail out there somewhere? Picking on me, that's what! (Shows momentary anguish; may be put-on) Well, if that IS why you came, I could've done without it! (Turns, banging water kettle, cup and saucer, as she prepares to make herself some tea)

Mr.B:--- (Guardedly:) You're taking-on again, Hershe.

Action: (Mrs.B. whirls, lifting kettle off stove and making threatening gesture with fierce look. Mr.B. utters startled breath-gush, rising out of chair and stepping away quickly.)

Mrs.B:--: I oughtta scald all the black off you! YOU brainwashed nunny! (Stands glaring at him, breasts heaving furiously)

Mr.B:--- (Hands spread placatingly:) Baby, I was just sharing with you some of the thoughts in a better frame of mind. You always say I don't communicate. You always talking about integration, you see, and --- well, these things been building in my mind.

Mrs.B:--: (Glares at him, seemingly undecided whether to throw the hot water; turns abruptly, banging kettle on stove:) Maybe you should have waited til integration came before getting married! (Lifts kettle again, reaching for tap, but appears momentarily undecided whether or not to dilute weapon; decides to dilute)

Mr.B:--- (Walking around table to refrig:) Now, who said anything about getting MARRIED, honeybunch? There's the old iron shoe again.

Mrs.B:--: (Shrugs violently) Don't "honeybunch" me! (Replaces kettle on stove, gives him angry look as he leans on refrig)

Mr.B:--- You know, you got natural soul for hitting low.

Mrs.B:--: (Frowns; opens refrig door exaggeratedly, looks in, then spots milk on table, slams it:) How ELSE you gonna hit a low-life dog but low?!

Mr.B:--- You abusing me again, baby. But I'm gonna stand for it.

Mrs.B:--: (Slight over her shoulder as she stands by table stirring tea:) I'd like to separate you from your --- (Turns, facing and passing him, as she moves deliberately roughly by, gives impression of finishing sentence, and:) GET! out of my way --- EUNUCH!

Mr.B:--- (Yields passage, looks after her, shakes his head pathetically, regards her for a moment as she sits cross-legged, head bent slightly, sipping tea) Yeah --- well, you can call me whatever you like, Sweetheart. But, the fact is, integration's gotta mean more and more the facing-up to these differences -- ideas -- ready or not, TOGETHER or not, or exactly that snow job you're putting on me: A complete and total brainwashing. Now, you know, yourself, that a MAN has somewise a hankering along otherwoman lines, generally ---

Mrs.B:--: (Fierce stare; ominous softness:) Lecher!

Mr.B:--- ---taking its cue from her style - reputation, maybe - charm, and all that. So, now, how come I can't lay up with Annie Speck? I mean, the idea is: Don't say I can't. I'm a man. IF I wanted it, not saying I want it --- ANY woman, say, on the good earth, aside from my present fate of being married? I mean, suppose I had dreamed that instead, without the home magic feeling and ---?

Mrs.B:--: OH, shut up! (Uncrossing her legs and looking as if to propel herself upon him:) I'm SICK of hearing you talk that crap! Every time you go out and come back, it's SOMETHING! (Gets up, setting cup and saucer roughly on end of ironing board, and resumes ironing with inappropriate fury:) Makes me think you've DONE SOMETHING, and I DON'T LIKE IT!

Mr.B:--- (Placatingly:) Listen a minute; just listen: You're still the star in this thing; nobody's replacing you, down-staging you. First of all, we're talking about PEOPLE going to bed, not---

Mrs.B:--: FIRST OF ALL, NO WHITE WOMAN EVER SLEEPS WITH A BLACK MAN LIKE JUST PEOPLE, not in our society. IT'S JUST ANOTHER KIND OF EXPLOITATION. AND I SAY YOU CAN'T, THAT'S WHO. IN FACT, I DON'T WANT THE SUBJECT BROUGHT UP IN THIS HOUSE ANOTHER TIME. CAUSE AS LONG AS YOU BLACK MEN LAY UP WITH TRASH AND GIVE THEN THE SATISFACTION THEY CAN'T OTHERWISE GET, THE LONGER IT'LL TAKE TO --- get it straight about who needs what and why. Now, get outta here and go on to work.

Mr.B:--- (Gaping) What're you talking about? Laying Annie Speck's not gonna slow up integration. Well, I mean, I don't know what WHO can't otherwise get; all I know is when I'm getting they giving -- as man and woman -- and Mr. OTHER, wise or no, AIN'T GETTING much that round. But, why ---?

Mrs.B:--: (Looks threatening, grasping turned-up iron:) Why don't tchu go on-n-get outta here, Almond Black? before I bust something over your head?

Mr.B:--- Just answer me this: Why can't they otherwise get it, because Charlie Speck out laying every other sister on the scene BUT Annie? So don't say I can't -- SHOULDN'T -- that's a personal business.

Mrs.B:--: He AIN'T LAYING every other sister on the scene. AND, OTHERWISE, he AIN'T GOT IT.

Mr.B:--- Oh, there's plenty of them got it. But, the p---

Mrs.B: (Grown somewhat resignedly argumentative) Well, there're a lot of them that AIN'T got it. And, besides, a lot of them're too busy exploiting black folks and others to have TIME for their women. And when they get a little time they got nothing to fill it in with. And stupid black men like you come along, see all this LONG HAIR and LOUD MEAT and --- and GRIN like you think you're getting something, and you're getting NOTHING BUT CON-TEMPT! to try to change at the nearest eye store as pally confidence in the real peopleness of them.

(Pause; he is nodding in a savant fashion, apparently assaying some re-affirmation, as the atmosphere has quieted to almost normal conversational timbre.)

And Godness knows what these big strapping black men get out of it! They can't MOVE; you said so yourself, you don't want any stuff that can't MOVE. That's all you hear you old black men talking about: How this BLACK GAL moves (Jealous contempt;) and THAT ONE moves, (Contemptuous imitation;) and 'If you can't MOC-OVE it, baby, you gotta go'... Ugh! such a disgusting buncha FINK men God never made!

Mr.B:--- Much a-cotton-picking obliged, Miss Integration. Now, you see, you see? Just a minute ago what you did was reveal just how HUNG-UP you are under Annie's hair; the reason being that YOU'RE brainwashed, and grease fried, in that white potato bag you're alw ---

Mrs.B: (Momentarily stuttering, furious:) THIS IS MY NATURAL! HAIR, NINNY! (:Yanking hair; taking step toward him:) MY OWN! hair!

Mr.B:--- (Guardedly, taking a step away:) --- And I ain't never in my life had a love affair with HAIR. And certainly not with any kind of FRIED hair, I'd sooner have it raw.

Action: (She sails into him, slamming a fist into his chest and swinging wild hooks, grunting with the effort and fury as he backs away calling for discretion: "---baby, now---" blocking most of the blows; she: "YOU! You---! Ugh-ugh! YOU! NO GOOD ---!" Suddenly, a block hurts her hand: "Ohhh --- huhhh-uh---" Grabs wrist, looking pained, looks up at him, kicks. "You dog!" He flees some paces, moving mostly backwards. Holding wrist, she shouts: "Get out! GO ON! GET OWW-UUT! before I --- (Wordless; casts about as if for a weapon, then suddenly plops hard in chair at table. Flexing her wrist, she rolls her eyes at him, sniffs woundedly, and he appears to feel the projected embarrassment of villainousness: Hung-headed, squeezes his forehead as if ego-centered there, queering off perspiration as well, scratches under his arm. She gestures to leap on him again. He stiffens and fades back, then approaches guardedly:)

Mr.B:--- I'm sorry you hurt your hand; lets see ---

Mrs.B: (Kicking at him and turning aside) Get outta he-ere! DON'T

TOUCH ME! --- you --- you ---

Mr.B:--- (Fades back a little, glances toward backdoor but is disinclined to leave at this moment; wants an opening to resume the talk:) WELL, I AM sorry about that. (His hands move nervously about his chest; going cautiously by, around to refrig again:) Ac-tually, I was going to --- I was trying to ---

Mrs.B: (Makes click with tongue getting up and going to sink to run water over wrist:) Just shut up, and go.

Mr.B:--- --- to tell you... I was leading up to telling you --- that, like, well, you're not ALL together yet, but it really wouldn't take much to get you together. And --- it's not that I'm dissatisfied ---

Mrs.B: OH, SURE ---!

Mr.B:--- --- And I love you. That is, well, that's how I have to say it so you'll understand.

Mrs.B: Oh, of course, you love me. You just broke my arm to prove it. I'd just like to know what it is YOU'RE so much TOGETHER with, except a confusion of person. (Turns off water, facing around) Yeah, maybe you'd like one of those self-important fancy women who pat their men on the head and behind and say, 'Be a good boy, now, and run along while I visit with my old FRIEND, Tracy.

Mr.B:--- (Steps away from refrig, leaning on chair:) There, you see? You're always ready to get off on some side track. Pat WHO? on the HEAD and say run along ---?

Mrs.B: (Interrupts adamantly:) THERE'S SOME --- there's some that would!

Mr.B:--- I'm a MAN. And WOMEN know it. What woman gonna stretch her pants and pat ME on MY HEAD? NONE. And we both know it. You---

Mrs.B: Ha! Un-huh. Sure, Almond, dear --- (Flexes wrist more easily, drops hand) --- but if I were to knit that across the chest of your sweaters: I --- AM --- A --- MAM, I could sooner get Mickey MOUSE to wear them than you.

Mr.B:--- (Fans her to scorn, turning almost completely around, then back) I --- don't need it, that's why. And don't get altogether ridiculous. I should go around advertising - inviting - trouble, eh?

Mrs.B: (Mock, teasing sympathy:) Ohhh, poor fellow, he upset about that? Donnny cry, bay-bee-ee, mama wonn llow em to hurt her bee-ig bay-bee --- her oldest and boldest.

Mr.B:--- (Boredly:) Ha-ha! (Pause) You know, wman, sometimes I think you need to be turned around and sat on a busy oil drill --- deep in the heat of Texas.

Mrs.B: (Funny-funny. You know, you sound just like some OLD FRUSTRATED HE-GOAT! who can't do anything anymore but SMELL.

Mr. B:--- (Shows extreme frustration and disgust; moves a few quick steps by table toward backdoor, turns:) All right, Miss Brand X. I was TRYING to tell you something, you see, but ---

Mrs. B: (Turning her back to him sharply, facing sink:) Don't tell me anything else, Mr. FEVER, but your footsteps going out the door.

Mr. B:--- --- (Swallows his rejoinder) --- between being stubborn and a know-it-all female, you're set on being just a WHITE ANNIE, like one Regular and one Menthol -- only it can't be just like that, even ---

(Mrs. B. thrust her arm out sharply pointing to the door ---)

Mr. B:--- --- It's gotta be name-brand and brand X: the slave brand, the straightman ---

Mrs. B: (Sustaining the directioning arm:) Allie --- (:Ominously) ---

Mr. B:--- Yes, mam, I'se goin, mam ---

Mrs. B: (You oughtta been gone, Allie. (Relents from pointing, faces him but throws only a cutting glance, arms folded, looks the other way:) You ought never have come. I mean it.

Mr. B:--- (Draws himself up tall, absorbing the spurn; huskily he guards himself to say his last bit:) Funny part about it, everybody knows brand X isn't the name-brand as implied at all, but something created calculatedly inferior --- (NASTILY):--- like MISS INnn-tegration. And when it's actually a name-brand, given its name its ARMY would STAND UP TO BE COUNTED.

Mrs. B: (Beginning faced the other way:) Allie, I am tired of hearing it, I am TIRED (Faces him), I AM TIRED!

Action: (He stiffens; they glare at each other, her patience obviously exhausted, and he, although apparently ready to leave, resents being dismissed. Then, abruptly, he turns, saying, "OK", striding across kitchen to door and leaves without further word. She watches him, and, as he exits, rushes to the door getting the slam at close quarters, re-opens it:)

AND JUST REMEMBER, BECAUSE YOU SLIPPED IN FOR LUNCH DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE ALLOWED TO GO TO THE POORHALL THIS EVENING! (Slams door, pauses thoughtfully, puffed-up. Shortly, she moves to the window as car drives away, looks thru space made between curtains, thusly standing for some moments, then turns around, leaning on sill; folds arms over breasts, raises one hand to mouth, bites fingernail, suddenly becomes conscious of babies intoing in inner room, moves off sharply.)

(Lights fade down and up)

(Mrs. B. returns to kitchen with bundle of dirty clothes, dumps them near washing machine, turns, pauses; goes to window and looks out, turns away slowly; goes now briskly into inner

room; after a moment, the sound of phonograph: Scraping record; reset; Mrs. B. re-enters kitchen slowly as voice on record intones; she listens deeply, proceeds to chair at head of table, sits sideways, listening, slightly bent in waist, hands clasped in lap ---)

(Recorded voice:

I have a vision that couldn't be stopped, of Integration, and disintegrating barriers, crumbling -- of people beginning as individuals and growing into an aroused community, as newly enhanced humanity in the embrace of personal imagery, alive; a vision that required the full inspired support of all the time of my life, and all the life-giving elements of God, nature, and man to overcome the plagues visited upon its budding struggle since the earliest glimmer of its hope; that has enlisted the fullest resourcefulness of all my talents and fortitude, and that of friends and followers, believers and well-wishers, and supporters of the faith -- the most talented and far-sighted, the most gifted and harrowingly agonized of those of the world family of humanitarian brethren; a vision that haunts my most enlightened ignorance and eludes my most eloquent description to detail of its development beheld.

And so, I must compose a dialogue of many voices of many visions. And these have been the voices mostly, mainly, of hope; and these the visions voiced that do not stop, that do not pause but are building bridges ever over despair:)

(Voices of the people:

I never expect I'll leave the South; all my roots are here. I'll just wait and watch, and help them to grow.

I see life in true-color; things'll be more earthy & rosey.

I think black and white will always live separately, but a lot of hating will pass over.

I think there'll be a lotta new interest in PEOPLE --- wanting to discover each other -- not in marriage, I don't mean an increase in marriages, especially, but that will get less sensational, too.

I think blacks will get elected to Congresses & Governorships, and like that. That's very important for the image, and so forth -- especially since we've been short-changed in the whole business field.

I think there'll be all-around improvement in communities, of their moral fibre and spiritual integrity.

I think: More things to do, places to go, and so forth.

I think: More and better jobs, more horizons, better living

I think: Cultural growth, growth of spirit & brotherhood.

I think things'll be better for my children, anyway.

I think the young future of America is here, if she's gonna have a future. I say, YES. And I want to be part of it.

I don't think we can imaginatively make the kind of scene it's going to be; it's too much event-shunned.

No, I think we are looking toward a time when we will be free to do what we want to do -- free of fear itself as the racist's bogey.

(And what sort of time shall this be? And what shall we want to do?)

The coming of this time is like the open end of a long tunnel, showing the way out. And this time is this BEYOND: Open, when we have reached the opening and can move freely in the open.

And what shall we do?

Our feelings relieved of a multitude of fears, and our hearts lifted of infinite burdens, we might wish to rush out shouting, singing hallelujahs, rush into each other's congratulating arms, or rush to our knees in thanks. And then we might want to play and explore this grand OPENING, these new vistas, to get the feel of being of delivered circumstance.

What shall we do? What shall we DO?

We grow. In this, the new spring of life, we grow. And, curious better to get to know the many dimensions of this new growth, we go in search of all the knowledges of feeling thinking man.

But WHERE shall we go? WHAT shall be REVEALED? Where does it LEAD? WHAT new vistas? What does this freedom ADMIT of for us to DO? to EXALT? to KNOW ourselves FREE?

I think we will know by the growth ... I think we will know by the growth ... I think we will know by the growth ... I think ---

(Action: Mrs.B. rouses and goes quickly to inner room during extended repeats.)

--- we will know by the growth, when the collective fear-free will has installed the individual.

End, Act II Scene the 4th

Act II Scene V

Time: Toward dusk of the same day. Scene: A curbside, off the main entrance to waiting room at the local airport. As scene opens, Mr. B is on nearside of cab taking a breather, some dollar bill in each hand.)

Mr.B:--- Lets see, if I play Bid Red three sets of Chicago --- No, if--- (Humms off several bills from one hand to the other:--- I play hummmmm --- Eight ball? -- uh, Rotation. Nawh. If I play--- if I rack up Slick first, I should come out --- (Peels away a few bills, looks up and off frowning. Maybe I oughtta go home and watch lovey-dovey. (Mild exasperation;) I can't understand what's happened to my style; I used to could wrap Red up --- (Snaps fingers). Must be all the worriation! --- (Gestures at taxi:--- Work! Un. Well, I gues that's the price I pay for practice. (Frowns some more, glancing around) Now that I told her about the parley -- breathing down my neck -- I donno. (Big gushing sigh; leans heavily on forearm on taxi:)) Well, love's Laboratory ---! (Transfers bills to one hand and pinches eyes with other; pause) Unph. Wonder if I oughtta see about the eye business for really sure!?! Nawh-ah!

(Action: Loud blonde runs up to cab from other side, carrying small overnight bag, opens door getting in ---)

I wonder what she's thing about right about now!!

Blonde: Hey, boy! you working? C'mon. Quick! I'm in a big hurry here! (Begins talking out loud in personal monologue:) DARN IT, that NUMBskull, FRANK ---!

Mr.B:--- (Having gotten just a flash of headscarf and loud hair:) Nawh, I'm breaking; gitchaself one of the speck boys.

Blonde: WHAT? (Scooting forward in seat closer to half-opened window:) Now, wait just a COTTON-PICKING minute, boy, you ---

Action: (He bends to see thru window and both register slight shock. She is taken aback, apprehensive of presumption.)

Mr.B:--- You got a "boy" in there? I don't see him.

Blonde: Eh-heh --- I mean -uh--- That is --- You know!! (Flutter of charm) Just between us hep cats --- man.

Action: (He holds pose momentarily, mesmerized by corny retort, then, about to straighten up, gets big flash of headlight knees & a lot of clear highway, exalting in eau d'awe vue.)

Blonde: Come on, hey! Lets go!

(He straightens up blinking, is about to look again but catches himself; slowly pockets money, giving sign of resigned compliance.)

(Raps on winder next to her:) C'monnnnn, Stupid.

Mr.B:--- (Having started around car, starts back, then quickens pace



around to driver's door, opening it and roaring:) WHO THE HELL YOU TALKING TO, WOMAN!?

Action: (She greets his hastening approach with big smile, but then: ???!!) --- disconcerting alarm and indignation. And, as he de-bowels himself, all of splash hits him again: Eau d'ave vue in shocked evaporating fullness. He backs up momentarily like an intruder; recovering somewhat, goes into figgit activity guise and finally puts on dark glasses. Meanwhile she has recovered, conceals some embarrassed amusement.)

Blonde: All right, all right --- HANDSOME. But, c'mon, will yuh? (Sarcastically:) Bee-ig Maa-an. (Pause; covers chuckle; seriously:) I've GOT to get out there, get my things, and get back in time to change, and all --- before the SHOW.

(Mr.B., pouting big man fashion, gets in, starts motor and screeches off. She is made a bit uncomfortable by the start, frowns and puffs up but restrains impulse to complain.)

That's a good boy. (Settles back pensively)

(Mr.B. hunches shoulders as if to block outraged ears and accelerates vengefully, zooming down the highway towards town. Shortly, blonde has settled back happily, delighted with speed; takes up monologue outlining her circumstances in thought but alternately speaking OUT LOUD and inaudibly. As this continues for some moments, Mr.B. flinches, looks puzzled, bewildered, outraged, etc.; frowns, hunches, glances back & thru mirror, etc. accordingly as statements seem intimidating and/or equivocal.)

Blonde: --- STUPID! --- he needs money again! owes tate, the bookie, at least THREE THOUSAND, and then the finance company, the club, the motel: who knows HOW MUCH! that blonde, Mable, who posed as his MOTHER --- HA! HA-ha-ha-ha --- to gg-get - HA-HA-HA --- outta that rotten deal in CHICAGO ---? and then the other booking for his filthy MISTRESS --- CORNY ACT, THAT stupid little TWISTERT--- turned out to be not just A PLAIN WHORE but A LESBIAN NO LESS --- imagine the gall to TRY TO MAKE ME-EEE! Then, Theresa, THE PHONEY, she didn't exactly BLACKmail him, but he MUST ALWAYS GIVE IN to protect himself: another THOUSAND. And was THAT A LOW-LOW, since he promised ONLY TWO HUNDRED. THEN, HOW MUCH OF THAT was really necessary? --- taking Connie out so often, especially to REALLY AN EXPENSIVE PLACE!?! YOU DON'T GET ON TV by over-flattering her likes! That STUPID tv spot of his! As if that was worth dating up A COOL THOUSAND! The second time this year I've been taken on this PRETTY BOY ride. I'm just A BORN SUCKER for the quiet countryboy type. YOU BIG PHONEY! SENSELESS!

I should never have considered that Denver engagement this year; then I never would've met that STUPID JERK! Can't even meet me AT THE AIRPORT! AT NIGHT! So, I missed the four o'clock plane! So what! I'LL BE L--- A REAL LOVER would've waited UNTIL NINE O'CLOCK TONIGHT, if necessary! And after promising to discipline myself about letting MEN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME, it's har-

pening again! These horrible empty nights again --- ENDLESSLY!

(quiet personal heartthrob, whisperingly endearing, dreamily:)

Oh, Harry! I should never have given you up. Harry --- What a fool I was: My career! And I could've let you talk me into it so easily: The farm, and home, the children, chickens --- the sunburn --- --- the dirty fingernails --- Ohhhhh-hh ---

Mr.B:--- Lady? I'm afraid I'll have to ask a silly question.

Blonde: Huh? Uh, oh, what---?

Mr.B:--- WHERE is this place I'm suppose to take you quick-quick like?

Blonde: Oh, didn't I tell you? Out on Townline Road. You know where the Davenport Lodge is?

Mr.B:--- Roughly. I'm not sure EXACTLY. I know where Townline Road is alright enough, though.

Blonde: Good boy. Good for you. I'm sure we'll find it alright.

Mr.B:--- (Mildly stung) Good thing you told me before we got past the Junction here, though, (Turning) or we'd have to plough thru town, and be in Endwood. (Frowns, casting sidelong backward glance)

Blonde: (Laughs, short burst, then openly:) Ha-ha-aa-aa --- you're cute --- a real funny fella (More laughter). Un-un-nn. (:Clears throat, then muffled amusement)

(Action: He half turns: Frustration pent-up gaze.)

(Raising hand:) Peace, Brother. (Chortle)

(His shoulders seem to heave up behind wheel. He looks off, eyes cutting back. She clears throat.)

LOOKOUT!

(He turns quickly to road: No danger. She clears throat again, summoning sobriety.)

Sorry. It looked just like that car was right up on us.

(The journey continues in silence except for traffic sounds. He seems edgy, anticipating another ego-reducer. Blonde is glancing at watch and thru windows intermittently, drumming seat, etc. Shortly, she leans forward:)

You're doing great. But could you maybe go a little faster? We've REALLY got a lot to do, you know --- Sonny, uh, fella. You've got to load up my two trunks. The devil take me if they're not THERE! And bring me ALL THE WAY BACK to the club, and unload them, and --- But you'll be well PAID, don't worry. Maybe I can even get somebody to help you --- with the unloading.

(He almost droops head between arms in contrite defenselessness -- overly long. She figgits, staring alarmed - starts pointing - at road; gestures severally to poke him but refrains; shortly, the suspense gets the better of her:)

WATCH! --- LOOK! LOOK-OWWWW-UUUT!

Mr.B:--- (Raises from fatalistic slump, makes slight steering adjustment; groans, growls, pushes big breath, pulls off to side of the road and brakes. Without turning fully around:) Sweet-heart, dear, cuttie pie, lady --- I --- I'm not a moving service. I'm just sorta like a chauffeur, you know? A suitcase, yes. A couple of TRUNKS ---!! Why don't we forget it, and you get yourself another --- Sonny, Funnyman, Stupid, Boy to drive you out to this woodsie place?

Blonde:: (From alarmed surprise to indignant puff-up) WHAT! (Sigh, casting about; tolerant condescension:) Don't be silly. O'mon, be a good fella --- (Big smile and flutter; sudden exasperation:) GAD! Why do I ALWAYS have such trouble getting ANYTHING done where MEN are involved!? (Resolutely:) O'mon, bigboy, DRIVE! (Thought pause) If you don't BEHAVE yourself, I'm gonna report you-uuu!

(She flutters indignantly, primping at her wares as if to assure the spread of her plumage for maximum effect, and to disregard the fact that he hasn't started up instantly upon being properly admonished. He slumps definitively in seat, in fact, as if enervated by her statement, making it impossible to do as directed. She casts mean glances after a moment of stylish preoccupation, then rises to the need to re-assert herself:)

Now, REALLY! MUST I REALLY go through THIS? You know, you're awful fresh for a --- uh ---

(He stiffens corpselike)

--- uh --- spade --- CABBIE! of course. (Phoney but relieved laugh:) Ah-ha, thought I was going to say something else, didn'cha? Well, I'm not really one of THOSE kind. In fact, I usually get along rather nice with --- uh --- tall, dark, handsome me-en. (Indignation:) And I didn't mean anything more than that you're a CABBIE and are suppose to take me WHERE I WANNA GO! (Mild entreaty:) Now, REALLY ---! ple-eease, LETS GO! DAMMIT! I AM gonna PAY, you know ---!!

Mr.B:--- (Mook surprise:) Ohhhhhh--- you're gonna pay!! --- well ---

Blonde:: YES. And I usually PAY! WELL! too, when people BEHAVE themselves

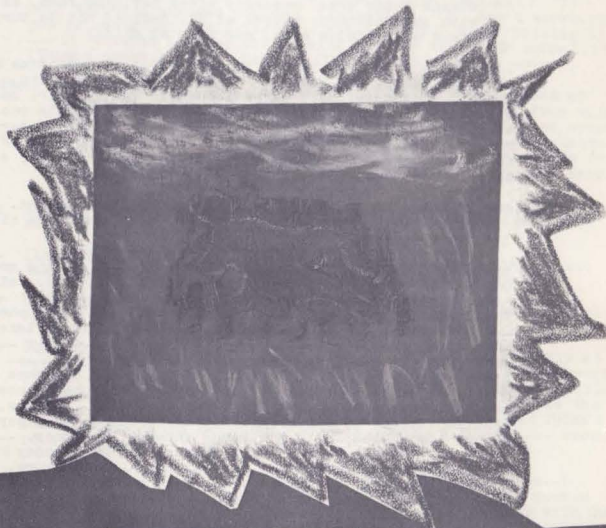
(He stirs resignedly; great effort; balks at last statement but acknowledges the inevitable; re-starts motor. She sits back authoritatively, though puffed.)

And if you're worried about the trunks -- if you're not MAN enough and gentleman enough, too weak, or GOT A BAD BACK, or something -- I'll get somebody from the motel to help; there

OUGH! to be SOMEbody SOMEwhere who cares about a lady in distress! Or, darn it, I'll even help myse--elf, if ne-ce-ssa-ree-EE. I DE-CLAHRE-RR, I haa-aave just the wor-sest ti-lime imaa-aginable tra-ing to ge-et a lil co-opah-ration from --- !!!

Action: (She pouts after being startled at herself, figgits, checks scenery as he zooms car hell-bent down road; looks decidedly mistreated and under intolerable circumstances. And his sidelong, mirror view, and backward glances say the same for his wounded temperament.)

End, Act II Scene the 5th



... love's laboratory...

Act III Scene I

Time: Evening, same day. Scene: L/R of the Blacks. Babies are in bassinets by sofa. Mrs. B. sits knitting nearby. As scene opens, she stops knitting, looks at watch, sighs, gets up. She is wearing similar house garb; paces floor some moments, goes to front window looking out, listens for sounds from rear; scratches scalp with finger, looks at it and frowns, clasps hands in front of her just pensively idling about floor:)

Mrs. B.: Where the DEVIL is he? (Glances at watch again) I wonder if he was really mad this noon!! Come home with all that TALK energy and upset me! And then HE goes away mad! (Pause) I hope nobody gave him too bad a time out there this afternoon.

(She goes restlessly back to window, looks out, turns back sighing; begins to move hands fidgetily: into dress pockets, out, clasps upper arms, massages sides defining form, assays it with some concern; pauses at TV, decides not to turn it on; steps away, folds arms, one hand at chin:)

I wonder what he was REALLY talking about at luncheon!! Seemed kinda mixed-up, and yet ---!! (Scratches scalp again, looks at finger, frowns; sighs) Maybe I oughtta was my hair, now, while I'm waiting!! (Near bassinets, gives each a little rock, peeps at babies, smiling; straightens up sighing, looks toward telephone; fiercely:) I OUGHTTA JUST CALL THAT POOLHALL ON FREDERICK STREET AND --- (Relents, glances at watch again; sits on sofa; rationale:) At least an hour overdue ---!!

(Resignedly takes up knitting, pouts thoughtfully a moment. Phone rings! Quick reaction, then deliberate composure picking up the receiver.)

Hello---? --- OH! Mother-- How are you? --- That's good. --- No, I wasn't expecting anyone in particular. Just...sitting here knitting and watching the babies. --- Allie? --- Well, no, not yet, but --- Well, he'll be along shortly. --- Just fine. --- Oh, NO, we never fir-ight. (Flexes wrist) --- Oh, Mother, really---! --- He's --- He's --- Yes, he's bringing home his money. --- Sure, fine! --- Yes, they sleep quite a bit. --- He? I'm fine. --- (Smooths down stomach:) No, Mother, of course not! Why should I be (Hinces idea:) pregnant again? --- Allie's father's fine. (Sighs, indicates some impatience to get off phone) --- Well, we've always gotten along, you know; he's not young anymore, you know. --- --- You're coming over ???When? --- Oh, Monday! Goo-ood. --- Sure! Wonderful! --- OK. --- OK, sure. --- Will do. --- Yes, Mother. --- Yes, sure, I wi-ill. --- Um-hum --- Um-hum, OK. (Leans over in apparent anticipation of hanging up) --- Oh, I'm sure he'll be along ANY MINUTE, now. --- Yes. --- Yes, Mother --- Yes'm. --- Um-hum, sure. --- ALL RIGHT, Motherrrrr! --- Ye-ES. --- No, Oh, say hello to Ann and Carole for me. --- Awright. Thanks for calling. --- No, no, I'm not in a hurry to hang up. --- Supper's on the stove, uh-huh. --- He WILL, I'm sure. --- No, no, he hasn't been in any trouble lately, Mother. --- Sure, everything's fine. ---

--- OK. --- I'll tell him. --- Ummm, yes, I'll be sure to tell him you said behave himself. --- I'M NOT BEING SARCASTIC. --- All --- OK, I'll TELL him. --- Sure. (Laughs) --- OK. --- Goodbye.

(She hangs up, sighing relief, looks at her watch, frowns and exasperates, gets up stomping feet, lifting her hair off her neck and holding it in a tail behind as she goes through doorway far left.)

(LIGHTS DOWN AND UP -- Several minutes later:)

(Mr. B. enters front door into livingroom like a mild storm, puffed and stern-looking, strides across floor to sofa, pauses, glancing at babies in bassinets, then turning about:)

Mr. B.:--- WOMEN! (Approx. falsetto:) 'Be careful with thaa-aat! It ONLY WEIGHS a hundred pounds! (Falsetto:) 'Oh, don't worry-rry, you're gonna get a bi-i-ig tip, Bi-i-ig BOY! HAH! Bi-i-ig tip ---!! What am I? some kid working his way thru PREP school?! (Thumps chest:) I'm a MAN! A BUSINESSMAN! (Paes about)

Action: (He begins mumbling, suddenly digs in pockets in mood of erupting anger, facing sofa. Mrs. B. is summoned from within by noises, comes briskly thru rear left doorway, head wrapped in towel held by one hand, water running down face; stands watching him, changes hands holding towel. He refrains from what he was about and turns jerkily, hands in pockets keeps his back mostly to her.)

Mrs. B.: So, you're home. Early, ain'tcha? Wha'smatta? lose all your money at the poolhall?

Mr. B.:--- (Like he has been doused by more absurdity, draws himself up, takes deep breath; glancing sidelong:) Yeah! So what?

Mrs. B.: So, welcome to the poorthouse. Your broth's on the stove, Pool Shark. (Starts back through doorway)

Mr. B.:--- (Quietly intense:) Very, very funny. (Looks more directly at her, backwards, moving toward center of room, then turns abruptly, bringing hands up out of pockets with crumpled dollar bills as he takes giant steps back to sofa: Bills, coins; hurls the money petulantly on the sofa:) MONEY! that's ALL! you! THINK! about! (Continuing action:) WOMEN! --- CUTE! BITCHES! --- know-it-alls! ---

Mrs. B.: (Turned back from doorway, watching amazed:) Allie! wha---? What the DEVIL are you doooo-ing!! (Moves quickly and pushes him aside:) BE CAREFUL, FOOL! YOU GONNA HIT THE BABIES WITH ONE OF THOSE COINS! if you're not careful!

Mr. B.:--- --- Dainty butchers! --- TIP! --- I got their TIP! Break your BACK! ---

Mrs. B.: (Mildly annoyed:) Allie, stop that!

Action: (Mumbling grumbling and fishing out ever coin, turning poc-

kets inside out, he turns, exhibition completed, and whizzes around bassinets through doorway far left while Mrs. B. opens mouth wordlessly, witlessly, changing hand holding the towel. And, as he enters inner room in a huff, she glances at array of monies and looks after him; slowly she puffs up, one fist socking hip. He pokes half out again, unbuttoning shirt, pointing with other hand and shouting:)

Mr.B:--- You ALL gonna get what's coming to you! -- EVERY LIVING PUSSY-WILLOW! (Glares for an instant, seemingly concerned to be taken seriously, then ducks back into room)

Mrs.B::: (Turns looking after him, gaping; lifts arm listlessly and lets it drop, faces front, shaking head slowly; sits heavily on sofa, bent over, lets towel flop about face momentarily, elbows on knees:) Have mercy --- this just hasn't been my day!

(Abruptly, she jumps up, grabbing towel in back again and going to rear doorway:) ALLIE! --- come pick up this money! And either hand it to me or put it on the dresser! (Backs up a few paces, facing doorway:) Come on! I MEAN IT. PICK IT UP! ALLIE!

Mr.B:--- (Appears in doorway, looking at her rather fiercely, shirt unbuttoned, takes it off and tosses it behind him:) Wha'smatta, you too DAINTY to pick up MONEY, Woman! Gotta bad BACK you can't bend over a couple INCHES? (Louder:) I'VE BEEN LIFTING HUNDRED-POUND TRUNKS --- like FIVE men & a moving van!

Mrs.B::: I don't care right now if you've been lifting THOUSAND-POUND trunks! You pick that money UP! PICK IT UP!

Action: (She stands rigidly, glaring at him and pointing to sofa. He seems to feel stupidly outraged by this forced confrontation, and looks from her to the sofa as if to say that she is much closer to it than he; looks down at himself, fingers spread moving gingerly over his chest and stomach of his undershirt, then snatches up the tail, turning brusquely back into the room with a look at her still posed in command:)

Mr.B:--- (Gruffly quiet:) Pick it up yourself; it's spread out nicely for you to count.

Mrs.B::: I'll get COUNTED --- to the BILL COLLECTORS! You come BACK here and PICK IT UP! (Pause, taking a step toward doorway:) Allie! --- AL-MOND ---!!

Action: (She holds pose a moment, until having to change hand holding towel; then, fierce sound of shower. She puffs up angrily and begins casting about looking for something: Over by endstand at end of sofa again, moves it, reaching behind, comes up with short club, hefts it, looking toward doorway; considers where else conveniently to put it, decides on occ. chair fronting TV, puts it under pillow, pats down; then goes hurriedly through doorway front left, comes out shortly pinning towel behind. Shower stops; she is pushing bassinets into inner room; here, confronting Mr.B. again:)

All right, now that you're all clean and de-loused, come PICK UP

THE FILTHY MONEY! you suffered such PAIN to earn --- SIR! (She takes a couple steps through doorway then turns facing it again. (Less stilted pointing with hand)

Mr.B:--- (Same quiet gruffness:) You better leave me alone.

Mrs.B::: ---Throwing it all over the sofa like you grudge some whore payment for services ---!

Mr.B:--- (From within:) Bitch! LEMME ALONE! I say!

Mrs.B::: (Socks fists in hips:) I just wish to hell I could. I'd leave you ALONE, awright! --- just as ALONE as you need to be! --- If I had better sense, and didn't have these babies --- (Sounds tearful:) You worthless bully-bum!

Mr.B:--- (Closer to door:) Shut up, and leave me alone, woman, dammit!

Mrs.B::: (After a frightened step backwards, steps forward again:) YOU GO TO HELL!

Action: (He makes bluffing run at her, mumbling fiercely, gets only slightly in doorway, half naked with towel. She flees toward center of room and occ. chair, looking back.)

Mr.B:--- (Leaning around doorway, pointing, gruffly indignant:) You --- YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU! DO YOU! (Disappears within; almost plaintively:) YOU BETTER STOP ---!!

Mrs.B::: (Moving back towards doorway:) I'M NOT TAKING ANYTHING! OFF YOU THIS EVENING, ALMOND BLACK! I'm gonna TEACH YOU a thing or two. YOU THINK LIFE'S YOUR PUNCHING BAG AND COSPIDOR! WELL, IT AIN'T (Pauses near end of sofa) AND I'M NOT YOUR WHORE! You better COME out here and PICK UP this money!

Mr.B:--- (Appears in doorway startling her, in slacks and heavy shirt not yet tucked in; nervously agitated, voice quakes but tries to appear cool:) Why donohu turn on the TV and have some soapbox therapy? (Turns away quickly to conceal agitation)

Mrs.B::: YOU THE ONE NEEDS THERAPY, YOU BIG BABY!!

Mr.B:--- (From within:) LIFE!! --- YOU gonna tell ME something about life ---! You don't know the name of the street two blocks over.

Mrs.B::: (Staying close to end of sofa:) HAH! FUNNY! (Get braver, turns and scoops up two handfuls of the money, coins preferred; rushes to doorway:) I got news for you, Funnyman! You oughtta listen and find out just what's happening! (Takes a guarded step inside doorway and hurls one handful:) TAKE! YOUR FILTH BACK! This AIN'T a whorehouse, and I'm NOT your whore! AND NOT SELLING!

(She moves quickly away as he appears in doorway gesturing as if to grab her, and she dashes the other handful in his face, then skips ---

HERE! KISS your OWN behind!

--- fleeing to center of livingroom; slows; sidelong confrontation and gestures:)

THAT'S the news in brief, front page. You want more, you come out here and I'll open your eyes to something else!

Mr.B:--- (Stepping through doorway, appearing shook:) You always know when to show yourself, don't chu? You! --- You sit here ---! I have to go out in that hustle-bustle! --- ridiculous happenings!

Mrs.B:--: (From the middle of the floor:) Not a thing in the WORLD happened to you out there, Almond Black! not a thing! What happened? You tell me. Did you get arrested? Did you get a ticket, or something!? Show me! I don't believe it! NO, NOTHING-- except some TAIL, maybe, you thought you might like that didn't flatter you like the big-daddy MAN all the women're suppose to melt for! (Pause; mostly disbelieving!) Tell me what happened!

(He looks for a moment like he's going to charge over on her but doesn't, and looks suspiciously at the occ. chair after she jumps in that direction; stands near sofa grumbling; thrusts hands in pockets. She moves behind occ. chair resting one hand on it. After a moment, standing sideways to her.)

Mr.B:--- You know so much! Between you and your nose you don't know your hand from a handkerchief! (Faces left rear doorway after, but doesn't proceed)

Mrs.B:--: (From behind chair:) HAH! What happened? You meet one who patted you ---!?

Mr.B:--- (Sharply turning, only his head but that's sufficient to cause her to nearly fold over the chair before recovering:) Stupid! Between you and your womanhood, you don't know a man from a hog-maw. (Takes a couple steps toward rear left doorway)

Mrs.B:--: (Decides to stand near arm of chair) HAH! Maybe your fancyflash can't tell a man from a manikin, but between you and your MANHOOD YOU don't know the SUN from a LIGHTbulb! so what's the difference?! (A step closer for emphasis:) Why don't you go ahead and have a nervous breakdown!? since you don't know what else to say! I'm gonna sock it to yuh, don't think I ain't!

Mr.B:--- (Throws a glance, entering the other room:) Go ahead and talk, woman. You don't know --- your ABCs.

Mrs.B:--: I know what I HAVE GOT there's some would appreciate!

(Action: He disappears within. She puffs, folds her arms, moving fretfully toward sofa.)

And don't bother to ask me to fix your supper! We don't have a contract for ANYTHING tonight! (Approaches doorway)

Mr.B:--- (From within:) Since when did you learn to FIX anything, anyway?

Mrs.B:--: (Halts momentarily and bristles; brazenly enters room:) You be-- Get away from the babies before you breathe some of your poison on them!

Mr.B:--- (Gruffly:) They're my babies.

Mrs.B:--: You don't act like it. And ---

(Action: Sound of scuffling and running footsteps. A SCREAM and high squeak; then Mrs.B. dashes through doorway front left, running footsteps cease within)

That's right! Maybe they're not ---!!

Mr.B:--- (Loud from within:) WOMAN, YOU TRIPPLING WITH LIFE'S FUNNY-BONE! YOU BETTER SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

Mrs.B:--: (Going bravely toward rear door:) TOUGH! (Stands just within doorway, looking left:) AND GET OFF MY BED IN THERE! I might wanna lie down.

Mr.B:--- Come on and lie down, you might learn something...

Mrs.B:--: SOME NERVE ---!:

Mr.B:--- Seems you gotta be shut UP---

Mrs.B:--: (Enters babies' room) You wouldn't know HOW! you lamebrain idiot! You the one don't know what life's ALL ABOUT! To you it's just twenty-thirty dollars a day and a BLACKOUT IN BED at night --- YOU BIG DUMB STUPID --- Jackass! I MARRIED A JACKASS!

Mr.B:--- Who you calling a jackass, woman?

Mrs.B:--: (Edging closer to L/R doorway:) YOU! Yes, YOU! You don't like it? Come on out here! I'm not gonna run, either! --- you scare-crow bully! (Backing slowly into doorway:) Come on, I'll fight-chu, you coward! So HELP ME! --- if I don't try to upset your strut! Mister Big Daddy!

Action: (She is in doorway. Footsteps sound within, slow and deliberate; she edges into livingroom well ahead, gets clear of sofa; as he strides into livingroom, she backs more toward occ. chair.)

Mr.B:--- (Pointing lamely:) You already have, Little Mama. But even though you're loud and wrong I'm gonna take pity on you. (He is picking up monies on sofa, on floor, around toward doorway; gets to doorway, sticks out handful to her)

Mrs.B:--: (Moved back to sofa) Put it on the dresser!

(He turns back into room with it, bending over: More money on floor inside.)

And THANK YOU, MISTER MAA-AAN, SIR! (She stands watching as he comes out again and passes right by her, she showing almost no apprehension; makes face behind him)

Mr.B:--- Have fun baby. (:Stretching out on sofa in his diminished glory)

(He cups hands behind his head. She stands looking at him, hands clasped, arms extended down pressed against her body. Long silence. He raises up to see what's happening, then look at each other quizzically; shortly, he drops back.)

Why're you running around here with that towel on your head?  
looking like Aunt Jessica?

Mrs.B::: (Wrinkles her nose) Just don't worry about it.

Mr.B:--- (Lifting up again:) You washed your hair? You did --- !?

Mrs.B::: (Wrinkles her nose again) Just don't worry about little ole me.  
(Walks over to front occ. chair;) Just keep your mind in the gutter where it's comfortable, and on those (Sarcastically:) beauties OUT IN THAT WORLD --- (Sits, reaching under pillow for stick, brings it out, concealing it behind her, rises, going toward rear doorway:) --- until it burns you up. Shouldn't take long.

Mr.B:--- (Springing up from waist as she comes by sofa:) YOU'RE PLANNING TO WEAR AN AFRO! (Grins)

Mrs.B::: (Almost caused to reveal stick by his sudden movement, stores short, holds hand out restrainingly:) Nevermind. Simple Simon didn't say THINK! or MOVE! (Passes cautiously to doorway)

Mr.B:--- (Facing ceiling:) Well, well --- (Chuckles; then reaching into his newly dressed pants:) By some strange coincidence, I just HAPPENED to pick up some beads. (Tosses them to her)

Mrs.B::: (Catches beads in one hand against chest; holds them up looking at them somewhat admiringly, reaches inside doorway to corner of inner room and puts stick away; steps back just inside livingroom slowly brings beads up and places them around her neck, then touching them up to hang just-so along the falls of her breasts. She heaves a big sigh, then:) You wanna eat?

Mr.B:--- (Poutingly:) You robbed me of my appetite.

Mrs.B::: Tough. (Starts away)

Mr.B:--- Anyway, it might have some of your OLD hair in it.

Mrs.B::: (Paused; shakes that off) What happened today?

Mr.B:--- Ahhhh!--- nothing.

Mrs.B::: You get a ticket, or something? --- cops bothering you?

Mr.B:--- (Turning on side, facing out:) No! Now, leave me alone.

Mrs.B::: (Makes face; glances back at stick; in fantasy of having it, makes venting gesture in silence; recovers) You sure you don't want to eat, Bastard?

(He makes some self-satisfied facial gestures -- mischievous, remains silent, swallowing; shifts himself a little for comfort. She glances back at the stick again, makes furious face of restraint.)

Supper is READY, Allie B.

Mr.B:--- I told you. Don't wanna eat --- now. Maybe later. Gonna

stay up and watch the fights.

Mrs.B::: Well, I hope your MAN loses, too! (Departs within)

(Mr.B. stays put for a moment, then gets up and goes to turn on TV; flips dial for channel, big sound: AND NOW LADIES AND---; tones it inaudible except at close range, returns to sofa, lying face out, then turns over, back to room ---.)

(LIGHTS FADE DOWN AND UP:)

(Mr.B. is snoring, babies are crying, Mrs.B. hits the floor within, goes to bassinets, makes coddling sounds: "There, there--- wha'samatter, honeybunches? Ohhhh--- we so maa-ad!" etc. for some moments; babies quieten a little. She looks into livingroom, glances toward TV, starts out then goes to inner bedroom; re-enters livingroom with a blanket, pauses opposite his head, raised blanket like boulder after studying his sleeping array, feinting to dash it, then spreads it over him; meanwhile, babies are getting loud again. She pokes his shoulder severally:)

Mrs.B::: Alli-eee? ---Allie!? Allie B. !?

Mr.B:--- (Grunts, groans) Huh---? Wha--? Wha'samaa---?

Mrs.B::: You gonna watch the fights, or you gonna sleep?

Mr.B:--- (Facing around:) Wha-utt? HUH? Oh --- s'it on yet?

Mrs.B::: (Makes exasperating gestures because of babies crying for attention coupled with his stupor:) I don't KNO--OW! (Moving quickly to TV:) I GUESS not. (Convulses and sneezes just as she reaches television --KAA-CHOO-- bends and tones it up, hurrying away--

(Announcer: And, now, this delightful message from our reliable friends who make all of this possible:)

(Mrs.B. has another mild convulsion as TV audience laughs, nearing rear doorway - babies wailing --- KAA-CHOO!) OHhhh L---

Mr.B:--- (Sleepily:) Thank you, dear. God bless you.

(Announcer: Here is Cherie, famous throughout the Continent for her exquisite profile --- Oooh, la-la -- and it's so easy to see why. And that complexion! You might SAY it's worth a MILLION DOLLARS, and in a way you'd be right. We asked Cheri --- )

Mrs.B::: Ohhh-- poor precious little fellas! --- did mommie leave yee?--- to look after your bi-iig bro-ther, Hunnnnn? There, there --- it's gonna be awright; everything gonna be just fi-line...

Mr.B:--- (Makes some semi-intelligible, semi-awareness sounds, and:) Uhh-ummmm, whas-goonon?--- uh-ummmm---

Mrs.B::: (Babies making intermittent discontentment sounds) Mommie's gon fi-i-ix! Ed-winnn! --- just evvvv-ry-shinnnn --- Ye-es, she ii-is. Just watchess. See? Ahhh--- thaa-aat's ri-right (Little

laugh:) aha-aha--- Ye-es, he so cute! What a bil-lig hand-some smi-ile! He such a --- (But one or the other of the twins seems determined to cry:) Ugh hhh! THIS IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES! --- (Calls for help:) Al-lieeee-ee! ALLIE---?

(He Jumps in sleep, otherwise hardly stirring.)

(TV Announcer: Are you still wearing last years tired face around? Then you need the new miracle Magic-Makeup by Roi de Coeur. Perhaps you've noticed how some lovely women always ---

(Continuing business with the babies. Mr.B. continues to doze.)

(Announcer: --- all-ways appear fresh as mountain lillies. Well, they're probably using the produce, for centuries the favorite of great ladies all over the Continent, now especially designed for the modern woman. Remember: --- )

(LIGHTS FADE DOWN AND UP:)

Action: (Same scene: Opens with TV music: "The Star Spangled Banner", picture of Stars & Stripes fluttering on tube. Light goes on in near doorway left. Mrs. B. comes out circuitously, checking first on babies, thru rear doorway; stands for a moment at foot of sofa, hands on hips, regarding him in heavy sleep; steps up to sofa, snaking him roughly:)

rs.B::: ALLIE! AL-MONDDDD!?! Wake up! WAKE UP!

r.B:--- (Grunts, stirs:) Unn--? wha--? Ugh! (Rolls onto back raising an arm over eyes; groans, then:) 'Wha'-times'it? The fights on!

rs.B::: Yeah...(Moving to turn off television)...the fight's on, Allie. In Vietnam, or some place. Get up and get your behind in bed.

r.B:--- Bed? The fights---? (Raises up as she turns off TV and the lamp on top of it, flops down:) Ugh! (Slaps forehead, repeatedly tapping it gently with his fist:) I missed the fights! (Big disgust c)ck) --- Ugh!hhh --- Why didn'tchu wake me!

rs.B::: (Sighing, back at sofa:) I FELL ASLEEP, NINNY! I'm SORRY, but I can't do EVERYTHING! (:Gesturing exasperating; moves off, going to rear room:) C'mon, get up. You're gonna miss the BOAT one of these days. (Disappears within)

(Action: He remains almost motionless except for fist gouging forehead, then the arm flops to sofa; he stretches stiffly, groaning, then settles still.)

(Almost plaintively:) AL-lieeee-eee-EEE! get UP-UP --- ALMOND! will you bring your stupid self to bed?! (Pause) All right, I'm not gonna call you again! (Pause) Almond---? ALLIE B.!!

r.B:--- (Jumps from shock) O-KAY-aaaa! All right! I'm awake--- (Stirring, sits up slowly; takes a deep breath, rubs face, clears

throat, kicking slippers around to slip feet in; halts, strikes thoughtful pose:) Was I dreaming about the fights? (:asking self; turns to call in to Mrs. B.:) Who wo-nnn---? (Fans her to scorn:) Ahhh--- she wouldn't know.

Mrs.B::: (From within:) Awright, I'm not getting up anymore tonight except for the twins! Sleep out there if you li-like. Just don't bother to wake me. You HEAR? (Pause) And no fooling around in bed all day tomorrow. You gonna take us to the park! --- (Light goes out in near doorway) --- so I can find out the NAME of the STREET two blocks over! And we can pick up the paper at Henry's.

Mr.B:--- (Makes face as matter of form, fanning toward doorway) All right, Hershe, dear, sweetheart, I'm up --- I'm COMING, Uncle Sam --- dear. (Scoots off sofa, standing up and dragging blanket; stretches again:) Ohhhhhh --- (Glances toward doorway wearing put-upon expression, at TV; thoroughly dramatic:) I regret that I have but one life to give to wife --- (Rubs back) --- and only prayers for country, community, and civil riots.

(He puts out little lamp at head of sofa; scene completely dark except for night light coming thru front blinds; goes shuffling toward dark doorway, front left, blanket over shoulder trailing down back:)

A poor player-- am I --- who ---SWEATS, and --- SWEATS his hours --- in paradise --- and --- and then floats away---

(Action: Soft, low beat of African drums --- continuing)

Aaleeee! Olubayo! eeeee-EEEE-YOW! -ohhhhh ---

Mrs.B::: (Soberly:) Shut up, Fool.

(Action: Drum tempo gradually increasing)

He:----- Jungle weave of night! --- --- A panther's breath in the air! --- eeee-YOW! --- Woman is whereabouts out there! --- To FIND her!!

She::::: (Changes, more in humming tone:) Keep to the path, O Mighty One! Search the memory for inspiring effort! (Laughs) Search for the opening in the jungle wall!

He:----- WILLING, is she? to become ---!! Then, say, IFETAYO! -eeEEE-YOW!

She::::: IN-NO-CENT --- as PITCH: Waiting!!! --EE-Yow--

He:----- eeeee-EEEE-YOW! OH-hh! A panther-toothed necklace for her!!

She::::: A smile as joy arrives at the Flower-in-the-panther! --- On the velvet field, at the path-of-fingertip-touch blossom: The Flower at-the-path's-pillowed-end, the Lost-finder's-Insight ---!!

He:----- The long nakedness envelopment! --- Balm for the madness in the pointer's quivering feather! But, now, I'M LOST! What's this! THE HUNTER IS LOST!!! (Sound of bumping into something)

She:::: You can find me -- you MUST -- O Great Arriver: For the interlocking mellon wells of sweetest wordlessness, mindful of full breasts, pointing yet --- great rhythms! --- soft hills and graceful falls, and mellon fields! --- and the soft shield of honor over the valley

He:----- The longing is brain-numbing! eee--yOW! Yet no lines guiding, O Moving-Wonder-of-Body-Presence! Danceress-in-the-Drum!

She:::: You're closer each footstep, by a foot closer yet, O Spear-of-Joy, O Root-of-Song!

He:----- You're some where EVER, I know, O Long Lips! O Mellow Litheness!

She:::: You're close! Here ---!

He:----- Here---? YES!

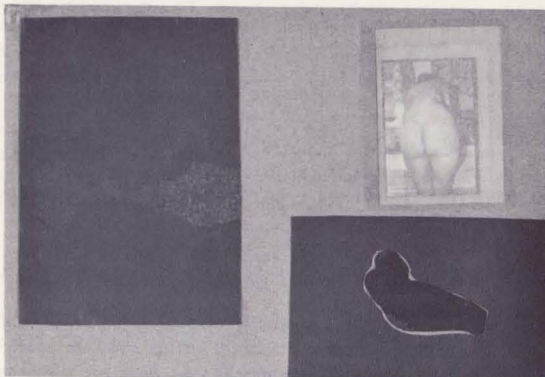
She:::: RIGHT HERE!!

He:----- O Mellon Field! O, Breasts-Pointing-Yet!

She:::: And Shield-of-Honor to bear your name!!

He:----- O Beauti-force!!!

End, Act III Scene I



...mellon wells of sweetest wordlessness...

Act III Scene II

Time: The following day, Saturday, mid-afternoon: Bright automn day

Scene: Park walk, benches nearby; enter Mr. & Mrs. B.; Mrs.B. is pushing twins carriage; Mr.B. walks leisurely on outside, hands in pockets, newspaper under arm together with a magazine. Both are warmly dressed, not engaged in conversation. A young white couple enter from left, walking briskly, in conversation; Mr.B. sees them coming, turns slightly from the shoulders but space is not sufficient, he and man bump; they grunt; women make high-pitched airy sounds:)

Man:-- (Looking fierce and shuffling back spraddle-legged:) Hey! Why don'tchu watch where you're going? Whatd'ya think you own the walk? (Pause) Well ---?

Mr.B:-- (Wearing an annoyed look, gives slight run-along gesture with head:) Go on ---!

Action: (Man shuffles back further, more spraddle-legged, clenched fists. Mrs.B. is trying to move Mr.B. away with one hand while staying the baby carriage, and looking very annoyed.)

Mrs.B:--YOU bumped into HIM! Why don't YOU look where YOU'RE going, whether you own the sidewalk or not!#

Woman: (Trying to lead man away:) C'mon, Phil. Don't make a fuss. No use to waste your breath on them.

Action: (Man is looking Mr.B. over; Mr.B. stands almost nonchalantly, hands still in pockets, but looking steadily at his confrontant. Man seemingly allows himself to be persuaded by woman, puffed up, recovers to stand tall; then moves slowly stiffly off, led by woman, her arms in his; all move a pace or so further apart.)

You folks just better watch out, that's all ---!

Mrs.B:--(Fiercely, looking back:) WHO YOU ---!?

(Action: Mr.B. snatches her around. She shrugs violently, seemingly tempted to hit him:)

Don't be snatching on me! --- you!!--- (Looks back, looks up at him:) You so BIG and BAD: Scared to open your mouth! Snatching on ME! (Glances back; other couple passes from view, man looking continually back; she looks up at him smoldering:) BI-IG! BI-IG! tough guy!

Action: (Another man approaches from left, youngish, white---)

Mr.B:-- Ahh, woman! why I gotta get excited about lil bullyboy and his frisky!?

Mrs.B:-- Because I didn't like her tone of VOICE! (A last look back) He wasn't so little, anyway.



Action: (Mr.B. shrugs, looking off. Mrs.B., pouting, stops suddenly stepping to far side of carriage; he stops, turning to her:)

Mr.B:--- If I fight you raise hell and say I shouldn't fight; if I don't fight ---

Mrs.B:!! Oh, shut up! HERE, you push the carriage! --- since I gotta do all the fighting! (Pause; lifts out pocketbook) Anyway, you're suppose to fight THEM.

Action: (He resignedly takes up task, putting paper in carriage and magazine in pocket. Other man approaches, slight smile, glancing at them and carriage. Mrs.B. continues to look fierce, also tense as man comes up to carriage on Mr.B.'s side. Mr.B. looks slightly embarrassed.)

Man:--- (Guardedly pleasant:) Hey, watcha got there, couple twins? (Gesturing a peep at covered babies)

Mr.B:--- Yeah, heh-heh---

(Mrs.B. relaxes, eyes flutter, tries a smile; all have momentarily halted. Man looks at them appraisingly:)

Man:--- Yeah? that's nice. Heh-heh. (Alternately glancing at them and in to carriage:) Two little ones, eh -- boys or girls?

Mr. & Mrs.B:--- (Mrs.B. first, clearly and with a good smile:) Boys. (Mr.B., heavier, not so out-going:) Boys.

Man:--- Boys!! Hey! (Looks at Mr.B., nods:) Nice going! (Nods to Mrs. B. who nods back)

Mrs.B:!! Thank you. (Glances at Mr.B. whose nod is plain but whose audible response is scarcely audible)

Man:--- (To Mr.B.): Were you having trouble with that guy up ahead just now?

(Mrs.B.'s smile vanishes, looks apprehensively from man to Mr.B.)

Mr.B:--- (Takes a breath, gesturing with his head:) Nawh --- we had a little shoulder brush.

Man:--- (Nods, studying Mr.B.'s face, glances at Mrs.B., nods severally, shift uneasily:) Ummm. Un-huh. (Hesitant interim, then lifts a hand in salutation:) Nice family you got. (Walks off, looking back:) Lots of luck, Pal.

Mr.B:--- Thanks. (Pushes on slowly)

Mrs.B:!! (Arm looped over Mr.B.'s, looking back:) Hunph!!! You know him?

Action: (Mr.B. shakes his head. She looks back again, and he is slightly pulling her after. A couple paces further, he inclines toward bench. She casts a knowing slightly resentful look at him, acquiescing, lifts newspaper out of carriage and begins dusting bench as he maneuvers carriage to right side and presses brake. He takes a peep at babies, chuckles,

and makes some little adjustment of covering. Mrs.B. steps over, peeps, and readjusts the adjustment as he stands watching in an air of uselessness. She appears less amiable still than usual, glances deprecatingly at him and she turns to sit, opening paper. He huddles in coat, sits to her right, arms hugging body momentarily, looking around at scene, takes a couple deep breaths, looks at Mrs.B. as she leaves thru paper and shuffles closer. She takes it otherwise and hunches from hip. He slouches on bench, then shortly takes out magazine:)

Mr.B:--- OK. So you don't wanna be friendly ....

(Several moments of silent reading, then newspaper interest:)

Mrs.B:!! Ummm. Well, well --- Look --- (Moves paper to show him)

(He glances at paper then fixes gaze on her, slightly questioning.)

Mrs.B:!! --- an article about the Integration Rally the other night. Very interesting. It says the rally was very successful in kicking off the fund-raising drive for the Afro-Bootstrap Campaign; they're going all over -- through the South and the urban ghettos next year. And then it gives the text of Dr. Goodblack's speech. It's sort of interesting. He says: (Reading:)

There is a certain look in the eyes of some publicity subjects, VIPs, which says, 'I am SOMEBODY', which would seem to cast into a limbo the lives of those of us upon whom they look and to whom they look for idolization, as well as, in some cases, to reflect the limbo from which they, themselves, came. The irony here is that the public KNOWS this look, recognizes, and LOOKS for it, but seldom want to see it -- except for people who wish to despise our celebrity, anyway, like certain bigots who look for it in the eyes of 'Negro firsts' and formerly poor big-money prize-winner giddy people ...

(Stops reading:) It's very long; I'll skip some. Lets see ... uh ... (Reads more searchingly tentatively hereafter:) ... cast an inescapable slight upon the average human life, that state in which you have to tell everybody what your name is, what you do for a living, and your claim to fame, if any, and show the favorite picture of your wife or husband - family, in some cases - to try to solicit some admiration ... (Pause:) "Ah ... lets see ..." (Continues:) Apropos, the cameraman will often tell you to pretend you're doing something to sort of help get the look off your face and/or out of your head some blown-up idea about having your picture took ... (Skips)

... it may be even harder in the early stage until you've lived thru to the wholesome feeling that this SOMEBODINESS really belongs to AND IS you; and, ironically, what's more: That, however far from hell, your new status is still a long way from paradise.

It is the truth of this distance from paradise that encourages so-called VIPs and other IMPORTANT types to focus on the distance from HELL (That's what we're suppose to be in,

and where many of our white brothers would like to keep us).  
But, we'll get to that a little in a minute.

The main reference is, of course, to people in general. But, as black folk in America, we probably know the 'somebody look' and the 'somebody attitude' a lot better than most ... (Skips, continuing:)...you may have insinuated yourself into 'somebody' recognition by SOME, but we both know that I'M going to presume you're NOBODY, or, 'you're nobody till SOMEBODY: ME, that is, the everybody-me -- everybody-me like the gradualism of timelessness -- endorses you through individual direct or indirect confrontation...(Skips, continuing):...

Contributing to the disprize of blacks historically have been many things, among which was the so-called folk wisdom and survival imperative to tell the whites what they wanted to hear -- meaning to clown, not stupid, lacerate and derogate one's black self -- which, needless to say, contributed to the contempt for, and at least the RATIONALIZATION of, black nobodiness ... After all ---

the rose that cooperates to undignify itself can be ONLY a rose by NAME, but inevitably from it even that it has: The NAME, will be objected to as too dignified to be borne by this thing of no dignity, and such name replaced by nincompoop or ... (Mrs.B. winces, skips):...

NOW, however, what was then the foregone conclusion -- a brief life if we thought to stand up (though roses and violets are never FRIGHTENED into falling), this fear MUST CEASE to subvert the humanity of even the least of us; for, henceforth, WE ARE ALL STANDING UP.

... (Skips, saying:) He mentions VIPs again, and people who represent themselves humbly before the public as a whole but whom no John Q. Smith could touch with a ten-foot pole ... and ... a type of liberal who will occasionally remind you that his time is his own and his help voluntary... (Reads:)... which is another luxury for such of the upper or privileged - or what-have-you - class ... he, of course, expects to be thanked and... you're supposed to be flattered to get anyway close to him ... (Scanning:)... and it's demeaning to have such person come and look at your dirty laundry when he never brings his...or but-- uh-- (Reads:)... a prepared polished facade of himself ... and often the false hope, and the establishment's brain-washing propaganda, etc... (Says:)... He says it's something like having a visitor in your home when you haven't had a chance to clean and get ready, which almost any self-respecting person will do, and mentions something about the suburban people coming into the slums in New York and smearing awful paint over the people's buildings as an example of the kind of help the poor usually get from these SOMEBODIES which they could better do without...(Reads):...

Usually, one allows these things to encroach upon one's dignity with a closed mind, but, if later, one gets to BE a somebody, the mind opens, and these things will be a source of endless embarrassment, forcing one to over-assert, or over-represent, the

IMPROVED aspect of one's essential humanity in SOMEBODINESS status. Of course, many such encroachments can only happen on a large scale in disorganized communities, but may, in effect, further work cleavages of disorganization because the more sensitive individuals will tend to disassociate themselves from such as will thusly sell their self-respect -- as will sell it, not that it matters to say SO CHEAPLY.

Having so exposed oneself, then, and attempt to assert one's equality; not to consider SUPERIORITY, must first necessarily get itself within a fortress of defenses and what amounts to rather lame excuses for the past record of blatant self-failure. Because what one has done, perhaps severally, is to have entertained a circumstance representing oneself as in need of and benefiting from even the hoax and folly of those publicly represented somesbodies. NOT ALL, BUT MANY of whom are suffering from an insatiable need to acknowledge even a delusion of SELF-worth apart from prima facie conferred somesbodies...

(Skips; says:)... And he associates this with giving coins to a blind man for his 'Thank you, Sir'... is (Reads:)... a similar petty kind of acknowledgment of self-worth, i.e., to HAVE ten cents and be willing to GIVE ten cents to someone who NEEDS ten cents, may purchase self-respect for some, regardless of how they came by the ten cents ... And analogous to the ten cents giver is the Anti-poverty millions embezzler, or thief --the adverse: The purchase of a moment's respect by giving ten cents in one case, and the purchase of a lifetime's respect by taking a million in the other; in both circumstances the poor are exploited in a help-the-poor situation, in the latter case by would-be giant exploiters formerly left by the wayside of inopportune circumstance...

Mrs.B: (Sighs wearily) Ugh!hh --- I'm getting tired of reading this out loud. Are you interested? (Looks at him apologetically)

(He shrugs, nods as with some obligation to further indulge both the **article** and the reading.)

(She nods as in personal resolve and consensus:) Well --- it IS interesting. Lets see, how much more ---? (Looks over page; recovers:) Hummmm. (Reads:)... (Says:) Here he says that most people aren't interested in 'being SOMEBODY' in the VIP sense, but with a personal notion of happiness borrowed from ... (Scans, mumbling, says:) They are concerned with COMFORT as a sort of earthy generalization of HAPPINESS borrowed from romances ... partly because of a more or less honest self-evaluation and of an evaluation of their chances in our society, not necessarily the same honest dollar, excluding phenomenal luck ... (Skips; reads:)

The world is continually saying privately (as to adults) that it doesn't NEED another somebody NOW -- that there are more potential somesbodies than there is ROOM, or vacancies, for somesbodies (based on some arbitrary ratio of chiefs to indians), and, of course, a long waiting list (and don't call us, we'll call you, or something like that). But publicly (as to children - say - schoolchildren) it frowns on all who do not aspire to emulate one of its acknowledged SOMEBODIES, the great

ones (the idea being in part to keep a goodly reserve, and another part to keep things in line and orderly by playing out a rope of hope) ... (Scans, says:) Then he says that the black man, even the black school child, is PRIVILEGED to the world's PRIVATE opinion, or its - this - opinion in private...

(Reads:)... which is to say, where there IS room for a SOMEBODY, it is my business to see that one of the white intra-group nobodies gets this nourishment, so as to keep the faith (AND THE LEGEND OF SUPREMACY) alive. But, of course, now and then, there WILL be a need for one or two Negro-Frists (or representative, token, Negro somebodies), and maybe they will be you and you if you cooperate ... (Scans, skips)...

(Reads:) The focus of who is eligible to BE SOMEBODY in this hedge-podge among black folk is consequently difficult and dangerous to presume. But many would prefer to presume (and do) that nobody is SOMEBODY in a black skin, making dealings with everybody therein easily of a supercilious presumptive fashion. (Skips)... it contributes a good deal to dissension over leadership within a consequently tightly circumscribed organizational and organizing leeway... (Skips)... but, again, as with people in general, most blacks aren't concerned with this, or are only concerned wherein because of general derogation they may feel obliged to strive to be this compromised SOMEBODY, as it were, in order to be ANYBODY (say, a kind of medium between nobody and somebody).

The irony is that under circumstances of you're-nobody-till-everybody-says-so, the black person cannot seemingly ever be just John Q. Smith, the comfortable common man -- the fellow who, in effect, ultimately must always be stable enough, wise enough, unselfish enough, and alert enough to tilt the world back from the edge of doom where the perverted ambitions of others have gotten it ... because nobody listens to a nobody, and one must be on a good foundation to lift and/or bear heavy weights... (Scans: --- Ummm ---

(Reads:)... It is with this John Q. Smith in mind, this stable fundamental somebody, that the importance of universal civil rights and the human dignity of descent loom ever so large; because these are the minimal requisites, the politico-social qualifications, for interpersonal comfort; these keep open and optimally honest the communication between the common man and the man-god of ambition...

Mrs.B::: (Sighing, glances at Mr.B.:) Ugh! --- B-other! But it's interesting, isn't it. There's just a little more.

Mr.B:--- (Nods, grunts acknowledgment:) Un-huh.

Mrs.B::: Ahhh --- ummm --- (Reads:)... these rights, this dignity upon which an optimal stable comfort is predicated, fact or fiction, are grants of legend otherwise politico-socially taken for granted in the establishment of the home. And in this regard, to play house is to make a home if the play succeeds. The playmate makes the play, and the play is the making of the playmate. The house is where one goes, or to which one comes;

and the home is where one is received, or receives ... (Skips)...

(Says:) That's cute, isn't it? 'The playmate makes the play, and the play is the making of THE... (or AT)... THE... '... and the play is the making of the playmate. (Turns a smiling look at him:) Isn't that nice?

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles) Yeah, it is.

Mrs.B::: I think so, too. (Turning back to paper:) Uh ... lets see... (Mumbles... reads:)... The reception and receiving are predicated upon positive identity, and cannot otherwise succeed except between identifiable SOMEBODIES... which means mutual respect, in part, and also means some measure of social standing...

The home is then the first referent of somebodiness -- the first, the most frequent, the most intense, and should accordingly be something of an island paradise, in comparison to which the outside world, the macrocosm, is an ocean of interpersonal neutrality, admitting of many other islands of community living.

The existence of the home, predicated upon prior recognition of somebodiness, should promote the growth that radiates from developing indices of further knowledge and FEELING, to the growing enhancement of continuing recognition... (Scans to the end, mumbling; reads:)...

The look in the eyes of home bodies say many things, usually something like: I am your wife; I am the woman, the beloved, and correspondingly of the man. Occasionally, they say, You're acting strange. Or some other not quite complimentary statement. More often they say simply, YES - yes - and, I am. The most humanly inclusive look says simply, I am. And this is the look we should like to see in the eyes of all the family of man.

(Says wilyly:) A few more lines. (Reads:) A companion or subtitle then to Operation Bootstrap could be Operation Afro. And so we have Operation Afro-Bootstrap--by which we do not mean to imply that there is some vast area of negligence on the part of our black brothers, but to affirm, as the promotional comfort of the black home must affirm - perhaps re-affirm - the SOMEBODINESS of the black image ... (Skips)...

(Reads:) Toward this end, it must accrue the definitive images and style of an Afro motif suitable to the American setting (You will hear more about what Operation Afro-Bootstrap intends to do, but, generally, it will be community-centered with house-to-house, door-to-door, communication).

The integration process, which is the course largely posited to solve you're-nobody-till-everybody-says-so-never, must necessarily be two-handed: To secure the RIGHT and to explore with the LEFT, or, to gain civil RIGHTS as the politically (power) identified AMERICAN, and to compose the most comfortable stance of somebodiness with definitive AFRO-ness, not

overly withdrawn nor overly LEFT-out. And, to make a maxim: Don't overly rely on the RIGHT(S) to win the fight.

Lastly, my friends, this word: If, even given our best efforts, Integration doesn't come by sane deliberate speed, I little wonder what will happen when all the rent-up aggression, the frustration, the subverting avenues of intragroup play-off, revert, and self-love comes screaming from its hiding places - wounded times over - gnashing its teeth for the loveblood of disprizers, venting rage upon indifference, and feverishly berzerk to get at and tear and rend the flesh of all prototype public and private somebodies, the practitioners of detraction casting their bleached looks of egomania, and the parsimonious scrooges of profitable and profitless discordant allowances for human comfort, endlessly dispatching dissent to the Bastille in a white mood of peremptoriness. But let us hope for success. Thank you.

(Sigh) Finished.

(She looks at him measurably; he shifts himself on the bench, appears thoughtful. She reverts to the paper, glancing casually here and there; shortly.)

So, what do you think---? Sounds like a real smart fella, doesn't he? Not bad looking, either, as I remember.

Mr.B:--- Think you could fill up on his looks and smarts, baby?

Mrs.B: (Elbows him) Shut up, YOU! (Pause) Nobody can ever talk to you; you're always introducing!! --- TROUBLE!

Mr.B:--- Hummmm.

Mrs.B: (Looks up from paper in a suspended mood) Is that all -- really -- you've got to say about it? After I did all that reading? (Seriously emphatically slow;) I -- THINK -- HE -- HAS -- SOME -- REALLY! GOOD! -- IDEAS!!

Mr.B:--- (Pouting;) Yeah, I guess. (Pause) But I don't like people spelling out miracles I haven't reported seeing - or worked out - and getting all the credit.

Mrs.B: (Looks puzzled) What? !!!

Mr.B:--- (Evasive;) Nothing. Anyway, he's not saying much to me anymore. I AM somebody. I'm the greatest. And, besides, I told you I've heard him several trips.

Mrs.B: (Returned to intermittent distracted perusal of paper) Yeah, I seem to remember you said something about hearing him before -- before, when you used to go to those meetings, right?

Mr.B:--- Un. (Pursuing his line;) And the last time a joker said to me, You ain't nothing but a so-n-so like I am, I dumped him on his rump.

Mrs.B: (Glancing up; tainted concurrence;) Yeah --- I seem to remem-

ber that, too. And you were mighty lucky I didn't follow my better judgment and leave you flat. A crazy thing to do! Fighting! And about NOTHING!

Mr.B:--- It wasn't crazy. Maybe risky --- because those cops got on my nerves.

Mrs.B: (Yeah, well, that was the craziest part: Trying to bully the cops! --- and in YOUR position!)

Mr.B:--- Well, I wasn't crazy, really. I was HOT, that's all.

Mrs.B: (Shrugs with note of non-concurrence; distracted paper reading continuing now;) Well, anyway, don'tchu think better about Integration? I mean, it's not JUST Integration, like --- anymore. These leaders are saying -- uh -- like --- well --- (Reverts to searching perusal)

Mr.B:--- Get yourself an Afro and beads, and wait for the doorbell. You'll open it and there'll be a brother there who'll sprinkle IDENTITY on you. (Chuckles)

Mrs.B: (Looks at him disapprovingly) Not like tha-saat! More than tha-at. And don't joke about it; it's important.

Mr.B:--- Well, does anybody but you and I care what I think?

Mrs.B: Al-leeee --- that's the whole point: At least twenty million black people care. That's what he's saying. These at least are the SOMEBODIES who care -- people, anyway -- each one caring for and about the others, because we should all think and feel that we're SOMEBODY -- not like the guy you dumped on his rump.

(Action: He sits up and bends to his right, placing an elbow on his knee and fist in cheek, looks at her remindfully. Open-mouthed, blinking questioningly, she turns away after a moment's confrontation, sighing to announce futility --- )

Anyway, SIR, that's why you should be interested in Integration coming now. (Teasing, venting remonstrance;) NOT TO VISIT THE STRIP-TEASE SHOW, DEAR.

Mr.B:--- (Breathy chuckle) I'm not really interested. (Pause) I'm just wondering what else those door-to-door fellas will have in mind.

Action: (Both sit thoughtfully silent a moment, then Mrs.B. turns good-naturedly to him, snuggling closer and inter-locking an arm. He looks at her quizzically, then seems to turn back within to his thoughts.)

Mrs.B: (Shakes his arm and nudges to get his attention;) Almond, dear? Oh, Al-leeee? Loverr---? Loverrrrrr---?

Mr.B:--- (Enjoying the coaxing;) Hunn? Hun-what---?

Mrs.B: (Sweetly;) Put down your dukes for a while, OK?

Action: (He ducks his head as if embarrassed, puts his free hand on her forearm, smiling tight-lipped, leans slightly more against her.)

Mr.B:--- Unn-nn.

Mrs.B::: You know something?

Mr.B:--- Uh, what?

Mrs.B::: You suppose all married people fight as much as we do?

Mr.B:--- (Jokingly:) We nev-ver FI-ight. We just disagree a little.

Mrs.B::: (Wrinkles nose cutely and smiles; takes a deep breath) I know one thing.

Mr.B:--- What?

Mrs.B::: (Another big breath) The AIR is REALLY WONDERFUL out here!!!

(Action: He deflates a bit, faces forward, samples the air deliberately and turns to her again. She smiles.)

(Lifting free hand and poking his cheek:) You know what else? Mother's coming over Monday -- and Alice and Jake tonight. (Pause) Mother's gonna help me clean THE WHOLE HOUSE. You're not to go to the poolhall after work, understand? Promise?

Mr.B:--- Un-huh.

Mrs.B::: And behave yourself tonight when Alice and Jake come over, understand?!

(Action: He veers his head away, groans as might be taken for concurrence. She gives his cheek a poke for good measure then faces forward, arching her back and breathing deeply.)

Ahhh!hh--- (She tries to snuggle even closer) Guess what? (Rests head on his shoulder as he attends) You ARE a LITTLE company, Common Man.

End, Act III Scene II



Act III Scene III

Time: Early evening of the same day, Saturday.

Scene: L/R of the Blacks. The outermost occ. chair has been moved back adjacent the other to the right of the TV and a card table is set up in its place, a deck of cards, paper & pencil, and two ashtrays on top, folding chairs in place, and two standing server trays at cross-corners. Mr. & Mrs.B. in casual housewear are seated on the sofa reading sections of a newspaper. As scene opens, Mrs.B. glances at watch, Mr.B. glances at her, and moments later the doorbell rings.

Action: (Both drop reading, rising)

Mrs.B::: Let them in, baby; I'll get the treats. OK? (Exiting doorway near left:) Send Alice back.

Mr.B:--- Yeah, OK. (Crosses to front door & opens it, stepping back and intoning chummily:) Well --- Howdy, howdy!! Come in, folks.

Alice:: Hi, Allie! (Enters doorway, beaming, late twenty-ish, glamored; followed by Jake) You're looking trim. (Slaps him in gut)

Jake:-- Heh-heh. How're you doing, there? --- well. (Permanent joviality)

Action: (Alice proceeds to sofa area, removing sleek gloves:)

Alice:: Where's Hershe?

Action: (Jake pauses just inside door looking back at Mr. B. who closes it behind them:)

Mr.B:--- (To Alice:) She back in the kitchen. (Starts away from door:) Just a minute, let me take your coat.

Jake:-- (Interposes to comment:) You see there? Al, ole boy, no sooner 'I get in the house --- (Pokes Mr. B. in stomach) --- talking about me: That's the way they do when you flatter them by eating their cooking. (Laughs)

Action: (Alice laughs, fanning the idea to scorn, eyes sparkling, as she waits for Mr.B. to help with coat; both she and Jake are well dressed, or: Middle-poor prosperously.)

Mr.B:--- (Approaching Alice after handshake and backpat with Jake:) Hershe's getting out the nibbles. You can go on back. Lemme take your coat.

Alice:: (Sets bag on sofa:) Oh, thank you. (Peals out of coat with elaborate turn-about revealing neat-fitting knit mini suit; beaming anticipation:) Thank you-uuu.

Mr.B:--- Hummm. (Glances back at Jake, smiling:) I see you haven't lost your touch, man. The uptake must still be trembling for the downbeat.

Jake:-- (Hands in pockets, standing off a couple paces and beaming, laughs:) Heh-heh-heh, ahh, yeah!

Alice:: (Playing Almond's shoulder with gloves:) Fresh. (Slips gloves in coatpocket, eyes dancing, locking from Jake to Mr.B.)

Mrs.B:: (From within:) Al-lice---? I'm in the kitchen, honey. Come on back!

Alice:: (Taking up pocketbook and striding toward rear doorway front, looking back:) Coming, honey! I wouldn't dare keep company with these two hungry grizzlies alone! (Exits with, beaming back)

Action: (Jake is removing topcoat. Mr.B. goes to assist. FROM WITHIN: "OH, HERSHE! AN AFRO! YOU BEAT ME TO IT!" The men look at each other, chuckle quietly. Mr.B. takes Jake's coat:)

Mr.B:--- (Reaching for it:) Here, let me have that.

Jake:-- Heh-heh. Sure, thanks.

(Mr.B. goes toward rear left doorway.)

(Turning about:) How's it going?

Mr.B:--- (Pauses, shrugs:) You know: So-so. (Chuckles with Jake) How's it been with you?

Jake:-- (Toss-up gesture:) Can't complain. Heh-heh.

Mr.B:--- (Turns to proceed into room with coats but lingers a moment, forcing humored sound; that over and the silence imperiling;) Looks like the girls are set to give us the business tonight.

Jake:-- (Patting for cigarettes:) Yeah, I think she's had her fingers crossed all evening, while telling me she hopes WE don't see a face card between us all night. Heh-heh-heh-heh.

Mr.B:--- Ha-ha-ha. That'd be something to put up with. (Resumes errand:) Be right back. Make yourself at home.

Jake:-- Right. You said it. (Laughs; stirs about to right of cardtable, lighting cigarette. (Turns toward doorway as Mr.B. re-enters) How're the twins?

Mr.B:--- (Gestures plumply:) Great! (Gestures openly:) Make yourself at home, Jakey. How about a beer?

Jake:-- Yeah, heh-heh, sure thing; you know me.

Mr.B:--- (Goes to near doorway left:) Say, baby, beer coming?

Hershe:: (Within:) OK! In a minute ---!

Mr.B:--- (Turning back into L/R:) Humm. (Shrugs:) Well, I guess we have to wait for BIG DADDY service.

Action: (Jake is depositing himself in the inside occ. chair, chuckles at this small humor. Mr. B. joins him in the other occasional chair.)

Jake:-- So, how's the old lady treating you, Al, ole pal? Heh-heh.

Allie:--- Can't complain. (Pause) She was telling me earlier - giving me the business: (Heavy falsetto:) Now you behave yourself, and no CHEATING.

Action: (They laugh together; pause.)

Jake:-- I ran into Grover the other day. Heh-heh. Seems he didn't know I knew you. Heh-heh-heh. Sends his regards.

Mr.B:--- (Glances apprehensively towards doorway; nods, grunts:) Un.

Jake:-- (Continually finding thin veins of humor; after a moment:) Heh-heh-heh-heh. Seen anything of the Corpsmen lately, Al, ole boy? Heh-heh-heh! (:Tone seeming louder than necessary)

Mr.B:--- (Looks sharply toward doorway again, shifts in seat) Not much. (Looks directly, confrontingly at Jake:) I can't have the cops on my back like before. And, otherwise --- (Nods toward doorway:) --- I'm just a now and then pool player. Can't get to the meetings much.

Jake:-- (Patronizingly:) Yeah --- Heh-heh --- I know whatchu mean.

Mrs.B:--- (Coming out with two beers in coasters:) Here you are, Gents. (Glances at card table:) Oh, finished stacking the deck already!

(Action: Jakes leads off chuckling.)

Hi, Jake. Coooh, you're looking --- !!

Jake:-- Heh-heh-heh-heh. (Receiving his beer:) Hi, Hershehhh. Thanks. Heh-heh-heh. How's my girl?

Hershe:: Fine. (Beams congenially)

Jake:-- I was just telling Al: It's the cooking. Heh-heh-heh-heh. If a fella doesn't eat it, he's in trouble anyhow. Heh-heh-heh-heh.

(Round of chuckles)

Hershe:: (Turning away:) Oh, stop your kidding, Jakey. You know Alice is a good cuh--ook.

Jake:-- (Raised voice:) Don't tell her I said so - heh-heh - but if she cooked like you I'd be twice as big, and even Santa's little friends would whisper TV commercials to me! Heh-heh-heh-heh ---

Hershe:: (Pauses near doorway; teasingly:) Now, you know I know you're flattering me with something ELSE in mind. (Chuckles) We have some goodies with crackers and skins. (Continues thru doorway:) Coming right up.

Jake:-- Heh-heh. OK! I'm in your hands. Heh-heh-heh-heh. (Pats his stomach and looks at Mr.B., draining the humor:) Heh-heh --- Nothing like a little something to nibble on while sleep-walking (Guffaw).

Mr.B:--- (Forces out some jovial sound, returning from distracted thoughts to be host) You mean you're not to concerned to rise above THAT? --- (Heavy falsetto:) --- isn't suppose to dominate our lives, you know!

(Chuckles)

(Slow, wearily:) Hershe was telling me about that gossip columnist --- Dr. Molly ---?

Jake:-- Yeah. Heh-heh-heh --- Alice, too! (Heavy Falsetto:) 'Dr. Molly said ---' (Leads Mr. B. in laughter).

Mr.B:--- Said some woman called up saying her husband was too much for her and ---

Jake:-- HEH! HEH! HEH! Heh-heh-HEH! hhhhh---eee-EEEE! No kidding? Heh! Heh! hhhh-eeeEEE! Imagine --- heh-heh! eeeEEE --- what I'd feel like if --- ALICE did the reverse of that. Heh-heh-heh! hhhh-eeeEEE! Someone'd be bound to recognize her voice! Heh-heh-heh-eeee-eeeEEE! --- I'd hafta get a pair of --- COMBINATION-LOCK-INGGGGGGGGG---eeeeeeEEEE! Heh-heh! hhhh ---! pppp-PANTS! for her! Heh-heh hhhhhh ---eeeeeeEEEE! (Cough, cough) And, then --- hic-hic-eeee-eeee--- suppose --- Heeee-eeeeeeEEE! --- suppose --- I FORGOT THE COMBINATION WNNNNnnnnn ---HEH heee-eeeeee-heeeee---AAAAaaahhhhh---(Fallout)---).

Action: (Continued laughter, Mr.B. joining, especially humored by Jake's laughter. The women enter in the midst of this, Alice leading carrying large bowl, behind her Mrs.B. with tray containing several bowls and napkins. Both pause a few steps beyond doorway in some amazement at spectacle of laughter. Alice looking back at Hershe and both tittering, then proceeding. Mr.B. gets up and approaches card table for cigarette pack in ashtray. Jake struggles for breath.)

Alice: Sure wish I could've heard that one, don't you, Hershe? (Continues around far side of cardtable to set bowl on tray)

Hershe:: Must've been a dingo. (Sets tray on stand and hands a bowl to Mr.B. for the other tray, looking from one to the other)

Alice: Or, maybe it's best we didn't. (Looking at Jake:) He looks like he's about to die off. What did you feed him, Allie?

Action: (Allie lights up, looking around at the faces, shrugs to Alice's question, smiling, pulls out chair and sits at outermost place. Jake is fanning at them, wiping tears with handkerchief, bent forward in chair. Hershe stands to left of cardtable amused by his state. Alice moves over to him, placing a hand on his shoulder:)

Alice: Can you make it, honeybunch? (:Bending over; straightens up:) Hii-hii-hii. (Glances at Mr. & Mrs.B. while patting Jake's back; titters from Jake's contagion)

Jake:-- Hic-hic (Cough) ---AAAAaaahhh---whew! (Nods vigorously, coughs into handkerchief, pats her on hip, then braces himself on chair

arms, rising:) Yeah-yeah, I'm ok. Whew! Heh-heh-heh --- (Moves to cardtable)

Alice: (Teasing:) Well, you're not to have ANY MORE of that. (Follows him smartly)

Jake:-- (At nearest treat tray, sets his beer on table opposite Mr.B.:) Please say you don't mean it, baby. (Looks at Mr.B. & guffaws as he prepares to sample dip)

Mr.B:--- (Chuckles) You're still in, Jakey.

(Collective pause)

Hershe:: (Moving to be seated:) Well, is everybody ready?

Alice: (Seated; to Hershe, pointing at Jake yum-yuming treats as he slides his chair in:) I wonder if those last remarks were clues to the fun. (Leads Hershe tittering; semi-private joke)

Hershe:: (Nods, looking from Jake to Almond) Yeah. (Reaches for deck, removes cards from box, points finger at Allie:) Now, no cheating, you. (Puts box on tray, sets cards in front of Jake; she & Alice look at each other and giggle)

Allie:--- Now, don't start that again. You and Alice don't do so bad.

Jake:-- You're telling me ---! (Shuffling cards)

Alice:-- Shuffle the cards, dear.

Hershe:: (To Allie:) Nevermind. (:Waving hand)

Allie:--- (Continuing:) Cheat??? We catch you fumbling with the cards, trying to stack them ...

Jake:-- Heh-heh ---

Action: (Both women turn away from Allie to express their disdain, Hershe folding her arms across her breasts and looking at ceiling, Alice slyly watching Jake's shuffle.)

Allie:--- ---And dealing from the bottom ... RED HANDED!! ---

Hershe:: (Sing-song:) We're not list'ning-~~gg-gg~~ --- !!

Allie:--- (Throwing up his hands:) Plain as day! And you both sit there giggling - like you're doing now. (Heavy Falsetto:) 'Oh, don't pay them no mind, Hershe, dear, go ahead and deal, DEAR --- don't even let them out!'

Action: (Hershe, Alice, and Jake titter and chuckle; Alice threatens Jake with pocketbook for joining in. Allie seems little amused by his report at first, but lets out a gush of laughing breath just as Jake spills the cards.)

Alice & Hershe: (Pointing:) Ah-ha-aaa!

Hershe:: Been practising, Jake? (Looks at Mr.B. teasingly:) So, trying to freeze our attention while your partner stacks the deck, eh? (Turns to Alice and they giggle together; back to Allie:) You see, you're the cheaters. We're ladies. We--- don't --- cheat!

Jake:-- (Embarrassed:) Slipped out of hands. Heh-heh. I wasn't cheating. (Looks sheepishly at Allie as he scoops up cards)

Allie:--- Don't let em ruffle you, Jakie.

Allie:: There's bound to be a ruffle until we get a fair shuffle.

Action: (Hershe and Alice giggle following the rhyme. Jake chuckles self-consciously, gets himself some more dip before resuming. Allie looks on, but is necessarily interested in the inter-action between Hershe and Alice. Both women are conscious of this but disposed to represent themselves unconcerned. But intermittently each of the three tries to steal an observation of the other two. After a short period of silence while Jake shuffles, Hershe suddenly snaps:)

Hershe:: Say! wasn't Mixie Maxie great the other night?!

Jake:-- (Glancing at Allie seems to deflate from aggravation:) Ugh!hh---

Alice:: (Snapping alight) Yes! Oh, so fun-nnnny! And that Afro costume! OUT! of this WERE-erl! (Also enthusiastic:) Oh, did you see the last part?

Jake:-- (Setting deck before Hershe:) Cut, please. (Underbreath laugh)

Hershe:: No. What happened? We --- (Glances at Allie)

Alice:: Chi-ile, Film Flammy did his THING like there wasn't EVER gonna be another show! OOOooooohhh! --- I'm telling you ---!

Hershe:: (Hopping in seat:) REALLY?! Oh, I missed the best par--art! (Looks accusingly at Mr.B.)

Jake:-- (Tapping deck:) Cut, please. (Looking at Allie and guffawing slyly silently)

Alice:: I should SAY! OoooH-WEeee-ee! (Glances at Jake but decides to do without his confirmation; throws arms up and out --both men duck:) I almost FELL-OUT!!! MYYYYYYY Goo-ODNESS! that man has talent!

(The two titter and giggle and girl-play it up some moments.)

He danced, honey, and he ---

Jake:--- (Enjoying this bit:) Cut, please --- pretty-pretty ---

Allie:: --- and SANG! OoooH-Weee --- just everything but the Dirty Dog, honey! ooh! I'm TELLING you ---!

Jake:-- Pretty-pretty, please ---

Allie:--- (Semi-confidentially to Jake:) She wouldn't make that much fuss over me if I bought her a mink and did the dishes every night.

Hershe:: (Momentary attention:) What? Oh, you hush. (Rejoins cut-up)

Alice:: Honey, I'm telling you the truth, that man MOO-OVED ME! that night!

(More vicarious titillation shared)

I haven't felt like that in YEARS! (Disparaging glance at Jake) I started to call you, honey. Sorry now I didn't. I was just so sure you'd be--- (A knowing gesture with head indicating Allie) --- You Kno-ow. (Titters)

Jake:-- Oh, Beautiful---?

Hershe:: Huh?

Jake:-- I said, you look quite rejuvenated. I think an Afro becomes you. (Smiling slyly and winking at Mr.B.) Heh-heh-heh-heh.

Hershe:: Oh, thanks, Jake. (Notices cards, cuts deck) I have to ~~let~~ the permanent grow out, still.

Allie:--- Wasn't ever anything PERMANENT about it, if you ask me.

Action: (Jake laughs uncontrollably; Alice, a little self-conscious, pats her hair and refrains in spite of Jake's contagion. Mr.B. looks off. Jake girds himself and cuts it off, beginning to deal:)

Jake:-- I'm sorrreeeee --- (Pats Hershe on back lightly)

Hershe:: (Smiles at Jake benignly, then directs statement to no one in particular as she gathers in cards:) Actually, I wasn't decided until today.

Alice:: Really? I was so SURPRISED!

Hershe:: OH! (:Snaps to Alice:)-Did you see that speech in the Call?

Alice:: (Coolly:) Oh, yes. (Patronizing smile)

Jake:-- (Stops dealing momentarily, frowning and seemingly prepared to launch dissent; humor falls away:) Hogwash.

Action: (Telephone rings; Hershe budes, glancing at Almond who looks in its direction, and, being momentarily out of the conversation, intimidates or otherwise prevails upon her that he should answer, though moving leisurely.)

Hershe:: Wha--? Oh, yeah --- well, anyway, I just HAD to wash it. (Deep sigh) And, anyway --heh-heh- I guess I'm tired of being Miss Integration --- like that. (Leans forward, elbow on table and fist in cheek, glancing up at Alice severally:) It's real popular, these days, anyway; nothing really special; Afro girls ---

Mr.B:--- (At phone near sofa:) Hello --? --- Oh, Red, hi ---



Hershe::: --- are  
ALL OVER the best magazines these says. (Looks around at Almond)

Allie:: Yes, they are getting around, aren't they?

Mr.B:--- Who? -- Chuck REED!!! --- Unhh. Wants the parley, eh? Well, not  
tonIGHT! --- --- ---

(Action: Group at table grow curious-listening quiet.)

Mr.B:--- I KNOW all that, RED! But Wilson knew that in the beginning.  
Besides, there's money around there for his house-out. Why  
don't YOU play Read while he's cooling his heels? --- --- Un-huh  
--- --- Yeah, well --- --- Yeah, all right, so take him on. I  
can't dash out ---! --- ---

Hershe::: BESIDES, you don't know how that man pesters me!

Mr.B:--- So, how long's he gonna be in town?

Jake:-- (Dealing stopped) Hershhhh, baby --- (Bends forward and sort of  
peers up at Mrs.B.:)--- I know ole Allie kids you a lot. But  
HE'S got big muscles; he can AFFORD to be a radical ---

Mr.B:--- No, tomorrow? Sunday? no. Sorry. Look, tell Wilson ---

Jake:-- (Listens)

Mr.B:--- --- I said  
he hasn't done so bad in the past from my game!

Jake:-- (Finishing the thought:) --- besides, it's his NATURE --- maybe.  
(Glancing at Mr.B.:) No offense. I dig it. But --- (Holds up)

Mr.B:--- Well, if he writes me off after this, he writes me off. But  
maybe some of the others'll have something to say about that!  
--- --- Yeah? You sure you're talking for Wilson? or yourself?  
How come he didn't call? --- ---

Hershe::: (Distracted, but trying to minimize the ease-dropping:) But, ac-  
tually, there's REALLY nothing RADICAL about this --- I mean,  
REALLY! --- (Glances around prolongedly, pleading silently for  
Allie to return, but preferring now to act bothered and curious)

Jake:--- Heh-heh. No, true --- but, if the implICATION is --- (Gestures out)

Mr.B:--- You know my game, Red. I never had to play it that tight. ---  
--- Look --- --- All right, SO? --- --- No, I'm not scared to  
play Chuck Reed, or anybody else; there's not that much in-  
volved. I'm not playing with my wife's mattress money! --- ---

(Action: The trio are all apparently listening now. Jake finishing  
the deal in the meantime. Mr.B. is aware of their listen-  
ing and appears restless to hang up:)

Sure, I've heard about his reputation! So what? Look, tell  
Wilson I'll run in Monday --- --- OH, wait! can't play Monday  
night; I promised Hershe; mother-in-law's coming --- ---

(Alice is pretending to be busy with her earrings, glances continually  
at Jake, as if asking him to resume the former conversation  
in which she had seemed intent upon hearing him out on.)

Mr.B:--- Hen-pecked: call it what you want, Red. Just tell Wilson I'll  
drop by Monday during the day to talk to him. OK? --- ---  
Yeah, TUESDAY! if he's still around! And he'd better be BETTER  
than I ever heard he was! (Hangs up, steamed, takes a few aim-  
less steps around near sofa before heading for game table)

Jake:-- (Resuming immediately upon Mr.B.'s hanging up, sort of quietly:)  
You gotta understand, Hershhhh, that we gotta have the white lib-  
erals with us. GOT TO! And we can't afford, really, to turn  
our backs completely on the conservatives; radicals, of course,  
are another matter.

(Mr.B. bumps down in his chair and snatches up a cigarette.)

Hershe::: (Eyes calling to and questioning Mr.B. with a glance:) But, all  
the leaders, now ---

Allie:: Oh, no-oh-o-o, Hershhhh, honey --- (Seems actually to have inter-  
polated for effect, real interest seems to have reverted to Allie,  
smiling almost permanently at him, with eyes flirting and dancing  
although perfectly aware of Hershe's observing her)

Jake:-- Heh-heh-heh. What leaders? You mean, you think the best Negro  
minds are in line with this thinking? heh-heh-heh. (Goes on, let-  
ting Hershe gape, as if between two fires:) No, mam. They're a  
decided minority --heh-heh-- these GET BLACK people. And be-  
lieve me, there's no better way to COMPLETELY isolate ourselves  
-- completely cutting off the vital lines of communication;  
which is the only way we're gonna make progress, not by moving  
off to some dark corner of self-pride, my dear. Heh-heh-heh-heh.

Allie:: (Reaching across table and patting Hershe's hand:) It's really  
VERY involved, Hersh, honey. But that has nothing, really, to  
do with your cute Afro. I think it's shiek. For YOU, it's  
probably the thing.

Hershe::: (Flustered) But ... (Looks from Allie to Alice, to Jake who  
looks and listens solicitously)...on a big TV hook-up, and all  
--- seems to me: Well, it's, after all --- (Looks, silently sol-  
iciting Mr.B.'s entrance)--- only a little change in EMPHASIS,  
adding a bit. And you (:Directly to Jake:) what you seem to be  
saying is, like, that NOBODY thing again. To me, it made a lot  
of sense. (She looks resentfully at Allie who manages a smile)

Allie:: (Teasing; to Jake:) Lookout, Allie doesn't go for NOBODINESS;  
he might hit you. (Chuckles)

Jake:-- Heh-heh. (Glance flitting over Allie; brushing aside Alice's  
remark:) No, listen. Believe me, at my place we're against it.  
Oh, there's some difference of opinion, but Ruffin is against  
it, and I'm with HIM. And I'll guarantee you in time you'll be  
reading a lot of contrary opinions to Mr. Goodblack. Not that  
the man doesn't have SOMETHING on the ball. But, you see ---

Allie:--- (Knocks on table making everybody jump) All right, Jakie,

Hershe you've made your point, done your duty --yeoman duty--- ! Are we playing cards?

Alice Action: (Alice blinks furiously, looks indignant momentarily then smiles containingly, looking at him misty eyed. The others gauge him. Hershe, about to release a temper, settles for a brief stare. Jake's face takes on the closest it ever comes to an annoyed aggressive look, but he contains it in puffed cheeks, his hand shaking a bit as he gathers up his cards. Mr.B. scarcely looks up as he arranges his cardhand.)

Mr.B.: Alice:: My GOODNESS ! The lion has roared. (Also arranging cards)

Hershe:: Anyway, as I was saying, I thought I'd try being Mrs. Black - as black as possible for a while - which may be a little easier on me --- (Wrinkles her nose at Allie B.) than being Miss Integration. (Defense-baring;) But I'm not so sure sometimes that it's me in any shape or fashion that MISTER Black really wants.

Mr.B.: Jake:-- Heh-heh-heh.

Jake: Alice:: (Leans over, looking at Allie; Teasing;) Well, we can't really KNOW blackberries til we taste them. (Raising an eyebrow;) Or any other kind, right, Allie, honey?

Mr.B.: Jake:-- OK, play cards. Don't forget the kitty, folks. Your bid, dear.

Jake: Alice:: (Shrugs coldly to Jake; sharing this with Hershe, directed at Almond;) What's that they say about: 'The blacker the berry ---'

Mr.B.: Action: (Hershe joins her in tittering. Almond sits looking blandly from one to the other and pathetically at Jake.)

Hershe:: But, even like now, I get compliments about my hair from everybody except THAT (Nodding toward Allie B.)

Mr.B.: Alice:: (Commissnerating;) Ohhhhh---

Hershe: Jake:-- (Continually glancing at his cards) Anybody for Whist?

Hershe: Almond:---I'm trying to find a way to tell you something --- something to get under the skin into berry BEING --- and LOOKOUT ---

Jake: Alice:: (Looking from Hershe to Almond who've looked gazes;) Oh, My ! Sounds like romance, babydoll. Is he bringing flowers home these days? (Titters)

Mr.B.: Hershe:: Not him. Not since we got married. Not until cueballs become flowers. (Paint-heartedly joins Alice in bubbling girl giggles)

Jake:-- (To Alice;) Your bid, sweetheart, when you get around to it. Heh. (To Hershe;) Your going Afro, then, does that have anything to do with Allie's activity in the Corps --Oooh, er --- I mean ---

Hershe:: I've got his CORPS right here --(Nods toward rear)--in this house

Action: (Jake glances slyly around, chuckling routinely, though possibly momentarily disappointed. Almond stiffens visibly,

glaring momentarily at Jake whose glance flitters over. Alice slowly apprehends joust between them. Hershe seems absorbed in card arrangement, answered from top of head.)

Jake:-- Heh-heh-heh. Well, you had me breathless there for a moment. I thought you were going to become ---

Alice:: (Bangs table) All RIGHT! Jake, the snake, that's IT for tonight!

Hershe:: (Snaps attentive, turning to Jake, quick look at Alice & Allie;) What did you say?

Jake:-- Huh? Er--uh ---I ---

Alice:: Oh, don't mind him, Herrrrr-she-eeeEEE.

Hershe:: (Another glance around, prolongedly at Almond who looks steadily at her;) No. Before--- you said---!!! (Looks at Almond and reads the truth; back to Jake;) Are you trying to tell me that this ---!!!? (Shaking finger in Almond's face)

Jake:-- I --- I --- just ---

Alice:: He just happened to run into Grover the other day, and he mentioned Al, that's all. Don't let ---

Hershe:: (To Alice;) I don't believe ---!! (To Almond;) YOU!! --- (Slaps him savagely) YOU! --- BASTARD!!

Action: (Almond spins out of the chair, half propped, covering, takes a couple hot steps then turns looking down at Mrs.B. who glares back at him defiantly. Others watch mutely. He relents, going to front window, hands in pockets. Hershe continues glaring and pouting. Short silence. Alice ventures a hand, reaching to pet Hershe;)

Alice:: (Shrugging as she reaches over;) Men, dear ---!!! They just won't let well enough alone. Why get stirred up?

Jake:-- I --- I'm sorr ---

Hershe:: (Looking from the petting hand directly at Alice;) BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE FEELING LIKE A LITTLE FOOL!! (Moves her available hand away, socking her hip)

Alice:: (Snatching back and sitting up;) Ohh--

Jake:-- (Permanently hunched-shouldered) I'm sorr---rrreee, I ---

Alice:: Oh, you shut up! (Appeasingly to Hershe;) But, how did you think he managed to stay so beautiful? --sitting around from place to place all the time? (Indicating Jake;) Look at THAT!

Action: (Jakes fumes at Alice, guardedly; reaches for goodies, angrily scooping and keeps himself occupied at this. Hershe looks beyond Alice to Mr.B. at the window, her cards now on the table, both hands propped on thighs, elbows out; runs hands along form, restively, but as for reassurance --- Alice watches silently.)

Hershe:: (Preoccupied; pursuing her own thoughts:) I've taken an awful lot of NONSENSE from that wildman these last two years!

Alice:: (Confidential tease:) Is he REALLY WILD, Hershyyy, honey? How did you manage to hit him like that: so QUICK?

Hershe:: (Slightly humored) I've learned to be fast; otherwise I don't bother unless I mean it. I've been letting him send me packing regularly. THAT has STOPPED. I've just never gotten the wild man outta his system, but I'm WORKING at it. (A little more humorously, wiggles in seat:) He's not getting any younger younger. And they just THINK they have the heavy stuff.

Action: (Girl titters. Alice pretends to be annoyed by Jake's continued gluttony to assert herself, reaches over and slaps his arm several times:)

Alice:: Oh! Stop! -- BEING! -- SUCH! a glutton! Stop it! That's enough.

Jake:-- (Looking hurt:) Huh? Wha'smat---? (Shrugs, squares around looking drooped)

Hershe:: He's wel-el-el-come to-ooo it. I'd rather have an eater that a fighter.

(Girly giggles)

He didn't fool me altogether, though. I knew he was meeting SOME of those cats there. They used to RUN the joint. But, at least, Jakle's honest. Let him enjoy himself.

Alice:: Well, I don't know. It's no fun just letting him eat.

(More giggles)

Jake:-- (Under-eyed:) You two sadists just having a ball, ain'teha? Are we gonna play Whist, or what?

Alice:: (Titters with Hershe at this; glances slightly over her shoulder then back at Mrs.B. :) Well, can we get Allie over? (Decides to try her own charm:) Al-lee-eee, Shug-gar---? Come on back and keep mama com-pan-knee, bay-ay-by.

Action: (Allie stirs at window, as if mentally brought back, looks partly around. Jake looks from Alice to Hershe, at Almond as if he has a stiff neck.)

Hershe:: Come on and play, Almond Black! The name of the game is how to play fair!

Alice:: Maybe we should switch partners. (Getting up and nudging Jake:) You sit there, Jakle.

Jake:-- Huh? What? (Pretends reluctance, but gets heavily up)

Alice:: (Taking Jake's seat:) Come on and be my partner, Allie, de-eeear.

Hershe:: What?!! YOU two ---? ! --- against ME???

Jake:-- (Getting comfortable:) I would resent that if I didn't have so charming a partner, and the chance to trump a certain hotbox person's plays for a change. Heh-heh-heh-heh.

Alice:: Nevermind. We're gonna make you EAT whatever it is you have. (Honey-ed sweetly:) Come on, Al-lee-eeee-eee ---

(Action: Almond walks slowly over, looks coolly at Hershe, and other wise around table. She looks fiercely back at him, with a little complacent flutter. Alice smiles her most glamorous. Jake pretends deep preoccupation, holding his cards low and examining them on a ledge of his belly. Mr.B. sits, legs crossed, angled on Jake's side of table, he and Hershe continually casting estrangement-gauging looks.)

(Fluttering with enthusiasm:) Well, now, this is going to be pie Who's bid? Oh, mine, right? I was first. (Looks at Jake who is obviously anxious to get bid; raises eyebrow) Unn-mmm, lets see --- (Closes hand quickly as Jake leans over to peep) WHY are you leaning so much this way, dear? Are you --(Flashes eyes and winks at Almond)-- in LO-OF with me? (Titters, winks at Almond again:) LOVE ---???

(Action: Jake chuckles nervously routinely. Almond pinches nose stiffling humor. Hershe shows signs of being on receiving end of what men are usually in for.)

(Knocks table several times:) I wonder how many of THESE my partner has!! (Gives Jake a sharp look:) Don't worry, honey, you're not gonna get it cheap! (Cuts eyes at Almond, trying to solicit something, radiating big smile; sings:) Love, oh, love--- (Slips down in seat trying to reach Mr.B. for footwork, sings:) Heart of hearts, how much do you love me?

Jake:-- (Mopping brow with handkerchief, gestures to look under table) What's the matter, your mini shrinking, dear?

(Round of chuckles, tittering)

Alice:: (Sits up) Oh, shut up, fatsa. (Folds hand suddenly and sets cards with a loud pat in front of Jake:) I don't have to go through this. Deal over!

Action: (Hershe and Almond show some amusement, but Hershe's is a little upset; she looks sharply at Alice who merely ignores confrontation.)

Jake:-- Huh? Wha--? Now, wait a minute ---

Alice:: (Slapping table with hand:) Deal OVER! (Sudden reconsideration: Takes her cards back and snatches his, winking at Almond) As a matter of fact, I'll deal --- since this seems such a lucky spot (Chuckles at her audacity)

Action: (Hershe starts to object vocally, but reconsiders and surrenders cards as Almond tosses his down to Alice, shows somewhat less disgust than Jake who looks crushed and glances at her as if affirming what she had indicated earlier about the change of partnership; he shifts now to get at goodies be-

tween himself and Mr.B. Almond, amused, lights cigarette and tries to avoid outright making eyes back at Alice. Hershe tries to appear unruffled and unconcerned; turns to Jake!)

Hershe:: How's the March-on-City-Hall shaping up, Jackie?

Jake:-- (Alerting up with a treat in each hand:) Fine, so far! --- more or less. (Guarded glance at Mr.B.) Certain groups want in, but we're keeping it non-violent, of course. Can't take risks ---

Alice:: Non-violent on OUR side. (Chuckles)

Action: (She finishes shuffle at this point, hershe cuts deck again, and Alice begins dealing.)

Jake:-- (Appeasingly:) Why don't YOU come into Anti-Poverty, Allie, ole boy? Or file for a cop assignment? How about that? You're a natural!

Allie:--- (After a moment; coldly:) Because I don't like becoming an insulated black man in a white-hope scene.

Action: (Everyone is a little startled. Alice practically stops dealing, looking at him as if she thought Jake's was a good idea stepped on, then stretches a smile and chuckles to display her abounding good-nature and/or that Allie really didn't mean it the way it sounded. Jake turns away as if saying he'd tried. Hershe is less defensive:)

Hershe:: Really, Almond, is that ALL you can say? I mean, is that ALL you can contribute to a decent serious conversation? --- about big things that're happening around us? You can't for two seconds talk like a normal civil person about a thing like this that's really meaningful and IMPORTANT? something concrete, for a change, instead of --(Gestures up in the air)-- up in the AIR nonsense!

Mr.B:--- (Annoyed) All right, so, what do you want me to say, huh? Maybe -- who kno---?

Alice:: (Cutting in ahead of Hershe:) Oh, REALLY, it's not all that important! A little march, for krissake --- (Chuckles, inviting Hershe and Almond to join her). They'll all be laughing at us along the sidewalks, and having a tomato-throwing fun-day.

Jake:-- (Grunts indignantly) Un, uh --- now, actually ---

Alice:: (Insistent) THE POINT IS: Allie has his thing, and needs to have his thing, in something el-lllllse. He's a fighter; he's always been a fighter. Personally --(Fluttering)--I like a fighter (Avoiding everyone's eyes). A fighter! --- has his place, TOO. We can't all go begging like sheep, pretending we're too civilized, or MORALLY UPRIGHT, to REALLY fight --- even when--(Chuckles)--the tomatoes and rocks start. (Ventures a glance around as she concludes:) Right? OK. (:Concluding deal:) Cards up. Everybody ready? Lets be non-violent from here on (Winks at Allie B.).

Allie:--- (Mostly to Jake:) Actually, it crossed my mind. But I'm at the age-limit now, and with a family. But if your group could pull some strings --- !! and I could get my cabs in good hands, I'd give it a try --- to break things in right.

Jake:-- (Appeased soberly, turns, facing front, nodding thoughtfully) I'll speak to Ruffin. We've considered the family thing ---

Action: (Everyone is sufficiently genial again, arranging cards.)

Allie:: All right, lover, you wanted to bid so bad before; it's your first choice to get your thing in.

Jake:-- Heh-heh-heh-heh--he-he-ha --- I bid four.

(Action: Everyone sits back stiffly looking surprised.)

Heh-heh-heh-heh--he-eeeeEEEEEEE --- !!!

End, Act III Scene the 3rd



Act III Scene IV

Time: Much later that night.

Setting: L/R of Mr. & Mrs. B. Alice and Jake have departed. Cardtable and trays have been removed along with two of the folding chairs; two folding chairs remain near center of floor. Occ. chairs have not been re-positioned, Mr. B. lounges in one. As scene opens, Mrs. B. enters thru doorway rear left, wearing houserobe & slippers like Mr. B., looks searchingly for him, spots him and pauses a few steps beyond sofa.

Mr. B.: (Slightly unfriendly tone:) Why did you leave those two chairs there? (Doesn't wait:) You sitting up? or what? You gonna wait til I go to sleep to be a Corps cat in the night? Or, you dreaming about loud Miss Somebody-or-other in high skirt? (Approaches nearer:) The NERVE of YOU and that --- to sit there all night and ---

Mr. B.: I WAS gonna tell you about the Corps meetings, Hershe. I've gone quite a bit; never really stopped -- especially those times you were away. But I think it's about over now. With what I've put together, I'm striking out on a new open road.

(Action: Mrs. B. holds up, is thrown off guard; looks puffed and pouting but rendered wordless momentarily.)

It's been important to me for many reasons, which maybe I can explain. I donno. (Slouches a little more in seat) As for your alter-ego, Alice, she naturally is privileged to dig at you. That's alter-ego privilege.

Mrs. B.: SHE is NOT my alter-EGO! or even --- amigo! (Taking a couple deliberate steps in his direction!) And you're the ONLY ONE who tries to fit those off-white pants on me! (Pause; puffs) Sometimes I could --- SNATCH her wig off!

Mr. B.: (Clears his throat, sits up) In our brainwashed atmosphere of what attractive women are suppose to be, she's got somebodiness on you; and you know it; she knows it; and she knows you know it. But, still, you're willing to play the game -- in spite of her presumptive kind of insinuations. I suppose it's some kind of challenge to you, like your trying to say it ain't so all the while.

Mrs. B.: (Has gone thru a series of exasperation gestures) WHAT! ??? Look, that nonsense again? !! (Fans in scorn, turning her back, arms folded) I don't wanna hear it!

Mr. B.: (Gets up, pacing deliberately in thought) She's got cultural somebodiness -- by more or less general consensus -- not so from having wealth or fame, or from having made a brilliant marriage, but just as a woman, a woman without the Brand-X complex, who can ride the hyperbole of name-brand promotion, who at worse need suffer only the dubious slight of being ONE of SEVERAL of the big-seller products. While you, you're a home-spun, perhaps famous among family, but far from the hearts of the madding crowd.

Mrs. B.: (Has gradually relaxed somewhat and struck resentfully thoughtful pose; speaks distractedly:) It never fails, Allie B. Every-time some loud meat flashes in your eyesight or smacks you in the face, you go into your thing. And I'm the butt of it all.

Mr. B.: No, but to your benefit. You would rather I pretended to be unaffected by the advertisements, and patronized you like Alice---

Mrs. B.: (Spins around gesturing but wordless for a moment) SHHH--SHE!-- PATRRR --- ME? (Looks off, runs hands down her lines) What's she got I haven't? the better? (Storms over plopping in his seat; snaps up to say something, but it collapses)

Mr. B.: A good bit more permanent self-assurance for one thing. Besides that, a slight of thought for being delectable. In our highly civilized world, you have to be delectable to represent fulfillment, or so the appetisement says -- not overly delectable, that's intimidating, but a little; not at all, that's very intimidating.

Mrs. B.: And how do you make love to THAT? (Sudden insight:) By the way, what've YOU got? Why am I on the defensive? How about YOU? What makes you so cocky?

Mr. B.: I'm not that. But, SELF-ASSURANCE can contribute to charm, poise, and such. You don't EXACTLY MAKE LOVE! to these aspects, but, then, in a way, you DO. Now, you asked about me: A man points up, which is both a blessing and a curse; that's another case. My image isn't good, needs a lot of improvement; I'm not saying it doesn't, but that THIS lies in a different realm. As long as I'm sizeable, have a WIRILE image, and strong character, I could be the great MAN of almost any legend.

Mrs. B.: So, I COULD BE the great capital-W-WOMAN. So what? What's that to do with what is?

Mr. B.: I could be Hannibal; I could be John Henry, or John Henry Johnson; I could be Matthew Henson ---

Mrs. B.: And I could be ---uh --- Cleopatra --- and --- uh ---

Mr. B.: I could be Esop, or Thotmos III, or Akhenaton ---

Mrs. B.: I could be Nefertite, or Makeda of Sheba, or ---

Mr. B.: I could be Vessey, or Toussaint, or Osei Tutu ---

Mrs. B.: (Silently questioningly pronouncing: 'Osei Tutu', and trying to think further.)

Mr. B.: --- Or Shaka Zulu, or Kanissa'ai of Ghana --- --- kings, emperors, conquerors, soldiers of fortune -- from Ghana to Songhay, from Japan to St. Petersburg, to Rome; from Mecca to Madrid, to Bavaria --- not a feeble claim of kinship, but a legend of hav-passed thru and of noble stature. Or any number of thousands of any ethnic group, except maybe an effeminate Don Juan type, simply in that I out the figure of a man: The brain, the muscle, the virile thrust -- not necessarily in that order.

Mrs.B::: Well, I've got a BETTER fig-ure-rrrr ---

Mr.B:--- That you have. But it's rarely been noted. And your charms?: History has disdained to allow that most of your black women were black. And Cleo was fat AND black, WHICH, maybe, means that Caesar and Anthony were rulers.

Mrs.B::: Ugh! What else have you been learning with those Corpsmen be-sides street-fighting, and --- and THAT?

Mr.B:--- That doesn't matter; your ammunition would be low in any case, baby. Anyway, that isn't important. We could review today's world with the same result.

Mrs.B::: I'm not so sure about THAT.

Mr.B:--- Well --- I'll concede, because that's not important either from this point of view.

Mrs.B::: Well, what IS important, Sir Black?

Mr.B:--- What so many people are talking about: Integration or disintegration as opposed to the Afro-distinction -- distinction as opposed to extinction. I say to myself: Integration? What's that? Most People seem to think that when Integration comes, we mix in some way with the specks so as to make it harder to discriminate against us. How is that? It only makes a little bit of sense to me. And for what? For that we're suppose to bleed thank yous. NO thank you. That's the favor route from the frying pan into the fire. Now, I see it like this: We can't get four or five States like the Muslims talk about; we can't all go to Africa; can't integrate without compromising -- as long as there's any major opposition. Dig up history?: Impresses no one who doesn't want to be impressed. In any case, no one is impressed overnight except by the living experience of SOME BODY. Remember: You're nobody til everybody says, YES --not just that you're SOME BODY but SOMEBODY as well, which enhances the body.

Mrs.B::: But what on earth has that to do with --- ALICEY

Mr.B:--- What? Well, because the world has advanced more or less to a time when it's generally felt -- among the young, anyway -- that everyone should do HIS THING, HIS WAY, or her thing her way. That means: YOU have a thing, ALICE has a thing. Now, watch and listen ---  
(Goes to sofa, tossing pillows off, pulling up spring section, and snatching off a large blue sheet;)

--- Remember what I said the other day about DIMENSIONS !!?

Mrs.B::: (Grasps head in hands, rocking;) Ugh!hh! -- Yeah, I guess---

Mr.B:--- (Sheet over shoulder, goes in drawer by sofa/endstand/gets cord, takes pole lamp and places it a few feet left of TV, gets nearest folding chair to attach sheet to pole at high point, while:) Well, that, too, is a sleight of thought. Other things being equal, as they say, happiness or comfort is a frame of

mind. As, for instance, one person can feel like nobody and nowhere and be unhappy; whereas, another person by consensus worse off can feel like SOMEBODY and SOMEwhere, and be happy. What makes that happen is the visiting magician, or maybe witch-doctor; he's the same fellow, and the effect is the same. It's all the things you see, hear-tell-of -- the wonder of -- but never feel as IT, never touch, that appear and disappear like the experience when the movie lets out, and like Queer Street beauty when the lights go out that make the difference.

And when you're the nobody nowhere because of this kind of sleight of thought -- or somebody nowhere -- you're on Queer Street, and you can't do without the lights. The lights must burn on and on, and wherever lights are burning, you're drawn in (it's the appetisement selling you) again and again -- like an old man seeking a fountain of youth, like the needle in a funhouse compass, or the needle-baby after the better fix, and like a man in search of his soul.

You're on Queer Street, where the whores, the pimps, the com-men -- also hooked -- wait for you to descend from your precarious emotional respectability, where you can buy anything you think might make your light come on, to SEE that great inner glow -- which is not light but dark touch; for to the spirit, light is but a sleight of touch.

Mrs.B::: (Leaps up holding face in hands, squeezes head, etc. like she's in agony;) Ugh!hh!ggg! Almond, I'm going to bed. You coming? This is giving me a headache.

Mr.B:--- Wait. Lets do this. You'll enjoy it.

Mrs.B::: (Dropping hands) I'm not so sure. What the devil is it you're doing, anyway? (Plaintive)

Mr.B:--- Well, wait. Do it for me, baby.

Mrs.B::: Hmmm. (Turns, steps sideways slowly back to seat, sits)

Mr.B:--- Queer Street is also where the strip-tease joint is. (Goes to right of TV getting other pole lamp, moving it parallel to other; continues: similar attachments)

Mrs.B::: (I'm a long way from Queer Street. (Pointing to sheet hanging from first pole lamp;) What's that? the Queer Street flag?)

Mr.B:--- (Pointing;) No, THIS is the therapy banner --- never seen on Queer Street uncontaminated. On Queer Street, your feelings are: You're floating in a nightmare, and the flag is the skull and crossbones on a bathroom carpet, travelling to heart-flush, but never arriving. And away off somewhere somebody is begging you: Come home. But the lights have got you; you're in light-rut

Action: (Mrs.B. swoons turgescently, folds her trunk over her arms bending forward. She closes her eyes, appearing sleepy. Mr. B. proceeds with attachments.)

Mrs.B::: (Falls back in chair lethargically, sits forward with head back, breathes deeply, yawns, and, as if in weakened condition, grips

chair arms with deliberate precaution; then, rising:) Lets stop this, Allie B. (Massaging stomach:) I feel sorta queer-STRUCK!

Mr.B:--- (Reverting his attention to her; dramatic but sober:) You're in the needle lights of Queer Street. We've got to get you out.

Mrs.B:-- (Looking off in something of a tired swoon, tossing hands that flap back against her thighs:) Get me to bed as soon as possible. I think that'd be the surest way out, or IN, honey.

Mr.B:--- NO. (Gives her a gentle push that topples her back into chair)

Mrs.B:-- (Plaintively:) Al-lee-eeee ---

Mr.B:--- (Returning to his project:) I'm sorry, Hershhh, baby, but this thing is a thorn in the side of comfort; once the numbness of local perspective wears away, we have a throbbing inflammation, an ache, until the thorn is removed and the side expertly treated. Relax. I promise you health.

Mrs.B:-- (Trunk bent over her folded arms again:) Oh, Al-lee-eee --- (Very Plaintive:) I'm satisfied you know what you're talking about, but I FEE-EEL AW!FUL! Like you musta felt in Chicago!

Mr.B:--- (Hurrying:) Yes, you're lit up, now - like a country girl sick from the big drafty city's impotent bull run-around; every sweat gland is like an eye of light, BY light, FOR light; become the symbol of salvation without which you perish; while within you putrify; like every little hair on a hairy body, every source of light is a ravishment point, a seducer, a freak fever, a pimp, suggesting to lure you into something, something the snooper knows you know he can sense you'd go for, because your feelings are radiating that naked bergerky mixed-up, every-dimensional need - like light - going everywhere (trying to) at once, intrusive and with conditioned presumption, but never, never getting to (letting you) see IT, to FEEL IT, but giving you lots of food for a fool-rush, lots of appetitement in falsey super white-light cosmetised heat-around-the-bush itness. That's why even I've been kinda curious to see IT: the flip show, the real professional showing of the out- and inside of IT -- also phoney

Mrs.B:-- (Taken to a prolonged side-to-side headshaking:) Stop! Allie B. ! Stop it! You're sick! and you're making me sick. (Sits up but in an agonizing manner, pressing both hands into her middle:) Ohhhh--- I feel ter-ri-ble! (Stands, trunk bent over her arms, intent upon leaving:) I'm going to bed.

Mr.B:--- (Dashes to her gripping her shoulders) Great! That's great! That's just how you SHOULD feel as the therapy progresses. That's perfect for the game.

Mrs.B:-- (Turns her head about, confronts him with the agonized look, then falls heavily against him, leaning to one side:) Ohhhh!OC-o-o-o-o---

Mr.B:--- (Moving her off and holding her by the shoulders; revelationlike enthusiastic:) You've been victimized by that appetitement, Hershhe! Understand? You've been sold the big-namebrand-X identity right out of the manikin show-window! You've GOT to take it off!

Take it back! baby. Demand a refund! That's par: Female style and prerogative!

Mrs.B:-- (Falling faintly against him again; very plaintive, almost supplicating:) Plea!EASE! Al-leeee-eeeeEEEEEE! lets go TO BED!! bay-beee-EEEEEE! AL-LEEEEEE!!?

Mr.B:--- (Signs of emotional strain) Wait! Hershhe, honey, baby, sweetheart! --- WAIT! Listen--- (Moves her off) --- let me tell you what it all means.

Mrs.B:-- (Faintly pressing in, face uplifted, head moving from side to side, pleading against this:) I know. I KNOW! (Sort of shrinks up under him, one hand on his shoulder, the other toying with his lapel, fingering his chest:) What's the matter? Don't I know how to moo-cove? I've got rhythm, haven't I? I've got --- How does that poem go? '...A body mold in the darkness ... is thigh-pressed cradle-abdomen met'---? (Very curt titter)

Mr.B:--- (Gasping upwards for breath, moves her off after an inner struggle) Hershhe, PLEASE! I want to DO SOMETHING! I mean--- !! (Shakes his head in confusion) Wait. Lets --- (Gestures at his setup)

Mrs.B:-- (Stomping foot; intimidating:) You've got me BEGGING YOU-UUU-UU ! (Shrugs out of his hands, twisting away and turning her back to him; over-affected peevishness:) You don't LOVE ME-EEEE! You don't LOVE me! Why can't I MAKE you do what I wanna do?

Mr.B:--- (Pulls at his hair, paces feverishly; irresolute; gesturing:) We'll waste the whole setup! (Pause; she makes face, half turning. He steps up behind her, placing his hands gently on her shoulders) Come on, sweetheart. (She shrugs fretfully) Let me demonstrate this. It's the answer to YOUR QUESTION: Where is this attractiveness? (Continuing his persuasion, he gradually gets her to turn around) YOU know, and I know; that is, we KNOW and we don't know. (Indicating setup:) So what THIS means is that we're getting TOGETHER --- TOGETHER together. (He droops a little in the knees, his forehead almost touching hers:) You KNOW I LOVE YOU. There's nothing between us, no obstacle of any importance, but this journey thru our feelings -- out of the man and thru the woman to our house: Home TOGETHER!! reviewing the appetitement together, of that world beyond, that comes in (Points to TV) to seduce us, to take apart every other moment of the partnership - the playmate understandings - we make over and over in this setup.

(He lifts her chin. She reponds but with some equivocation.)

You've said you could've been an actress, dancer, and so forth. You can prove it once again, now.

Mrs.B:-- (Inclination relapse) Un. Now you're trying to psych me.

Mr.B:--- (Straightens up, trying to move her toward sheet setup;) NO. But lets get TOGETHER! Lets get re-acquainted, reinforce in feeling - in fact - to play, to be, TOGETHER! re-adjusted, a greater com-

fort!

(She yields gradually, moving under his direction with tentative assurance, looking dreamily up at him; they pass behind the sheet.)

That's my sweetheart. Yum-yum (:Little kisses behind curtain; some unclear quiet conversation) Now, be brave, and we'll make you a STAR. Stay right there. (He leaves, going to forward side of sofa)

Mrs.B::: This gonna take long?

Mr.B:--- A short --- forever.

Mrs.B::: WHA-AAAAATTT!?

Mr.B:--- Now get set. We are about to redeem condition BEAUTI-FORCE! from the appetisement sleight of thought that makes fools of us all. No longer will mankind try to see IT to free ITness without dimming a watt. Ready? (Puts out near lamp, stage becomes dark) Now, turn on the TV.

Mrs.B::: TV on ---

(She switches on TV, station off the air produces only tube light, bluish, sufficient to make silhouette of her on sheet.)

Mr.B:--- Now, stand in the center of our screen when the commerial comes on and slouch and look sloppy.

Mrs.B::: WHA-AATT! I can't slouch and look sloppy; I'm too beauti-forced full of love.

Mr.B:--- Come on. Remember, you're the star.

(She slouches exaggeratedly)

(Commercial leader's voice:) And, now ladies and gentlemen, this special announcement commerial --uh-- special commercial announcement -- uh -- the following --- (Dramatic insinuating voice:) Men, does your present companion always remind you of the girl whose handkerchief no one picks up?

Mrs.B::: (Recovering posture:) Almond! you're making FUN of me-eeee!

Mr.B:--- No, dear. Come on. Play.

Mrs.B::: I don't know --- (Shortly resumes slouch)

Mr.B:--- (Continues:) Are you hard-put to drag out to work each day? Take lunch to work? Be on a job a third of your life? Be objective with the boss's secretary? Come straight home at Five? Make love? Swap tall tales with the boys? Are you annoyed because she spends so much time shopping & so much money when nothing seems to help? THEN, we have a SPECIAL message of importance for YOU!: Our NEW SPECIAL MIRACLE PHENOMENAL SECRET-WON-

DER, APPROVED-BY-ONE-OUT-OF-ONE-PSYCHIATRIST, HYSTERICAL SUPER PRODUCT, SEE-ALL--HAVE-ALL was meant for YOU! Guaranteed to lift your morale, or your feelings returned!  
(To Mrs.B.:) Let there be pure sheet light!

Mrs.B::: Here I am, Big Bo-oy.

(She sweeps two floodlights across room spotting them in proximity of Mr.B.; brief, then fade-out; he, meanwhile, represents himself as rooster, uttering 'cock-a-doodle-do', then knock over on sofa, uttering 'Uhh!HH' several times while pecking on knees, then rolls onto back, kicking in the air, trembling and then freezing with limbs in the air.)

Mr.B:--- (Resuming announcership:) That was an interpretation of the effect of our ingredient discovery, the hundred-light-watt-year-woman by our one-out-of-one psychiatrist, psycho-sexually infantile, of course. (Hunches shoulders) Some, of course, feel that one year of such bliss is enough. But you May wish to expire in a lesser watt-knot, for which purpose we have Lotus Blossom, Pagoda, Danube blue-white, & Rhinestone. Confidentially, a few of our customers aren't really satisfied with our pride and joy. We get complaints all the time, in fact, requesting refunds, mailing in the empty ---

So much so, in fact, we've had to sell a half interest to a Black Power speculator, the head of a solvent French firm. (More confidential air:) Part of the split is that many people don't want their slops to look like slops before they will --- but many do. That's off the record, of course. I'd lose my job if --- (Pretends to see someone:) Oh, hello, Mr. Renault ---

Action: (Pause; assumes droopy face and head-shrunken-into-shoulders defeated look, turns, and goes creeping off thru doorway, left front. Shortly, Mr.B. steps back on scene with restrained enthusiasm:)

Mr.B:--- (Assumed new guise; looking back:) Poor fellow, I didn't have anything against him, really. (Resuming program:) We'd like to introduce you, ladies and gentlemen, to our product of the future, inspired by those very designers of the emperor's new clothes, and brought to you by sonar. (To Mrs.B.:) Light.

(Mrs.B. turns off TV tube. Room is dark.)

Behold, there, our Have-Holster--Willing-to-Bear-Arms model, the super-simple, total wonder product, a full field and stream piece with all its hidden magic. (Pause) However, our supply will be limited due to advanced government subsidy to Braille Playhouses, and a big electric power company lobby. (Pause, assumed intimacy:) Confidentially, I have --- (Remembers, looks off-stage; changes:) ---er - uh - what I mean is --- (Other voice) Sir---? (Creep-off repeat)

(TV tube back on, no silhouette.)

Mr.B:--- (Re-enters; other guise, rubbing hands looking back gleefully; then catches self; assumes false remorse:) That's fate/over



which, etc./ (Oversell:) I give you my word, folks, that everything you've seen or haven't seen is the absolute truth -- absolutely, one-hundred-percent windless, wattless, witless, worthless, word--- (Other voice representation:) Sir---? (Gestures bewildered:) What did I do? (Recollects 'w' words, repeating silently, tracking on fingers; halts horrified; creep-off repeat)

(New man comes on soberly; Mr.B., looks back then faces around nodding philosophically.)

(Announcement continued:) But, if you don't go for our cream puff peach spread, lotus blossom, or pagoda, or dairy mary - as appetisement - you'll probably dig their soul sister wholesale. Heh-heh. If you really want the house bodymate, the caretaking home-maker special, if you're a man who enjoys his joys naturally, then what YOU need is our simple everyday companion product: Out-Going-less--Infill-More, or The Under-Seen-Queen-of-the-Legitimate-Positions-State, Double-Sheet-Screen, & Jockeyless Radar. Here's what over-six-to-twelve middleweight long-ranging short stop rhythmasters say about 'Everyday': (Represents an index card note:) 'Everyday is a joll-day'. (Pause; returns card) So, take a nip --uh-- trip, er, I mean --sip - uh --- After all, fifty million francs can't be wrong! (Acts a bit ruffled)

And now we return you to our regular program, The Dimensions, which happens to be along the same lines, up your alley. heh-heh. (Turns, going off, sheds character, throws up arms in joy:) At last, I've oined my farther's respect! I'm a Tel Aviv --- (Bewilderedly:) ---idol!!!? (Looks downcast; voice again:) Sir---? But, dad--- !!? (Repeat creep-off)

Action: (Re-enters Mr.B., shrugs, looking off-stage. Turns on lamp on endstand. Mrs.B. returns in silhouette, his wig over Afro. Silhouette is flat breast and buttocks.)

Mr.B:--- (To Mrs.B.:) Now, who are you going to be first?

Mrs.B:-- I am Miss World. (Intoning & gesturing grandiosly:) I have been chosen above the field of tens of thousands of the world's most beautiful-ti-forced women. Yachts have been bestowed upon me; an hundred millionaires woo me; my picture adorns a billion places; I have a thousand contracts just to put on my bikini and be. I have given ---

Mr.B:--- OK for that. Now: Miss Integration ---

Mrs.B:-- (Pauses, hunches shoulders, looking knock-kneed puzzled:) Uhh!!!

Mr.B:--- Exactly. Now: Sheba.

Mrs.B:-- (Negligee effect of silhouette; sweet-toned, majestic stroll & gestures, some erotic index:) Oh, renowned and noble Solomon, King of Israel, I, Makeda, Queen of Sheba, have heard wondrously of thou, and have come to speak with thee. Tell me all the matmets of thy heart.

Mr.B:--- You are dark, O Queen. And I see thee a beauty. Tell me, wherein lies thy attractiveness?

Mrs.B:-- (Momentary hesitation) Yes, I am dark and beautiful. Imprint me upon thy heart, and passion will increase thy wisdom.

Mr.B:--- You are dark and beautiful, Yea, but WHEREIN is thy attractiveness, O black and beautiful Queen?

Mrs.B:-- (Gestures puzzlement, then:) I am young and --- (Throws up hands in exasperation; bathetic insistence:) IMPRINT ME UPON YOUR HEART! (Pause) What're you doing? That's not fair!

Mr.B:--- All right, just a minute. (Getting up, looks along bookshelf in endstand, takes out small volume)

(Mrs.B. has struck pensively fretful nose.)

Remember the lines from the poem you quoted - almost - a while back?

Mrs.B:-- Yeah, but, for now, can't we just go along with the usual bit?

Mr.B:--- (Seated on edge of sofa:) NO. How could you show your face knowing you've failed when we've allowed the possibility of nobodiness. We're doing great. Just a minute.

Mrs.B:-- You sure you're not making fun of me? Allie B? I feel silly!

Mr.B:--- (Finds place in book, looks up insightfully:) Uh, no, now do ---

Mrs.B:-- Just tell me, wherein IS my attractiveness?---suppose to be?

Mr.B:--- In your style.

Mrs.B:-- In my STY-LLLLLIE-----? In my style. (Exasperates)

Mr.B:--- We'll get to that. Now you're Nefertite, wife of Akhenaton, entering upon your colonnaded balcony as he contemplates the sun.

Mrs.B:-- (Dramatic tone:) Oh, Akhenaton, Lover, Lord --- explain to me again how the great All-God is revealed to us in yon sun.

Mr.B:--- OK. Maybe we should skip Cleo. But go ahead ---

Mrs.B:-- (Similar business of grandiosity:) Oh, mighty, NIGHTLY, Lord Anthony, fear not the approach of Caesar; for I him him by ---

Mr.B:--- Ok-ok, enough for him. Now, see if you can do something of contemporary dance, or your thing, in the raw while we consider the poet's vision.

(Light drums of nostalgic theme; Mrs.B. prepared to dance; he reads:)

"A body molds the darkness is thigh-pressed cradle-abdomen met  
and breasts the umbral breasts have softness...

hands move to clutch that having being  
to handle mouth's pout from distant touch  
thigh raised to handsome cup...

... her face is a slope swelling at the lips...

And she is a river body  
a long night dream that reaches the sea  
and the grace and rhythm of the sea  
carriages rocking in mocking girl gait  
flowering to flow witherward to step  
in brown darkness

is admission supine eternal to let  
prone veins of fire repent of presumption...

And yes is tabu the line dorsal...

divisible by knowledge points equations  
thousandths narcissus touched...

this is the layer cake kinetic... " 1

(Mr. B. leaves thru book quickly) And this: (Reads:)

"And I am touch-deep of IT  
wearing charm and storm of umbral space  
a form in itself rhythm avidly sensuous;  
I am yes-need spread open to life-in-motion  
and empathy proposal to rhythm beat  
showing no other way its being ...  
otherwise boundless abounding beat..."

(Mr. B. pauses from reading; frenetic flurry & interlude of drums and  
accompanying dance of Mrs. B.; brief; Mr. B. continues read-  
ing as drums subside to soft accompaniment & Mrs. B.'s dance  
accordingly; reads:)

"...beyond wine-skin night, in touch-sight,  
mellon dark fields open  
and feeling is delivered presence in rhythmfold...

in here figures all centers being  
handles to every sense... " 2

(Mr. B. leaves over again) And, finally, this: (Reads:)

"Thigh clay oh thigh clay is genius  
thigh oh a mettles truth  
clean thigh line thigh lithe aura skin flesh  
is clay clean is  
sigh aura cup full  
black grape.suited kin  
is aura grape smoother flesh sweet  
is sky wide.away filling hands with wind.oh  
kiss  
is pure as.is.if fruit ripe.end pods side out...  
here touch.black avow.wild

Dark thigh lines out.fill.out melds avid lining touch  
width dense.in event be.come.fort hands some kisses  
dark space.in place aura thigh is par.a.phrase.ink

as instinct deep intuits black kink axis in field.in to  
figure out black out in pink.ink acts in.two fill.in up width  
in.suit.in.distinct pitch tintured.in.information  
dense.ink dense  
stereo ink.suite.drums.mum.blot  
umbral.link.chord.in.love  
calling to oh mellow wish this adjunct feeling  
as per source offer be-wed  
as will.link.be.come.ink forms  
as per affirm.ink to feel legend  
emerging from twi-nighted line  
as to think.ink inside out.fits frare.suited  
thigh line abdomen ... " 3

Mrs. B::: (Swooning:) OooooH, that was fun! (She returns shortly to pen-  
sive silhouette)

Mr. B:--- (Puts book away, stands, paces:) Wait. Stay there. (Thought-  
fully:) Now, the proof: IT. I had --- (Comes to him:) Yeah.  
(Looks in drawer of stand, gets little blue bulb /like night-  
light/) Remember the IT?

Mrs. B::: Yes.

Mr. B:--- (Puts out light on stand, crosses to Mrs. B:) Well, IT, that that  
makes feelings naked berzerky mixed-up every-dimensional hungry,  
like light - in the wrong light - this IT is IN.

(Behind sheet, turns off TV, puts blue bulb in lamp. shade off /Move  
pole lamps closer together to make billow effect in sheet  
for body impressions during dance/ Little blue light comes  
on first; Mrs. B. holds it slightly above her head; she is  
seated in belly of billowed-out sheet, a very small silhou-  
ette/created by overhead light/ between the giant spraddled  
legs of Mr. B./created by light from floor/ headgear for Mr.  
B./the witdoctor/ drum accompaniment; Mr. B. intones:)

Black woman! Black: the feeling around me, Black!  
the dark room's peace, Black!  
the engrossing touch, Black!

Black woman! lithe and long and supple voluptuous, Black!  
Black woman! stops the nakedness of my wish-head, Black!

covers over my non-containment, Black!

frees the germ of my disorder, Oyaa-aaaa  
frees the drugged steam-raging force  
frees the drum-dumb violent beauti-force!

Black-Black: beauti-~~full~~touching the lonely long madness!  
blacks up the over-long hanging sunburst hunger  
handles the darkness  
soiling its dipped drought  
dips me in the spring of company, Oyaaa-aaa

the dasher of rocks

the echo of will-split  
the looming carresser  
the filtering fingered life  
the planter of seed  
the weeder of wildwills  
the nourisher of will-droop  
the fertile beholding

Black woman: slight the thought that over-passes without legend!  
the hand that under-passes without knowledge!  
the sense that conceives without longing!

(Pause)  
(Mrs.B. passes light to Mr.B., other lights fade gradually.)

Mrs.B.: (Rising:) I feel --- IT: --- reINforcement! --- full of beauti-  
force! --- drumming to fulfil IN! I'm under the spell of motion  
(:Loud:), in a sea of rhythm!

(TV light on for silhouettes; they embrace; Mr.B. holds blue light  
between Mrs.B. and sheet; both slowly dance in embrace.)

Mr.B:--- TOGETHER! We have the fix for deep warm dark enclosure!

(They gradually separate, changing positions severally as dance con-  
tinues.)

The light is within. This is TOGETHER togetherness: knowing  
where the light is: being free of Queer Street & Vanity Fair.  
(Keeps light between Mrs.B. & sheet in dance) TOGETHERNESS is  
SOMEBODY, the IT IN. IT's IN is the greatest statement of posi-  
tion, all-ways-at-once beauti-force: IT's IN! Creating the  
world; this: the IN for IT saying, Yes, let there be touch-to-  
night; let there be IT's IN TOGETHER! All beauti-force: the  
touch of IT's IN, the kiss of IT! It shattering time! into  
whereIN do/be.IN receiving IT! IT singing dark re:INforce-mating  
beauti-feel! IN compelling all space to life! compelling the  
stroke! to give hands TOGETHER togetherness IN! to let IT behold!  
giving up IN-stance stilt to OOO-do/be/do-OOO ---

(Pause)

Where-IN is your attractiveness?

Mrs.B.: IN:my style, IN-dimension, IN-motion, IN-rhythms, IN-beauti-  
force, IN-re:INforce-mating, IN-TOGETHER togetherness, IN-sight  
beholding, with IN-all-ways-at-once Itness, IN-sense inspired!

Mr.B:--- Are you the thing:-IN-itself?

(Pause)

Mrs.B.: NO! I am not the thing:-IN-itself --- without living IT.

Mr.B:--- (Exhilaration:) O Black Woman! Mrs. Black!

Mrs.B.: (Same) Sir Blackman! Mr. Black!

(Action: Up drums, dance of joy --- subsiding to slow embracing  
movement.)

Are we sleeping in the guest room tonight, Lover?

Mr.B:--- Guess.

(Action: Quickly they detach sheet, switch off tv light, and, wrapped  
together with little blue light in sheet, race to sofa, div-  
ing on whoopee style, still joined, embracing:)

(Kicking up sheet, shouts:) OOOooooh! WEeeeeeeee! SOMEBODY!!

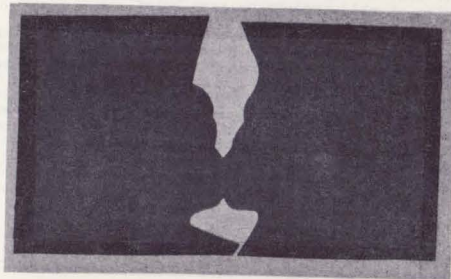
(Mr.B. laughs.)

OH! and what happens later?

Mr.B:--- Better than the old style: We live on the INter-rest.

(Whoops, drums ---

Acts UP



- 1 From poem "Umbra", Beau-Cocoon #1, vol.1, Autumn, 1968, c., B-C, Inc.
- 2 From poem "...Aura Touch-Light", Rhythmic Adventures Beyond Jazz  
Into Avowal Sound Seams, c., 1975.
- 3 Ibid, poem "By Line Abdomen Cradle Aura Womb", by Lloyd Addison.

# NOTE ON MR BLACK

I have wanted to do a play on the order of Mr. Black for about three years, and, though many items have come forth in the interim, I have been disinclined to tackle the play; so it remained a couple pages of notes. Finally, I have geared up and have completed it in just about two months of parttime endeavor. However, this work is the principal reason we are going to press in March instead of having gone in February. Once begun, I realized it was going to be longer than anticipated, and perhaps should not have been a play at all but a novel. Nonetheless, a part of my eager anticipation of this issue of B-C was the prospect of analyzing the themes. The play itself is perhaps as good as I could have made it in any case. That is, what it is not is self-discussion. My experience generally is that most of the related works make their point much too broadly. For an alien, the conceptual threshold of black beauty is understandably elusive, moreso the emotional threshold, except in the naked man and woman state. But this latter instance introduces sex as the immediate referent (instrumental, utility, etc.), which compounds the analysis inasmuch as it is not, in fact, THINGS, that are esthetically under analysis but PERSONS (personas, the whole-piece). And this occasions near-hysteria, because the wholepiece once admitted unveils a vast need, the filler for which is too much to swallow at once.

What I had hoped to write in goodly detail is not now allowable due to limited time and space. And since I cannot begin really to unravel my notes, I will have to be very brief.

Aside from the overall business of Integration, the play is of course concerned with the subject of man and woman in the monogamous state, other factors of less emotional content, as sex partners. But really the primary concern treats with the alienation of black humanity - essentially - from the gamut of worldly - but mainly Western - esthetics. Because of the limited time and space, these considerations will be deferred until next issue for further analysis-- which, in any case, we had planned to a greater extent. The forthcoming summer issue of B-C will feature the 'Finder Poem', Black in Search of Beauty, 1956, 1960 -- a poetic odyssey - the subject of which as is apparent readily admits of analysis in conjunction with Mr. Black..

The notes for the analysis led to the following little verse which keynotes a part of the idea: (I suppose I would call it 'The Shadow of the Act'.)

I never touched the prime insight  
nor any time of vivid fact,  
until I touched the unveiled night ---  
a time without light  
the shadow of the act;  
a touch receiving in relief  
the special embrace of self-belief,  
and thus came to affirm the categorical notion  
that the 4th dimension, time, is motion.

LEA

# BEING

has called upon God once  
and survived ungodly non-intervention;  
has called upon God twice ---  
and man  
whose justice is metted  
matter-of-factless-of evil and good  
unsurpassed by mourning weather ---  
again and again  
such as the lot of invocations  
astound by invoiced impish fortune  
until  
though without sworn statements  
of betrayal:  
when a strongman has been brutalized  
to nausea --  
to invoke the whatever-god unresolved --  
no moment's conviction  
ever admitted  
so conclusively: GOD:  
THERE IS NO GOD!

(So saying, the hell with it!)

LEA

---

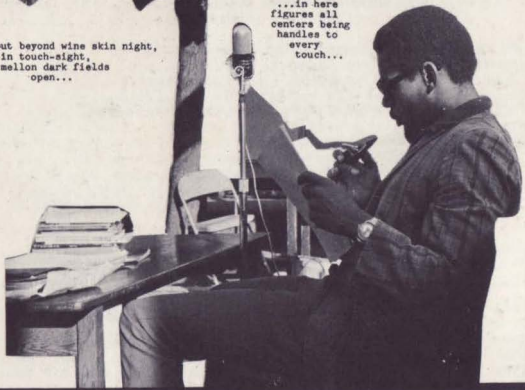
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123rd St., N.Y. 10035. Check issue one, vol. one for good idea  
of poetry requirements. ED.

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...but beyond wine skin night,  
in touch-sight,  
mellon dark fields  
open...

...in here  
figures all  
centers being  
handles to  
every  
touch...



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