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The

BLACK

CHALLENGE

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The BLACK CHALLENGE

EDMUND O. AUSTIN

VANTAGE PRESS • NEW YORK

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FIRST EDITION

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(13.2959)

TO MARCUS COX—A PROUD NEGRO.

(The 1920's)

I hope that when I die and go to—
Wherever I am going,
I'll never bend the knee too low to—
Whoever did the sowing.
I hope that when the Good Lord calls me,
And says: Who's a-going there?
I'll have the nerve to shout—whate'er befalls me
There's a Nigger coming here!

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ODE TO THE N. A. A. C. P.
AND ITS FREEDOM FIGHTERS.

(The 1950's)

O Strivers in the Wilderness,
    Erupting into bloom,
Upturning to the sun's caress
    The face of him in gloom,

Expression of the black man's voice
    To sing his lowly songs,
Crusaders thou, without a choice,
    Go sing his age-old wrongs.

Sing to the world a carefree tune,
    Nor note of gloom nor fear;
This to the world the heavenly boon
    That only black men dare.

Out from the night, out from the dark
    Swing low, swing high, swing long,
Voice of that night, voice of the lark,
    Throating a golden song.

Nor power nor wealth may come to thee—
    Thou hast no port, no goal;
For thou art e'en a ship at sea,
    With freight—the Negro's soul.

And who may span that boundless sea,
    Or limit its embrace?
Be this thy opportunity,
    Voice of the Negro race!

E. O. A.

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The
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CHAPTER I

"A CANAAN! A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY!"

This was Jeremiah King's summary opinion of Harlem some few weeks after his arrival in New York as he paused at the corner of 135th Street and Seventh Avenue and stood contemplating the hustle and bustle of black, brown and light-skinned Negro life streaming around him.

"But with no strict Jehovah and his Ten Commandments to worry about and—no Moses," he added, as an afterthought.

Thinking in Biblical terms came natural to Jeremiah King. Back in his British West Indian island home, from which he had so recently emigrated, his father had been a minister of the gospel. From his very early beginnings Jeremiah's youthful fancy had been fed on stories from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, reciting the progress of the ancient Israelites in their toilsome journey from enslavement in Egypt towards Canaan, the Land of Promise. During his contemplative pause on the Harlem sidewalk, Jeremiah felt himself to be, indeed, akin and like unto one of that imaginary band of invading Israelites standing on the hill of Mizpah, and having before him the vision of a Promised Land.

Jeremiah had used his short sojourn in Harlem to advantage. He had observed much. True, in his search for knowledge and diversion in the pleasure palaces of this "Nigger Heaven," as Harlem had quite recently been most inelegantly termed by a well-known, but ribald, novelist,

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Jeremiah had found the July weather to be much more uncomfortably hot and disagreeable than even the heat of his tropical island home, yet he contrived not to perspire too profusely and endeavored at all times to maintain what he considered to be one of the hallmarks of a true gentleman —a poised and dignified leisureliness. All in all, it seemed obvious to Jeremiah that Harlem was a most liberal place. In any undertaking conducted there, the sky seemed the limit.

Officers of the law Jeremiah had seen, both white and black, but their purpose in the scheme of things seemed rather to preserve the hilarity than to disturb it. In the matter of business ventures, Harlem appeared a young, toddling community, with the race to the dexterous of hand and the nimble of brain—a totally irresponsible place made as much to order for him as he had ever dreamed any spot in the world could be. A desire to weave himself into the fibre and texture of this place, to be a part of its sprawling adventure, surged through Jeremiah; and he came to the conclusion that he was going to enjoy a very satisfactory existence, indeed, in Harlem.

As Jeremiah continued to pause there on the sidewalk, he heard in the distance the deep, regular boom of a drum come up the avenue. Suddenly, the air was cracked by the shrill blare of a brass band. Up the avenue the sounds came, nearer and nearer, the gladness of anticipation ripening into the fervor of consummation. People here and there stopped in their tracks on the sidewalk; and advance agents —children rushing along and weaving their way in and out of those who had stopped to watch—heralded the approach of what it turned out to be, a mammoth parade.

At the head of the procession, a short, squatty, black Negro bestrode an enormous white horse. The horse, a chosen performer for the occasion, stepped proudly and prancingly along like the charger of some king. Even from the distance Jeremiah caught the flash of gleaming white teeth as the rider grinned and bowed to the sidewalk throng.

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His broad shoulders and thick, compressed body were encased in a close-fitting purple military suit. Across his broad chest was spread a golden sash bearing conspicuously in black letters the insignia: "HIGH COMMANDER."

Following the High Commander and upborne by two stalwart aides—both black as their leader and similarly dressed in purple uniforms—a large crimson banner flaunted its brazen message aloft: "BACK TO AFRICA!" and below, in smaller letters: "Return to the home of your African ancestors."

The parade itself was so flamboyant that neither its plan, its scope, nor its purpose impressed themselves on Jeremiah's immediate comprehension. Of parades celebrating some significant thing in the life of the community back in his West Indian island home, Jeremiah had seen quite a few. He had often enjoyed the antics of the gay masqueraders during Mardi Gras carnivals. He had witnessed the battalions of the British Army put through their paces. He had mingled with the East Indian population of San Fernando during the periodic gaieties of their Hosein festivals. All these had had some accepted place in the life and habits of his island community. But here was something which, in purpose and in spirit, seemed entirely outside of, and foreign to, the rushing life of Harlem—a "Back-to-Africa" Movement.

Harlem, with its streets and avenues, their odors, their crowds, their color, was truly intriguing to Jeremiah. Back to the African jungles—habitat of lions and tigers and all sorts of strange, wild animals, among them savage human beings? Interesting enough, perhaps, but full of danger and uncertainty. One would always have to be on the alert while satisfying curiosity. But here in Harlem, and on its highways and byways, were stray and idle groups of gossiping men and women holding up lamp posts and cluttering street corners; ribald laughter; quick banter and turns of speech; deep, rumbling voices that sounded like drumbeats and were yet mellow as flutes; and, underneath it all, a gay ir-

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responsibility which seemed not to give a snap of the fingers either for the Here or the Hereafter—this, indeed, was fit hunting ground for an adventurous soul.

"Who in hell wants to go to Africa?" he muttered. To whom was this invitation addressed, anyhow? Surely not to him and all the brown and yellow and light-skinned people collected there. Was not England, the birthplace of his Caucasian mother, as much his home as Africa, the land of his paternal ancestors? If so, how divide himself? Which part of him belonged to Africa and which to somewhere else? What was the matter with New York, with Harlem? Wasn't this place good enough? And who was this bold proposer—or these proposers—who had the folly or the temerity to preach the rank heresy emblazoned on these banners flaunted aloft?

The leader of the procession had reached 135th Street. He swept his purple-and-gold ostrich-plumed cockade from his head with a grandiose gesture and waved to the crowds. His thick, stubby hair sprang in remonstrating kinks from the top of his head like the erected quills of an agitated porcupine. With the white of his eyes and gleaming teeth set as focusing points in his black, perspiring face, he seemed for all the world like some naughty ape which, in the glee of newly found freedom, was intent on some wanton act.

An instant more, and the prancing white horse and its rider came abreast and in full view of Jeremiah. Jeremiah stared into that black face with unbelieving eyes. Excited recognition came to him.

By the great jumping Jehoshaphat! That was Marcus—Marcus Cox, his erstwhile man-of-all-work back home in the West Indies some half-score or so years ago.

For a flashing moment those years rolled back their veil and a clear picture came to Jeremiah out of the past. A long dusty road lay ahead. Jeremiah himself bestrode an old, rakish, raw-boned horse, riding to his law office in San Fernando. Sometimes by his side, sometimes holding on to the old horse's tail, at other times lagging still farther behind,

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a short, squat young Negro was jogging along, often to take the horse back to its home at their journey's end, at other times remaining in town to perform odd jobs around Jeremiah's office. And now, here was that young man, always voluble and precocious, bowing and grinning before him in the flesh!

"I'll be damned! I'll be *doubly* damned!" mused Jeremiah. "This is amusing. Marcus, the leader of a parade! A movement! A High Commander, if you please, whatever that meant, but obviously a person of some consequence in Harlem, judging from the general excitement and the plaudits of the crowd as he rode by on his white horse."

"He sure is a great Niggah, that Cox! Wonder how he gets away with it? He sure has got those monkeys by their tails all right, all right!" remarked an approving bystander next to Jeremiah.

"Monkeys, nutten!" ejaculated a scowling black giant a few paces away. "He's you damned 'Merican Niggers' leader, too, he is. Dat's de truf, and don't ye ferget it neder!"

Jeremiah recognized in this speaker's brogue the West Indian tongue, whose owner had been referred to as one of the "monkeys" whom Marcus had by the tail.

His curiosity now aroused, Jeremiah followed the procession and kept pace with the prancing white horse as the parade swept into a side street and came to a halt before a low, rambling barnlike building covering almost half the block.

The High Commander was about to dismount. Jeremiah moved over from the sidewalk to greet his erstwhile employee, but a half-dozen or so of the marchers automatically formed a bodyguard around their High Commander and Jeremiah was unceremoniously pushed backward to the curb. Then, like a battalion of well-drilled troops, the men and women paraders formed themselves into columns and filed into the building.

Twilight had by now descended. An accommodating arc-

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light near the entrance of the building burst into glow. Simultaneously, a flare of light shot up from inside the building. Jeremiah, following the long line of single-file marchers, attempted to enter, but an undersized, bullet-headed Negro barred the way. He looked impudently at Jeremiah.

"Is yo' a member? . . . No? Den what yo' wants? Dis meetin's private; nutten but U. N. M. mens and womens here," he growled.

"What does that mean—U. N. M.?" inquired Jeremiah in a tone and manner intended as ingratiating.

"Wah yo' mean wot dat means? Mon, git away from here and doan be a dawmned jock-ass," and the speaker prepared to add force to his scowl.

Exasperated, but preserving his temper, Jeremiah presented one of his cards: "Jeremiah King, Barrister-at-Law, Kingswood Terrace, San Fernando, B. W. I.," it read. Jeremiah added: "I'm a very good friend of Marcus—I mean Mr. Cox," he hurriedly corrected. "I come from his home and would like to see him."

The doorkeeper hesitated an instant. The card was impressive.

"I'm sure Mr. Cox will be glad to see me," Jeremiah urged, noting the hesitation.

Another purple-clad and bemedaled Negro came up. The doorkeeper saluted the newcomer and explained: "Leftenant, dis mon say he's a fren' of de High Commander. He say he want to come in."

The newcomer beetled his brows, deftly switched a hanging monocle to his eye, and slowly scanned the card.

"Might I axe you, Mr. Couns'lor, what yo' bizness wid de President General High Commander might appertain to? Dis is a gala night; plenty of 'portant bizness and . . ." then, suddenly, as the walker of a tightrope might flop to the floor after a gallant effort to maintain his balance, he turned about face: "Shucks! Leh'm in, sergeant. He from down home, anyhow."

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As Jeremiah was about to enter, a slow, surging glow of neon lights across the front of the building broke upon his vision. "Liberty Hall," those lights announced.

Jeremiah entered, found a seat at the back of Liberty Hall, and sat down.

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CHAPTER II

THE DISPOSITION to explore new horizons when the old ones become stale and humdrum was undoubtedly the cause of Jeremiah's departure from his well-established West Indian haunts and his presence in Liberty Hall on this particular hot July night. Throughout all his thirty-six years, Jeremiah had found the world, and life in it, to be very satisfying—in fact, a delightful thing. He was thankful to the Fates which had ordained him to be one of that innumerable caravan to adventure on the shores of this earthly sea; but that had come about, he told himself, because he had contrived to make it so. "The eye sees in it what it has in it to see; and the world to a dog and to his master are quite two different universes," Emerson very cogently said in one of his essays. Shakespeare's dictum, too, "First to thine own self be true," was to Jeremiah an immortal truism; and so, from his early years of comprehension to his maturity, Jeremiah had developed the knack of not taking life too seriously.

Thus it was that things in the world which inhibited and restrained most other people—such as duty and obligation and the many passions born of those mental goblins—had done very little either to incite his activities or to agitate his conscience.

Not that Jeremiah King was devoid of these promptings; but whenever the occasion arose to bestir himself or to refrain from so doing, it was the essence of his being to consider first his own comfort, his individual well-being and,

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above everything else, the preservation of his peace of mind.

Many years before, Jeremiah had drifted into marriage. So successfully had he filled the role of domesticated man that, in proper and due season, he had become the father of a son. Little Michael, his son, had died when he was only four years old. A period of frustration overtook both Jeremiah and his wife Dora after their little boy's death. What change Michael's survival might have made in the current of his life and in his outlook thereon, Jeremiah would never know. In the solitude of lonesome walks and strolls he had pondered deeply upon these things but had found no answer. Nevertheless, as time went by and his inward vision of the prattling, kicking youngster with sparkling black eyes became fainter and fainter, Michael's early release from life seemed in some vague, dim way a matter of relief to his father. Dora was always nagging, and Jeremiah dreaded to think what greater conflicts might have arisen over the rearing and training of a son.

Jeremiah had not married his wife Dora from any urgent heart-promptings. In affairs of the heart, ever since the time, many years before, when as a law student in London he had fallen desperately in love with an English girl and that affair had come to naught through racial barriers, Jeremiah had found it expedient to be very wary of romance. The time came, however, when, as a matter of business and professional diplomacy, it seemed desirable to have a wife and a housekeeper. There had not appeared to him any particular reason why he should not have chosen Dora; and as she herself was anxious to marry him, and, in addition, as her father was a man of some substance, Jeremiah had obliged.

But there was one element in this which Jeremiah had failed to take into account: that was Dora's striving and tempestuous nature. No sooner had they married than Dora deemed it necessary to act as a spur and goad to him, relentlessly pursuing him, first with urgings, next with pleadings, and, finally, with naggings—all to the end that

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Jeremiah make a better and better place in the sun for themselves and, when little Michael came along, for him also.

Naturally, Dora was ambitious to acquire some measure of prosperity. She wanted a comfortable home and such other appurtenances as would make her relatives and numerous acquaintances, especially her erstwhile female competitors, feel that she had chosen well in her matrimonial venture. And so, when Jeremiah had deliberately elected, as Dora saw it, to travel the path of ease and comfort and had refused offers of several prosecutions on behalf of the government, which might have meant almost immediate preferment and financial benefit, Dora's urgings and pleadings turned to most bitter naggings.

Jeremiah had not taken kindly to Dora's promptings; and when the naggings came, with their harsh reproaches, he had found it expedient to fasten about himself the armor of indifference. Jeremiah had his own views about both his professional and his social activities. He considered himself sole captain of their domestic ship, with no aides, advisers, or accomplices. "Accomplices!" This word expressed his idea to a nicety, suggesting to his legal mind one who aided and abetted another for sinister purposes. To Jeremiah's mind, any help tendered by his wife in his activities would always be . . . sinister.

Jeremiah was not given to morbid introspection. He felt one fact intuitively and instinctively—life was a personal and present affair. Yesterday was an orange, juice-sucked, to be tossed over a fence into the limbo of forgetfulness. Tomorrow was a bare anticipation, void and formless, and, whatever it might bring to him in its uncertain and speculative course was certainly of no concern to anyone, especially to Dora, on whom he felt he had conferred her chief honor, that of being known as "Mrs. Jeremiah King."

Jeremiah, however, never loved a quarrel; and so, partly by a policy of evasion and mainly by an impenetrable nonchalance, he had contrived to pursue his own devices through

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the many years of their married life, especially after his little son's death.

Money was often the cause of their conflicts. Dora had a comfortable allowance from her father, but she persistently made it clear to Jeremiah that, when it came to his finances, she, Dora King, his wife, was first and foremost in consideration and importance. What was left, after her wants and whims had been satisfied, he could spend as he liked.

Now, money to Jeremiah had always been a most personal affair. Money, in bills or in coins jangling in his pockets, was synonomous with individual liberty, freedom to secure the things he desired and to do the things he wanted. It meant boxes of the best cigars, cocktails at his club, all the clothes he wanted, and, whenever the urge seized him to be generous, to do so with that competence and complacency which was of the essence of his ease-loving nature.

Jeremiah never seemed able to accumulate sufficient money. Indeed, after marrying Dora, it had been a most difficult matter for him to realize that his wife constituted a financial burden to him; and all through the years, as Dora's demands on Jeremiah's purse-strings continued, they appealed to Jeremiah as so many blows struck at his personal liberty.

A vague longing to wander, to loosen himself from a tie which had come to constrict his personal whims, gradually took shape and substance within his being. Jeremiah felt that he had reached the point where separation, total and absolute, from his domestic state seemed the only solution to a most disconcerting problem.

Instinctively, his eyes and thoughts turned towards the United States, Land of Promise to disquieted millions throughout the world. Faint whisperings of New York and of Harlem where, as rumored, hundreds of thousands of people of color had a city of their own, came to him. At thirty-six years of age, was he too old to pull up stakes and start anew? Surely not! His professional and other intellectual

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attainments should count for something; and, while finding a place for himself, he surely would not starve. He had put by a competence against any such calamity. Dora, during one of her periodical huffs, had gone off on a visit to her father in one of the remote parts of the island. What was there, then, to prevent him from taking advantage of this opportune time to avoid the bitterness of personal criminations and recriminations by removing himself quietly and unobtrusively? Nothing, absolutely nothing! So it seemed to Jeremiah.

Thus it came about that Jeremiah took an early train on the Monday morning following his wife's visit to her parents and arrived in due season at the capital port of the island, from whence he embarked for New York.

He left behind him a deed in Dora's name to their house, and a letter in which he told her that all the money in bank in their joint account was now hers, as well as everything else in and about their home, even his personal accumulations, with which he did not want to burden himself. "And now, my beloved wife," he wound up his note (this was his last shaft at her, for even the Dove of Peace, much less that of Love, had long since departed from their household), "you may consider yourself 'free as a bird of the air.' Get a divorce; do anything that you like. I shall not return."

This was his parting message; and as the train rumbled on towards its destination, Jeremiah told himself that, in all the things he had done, he had been exceedingly generous; and, in fact, he had done something which not many men could have done.

Jeremiah boarded his ship and stood on its stern as she gradually nosed her way out of the harbor into open water late that Monday night. Behind him the lights of the city sprang up. He watched them until they became mere twinkling specks in the distance. From beneath the horizon on his left, a moon, a more than full moon, arose gently and shyly,

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as a coy, dainty person might emerge from shadow into light. Impulsively, Jeremiah's hands moved out and upwards as in a last farewell over the white churning waters in the ship's wake, and he breathed deeply within himself: "God! It's good to be free!"

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CHAPTER III

"YES, GOD, it is indeed good to be free!"

When Jeremiah breathed out this cry of his own heart, he was undoubtedly voicing the universal craving of every created being in the universe; yet there are many souls who fail to understand that the kinds and quantities of freedoms they desire may mean pure enslavement to others.

Back in his West Indian habitat, Jeremiah had been reared in an environment where men of intellectual attainments had their particular place in the sun, irrespective of racial or other differences. They had come to that place naturally and as a matter of unquestioned right through many past generations. It was only those of inferior education and occupation, laborers, mechanics and the innumerable mass of toilers who lived by the sweat of their brow, who had any need for revolutionary improvement. Thus it was that, as one of that preferred class, whenever some louder cry than usual arose from the substrata of submerged human beings in his community and forced itself upon his notice, Jeremiah, together with others of his class, was prone to view these strivings of the masses with a certain degree of contempt. And so, as he sat in the back of Liberty Hall that night, sensing that here before him was just such a movement, there was, perhaps, somewhat of a sneer on his lips as he gazed around him.

Jeremiah was curious to discover how a man of Marcus Cox's attainments, or lack thereof, had been able to marshal such a fantastic display and parade as the one he had wit-

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nessed earlier that afternoon. It was as if he were attending a theatrical performance and were waiting for the curtain to rise on some farce.

"Liberty Hall—and a Back-to-Africa movement!" What connection did the one have with the other in this free and democratic America, where all men were created equal, though not born equal! The distinction between the two concepts seemed a nice one to Jeremiah. A man might be born a cripple, a hunchback, and, therefore, handicapped and unequal; but he was created equal none the less to one born with a perfect body and supreme intelligence.

"Eh, what?" he murmured to himself in true English style and smiled as he continued to toy with the paradox.

In a moment, however, as he sat there in Liberty Hall pondering, Jeremiah was jolted back to the actuality of things by the sharp blare of a bugle. Advancing from the wings of a stage at the far end of the room, a midget of a black boy appeared. Head thrown back, the lad held a bugle to his lips. With his unoccupied hand, the small bugler tried to control the swaying of a long, unwieldy sword which hung from his side and clanked ridiculously on the floor while he essayed the business of bugling.

As the bugle rang out, the audience rose as with one accord. Jeremiah, too, found himself on his feet. From either side of the stage there filed out two parallel columns of soldierly-looking Negroes, chosen especially, it seemed, for their imposing height and stature. They halted at either side of the rostrum with spears held aloft.

A second bugle note rang out. The spears were lowered to meet on either side, and through the center of this lane strode Marcus Cox, the High Commander. He was dressed in the same purple uniform as the one he had worn earlier that evening, but now on his head there reposed a skullcap of gorgeous gold, and, from his shoulders, a leopard cloak lined with deep scarlet hung loosely and swept the floor.

The night was hot, the room was close with the odor of perspiring bodies, but the High Commander advanced cool

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and supreme. He approached the front of the platform with a strut and swagger that reminded Jeremiah of one of his gamecocks back in San Fernando. Pausing an instant, Marcus made a profound bow, then slowly settled his squat body into the seat of a black thronelike chair which was the sole piece of furniture on the dais. Instantly, as the High Commander seated himself, a black curtain bespangled with golden stars rustled across the platform behind him, leaving Marcus as the sole occupant there.

Looking around him, Jeremiah noted that the men and women in that crowded audience were predominantly black or of dark complexion.

"No doubt about it, this is an African movement!" he chuckled to himself.

But Marcus, the High Commander, was about to do something. Slowly spreading his cloak over the back of the chair so that the leopard background was revealed to the audience, and carefully permitting its feline head to protrude from the folds, Marcus Cox took a step nearer the edge of the platform and, with an outward movement of his arms like the first gesture of a swimming exercise, began to speak:

"Mens and womens of this Universal Negro Movement of the United States and of the world! Soldiers of this Black Movement that's agoing to revamp the earth, I salutes you! And know by these presents, you black sons of Ham—for Ham was the first black man in the world according to Holy Scripture—an' I don't means any hog ham eder. . . ."

There was a rumble of laughter at this sally. Feet were scraped and shuffled around the hall approvingly. Marcus was quickly getting into his stride.

"Know by these resplendent presents that we held forth today an example of our intentions for our posterities to shine by and ambulate."

Jeremiah began to smile. Marcus was indeed spreading himself.

"As the Shakesperians has said," Marcus continued, "you

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eder wants to be or yo' don't wants to be. Now, which is it—you black brothers of this movement? And when I says 'black' I *means* black, and we all wants to be proud of our blackness. We ain't 'shamed of rich black earth that God Almighty's made to fertilize the earth. Why in hell is we 'shamed of good, rich black mens and womens?"

There was a burst of thunderous applause.

"No, sir! No, sir! We ehn't 'shamed a bit," came back the triumphant response.

"You, know," Marcus continued, "I wants to transgress for a moment. I wants to tell you this: Dere is plenty of rhiney Niggers, many of dem who don't know who dere mudders or fahders are. Dey're in Ha'lem, dey're all over. Dey think it's smart to pass, to make believe they're everything 'cept what they really are—just pure damn fools making believe their skins are white while dere souls is just black as hell."

There were loud guffaws at this shot, but Marcus held up his hand for order and proceeded:

"I has no use for man, woman or chile who's 'shamed of his race or color. Pussonally, I'se proud o' my black skin. I thinks it gives me all d' strength I feels in my bones. I aims to tramp d' earth wid all d' dignity and power of a great big elephant. I aims to make every son-of-a-gun knows that I'se around. I remembers back in dis place they calls Ha'lem dese many years ago. Dere wasn't but a handful of Niggers here den, just the few who was white enough to squeeze in and think dey was passing. But after de great big world war when de Kaiser tried to raise hell all through Europe and we 'Mericans—white and black dis time, when it comes to fighting—went over dere and licked de pants off him—after dis fuss was all over, seems as if de Niggers from all over d' world come and invaded Ha'lem. They chase all the white people out of dere homes and flats. In fact, de white people just ups and runs away. Dey just smells the Niggahs coming and ups and leaves like jackrabbits. 'Twas just like when de ancient Israelitish people comes

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to de hill overlooking Canaan and Galillee, and de Philistines and de Hittites and all dose other ancient people heard 'bout dem coming and dey scampers away leaving dere lands and possessions to the chillun o' God. 'Twas just that away wid we black Niggers in Ha'lem. But my brudders and sisters, dose same white people, dey plays a trick on us. Dey left us in Ha'lem high and dry. De's caged us in here between Central Park and de Ha'lem River. When we goes below 110th Street, we kin walk on de sidewalks, it's true; but we dasn't enter one a dere barrooms, dere res'rants, dere hotels, nor anything dey's got; and when we ask for a job, we gets nothing 'cept a po'ter or some handyman's job. Dey has us pinned down. Ha'lem is just one big concentration camp where we come up to after we've scrubbed de white man's floors and done all his other dirty work downtown. And it's de same way all over de world. We ain't got nuthin', and we don't 'mount to nuthin'. Why, shucks! Hell! Gol darn it! The sitiation of us and our chilluns is worse'n than de dregs of de earth. We all is just hew'rs o' wood and draw'rs o' water. We'se like de ancient Israelitish people crossing de Dead Sea wid de 'Gyptians at our behinds. But de great God Almighty ain't fergit us. Dere's a Pillar o' Fire aleadin'; and I, Marcus Cox, is dat Pillar o' Fire! Yo' been sleepin' unto de third and fou'th generation, but, please God, I'se going to wake you up! De time is now ripe for you to wake up like a young giant all freshened up from his nap. As I said afore, yo' can't do nuthin' in dis white man's land, and dere ain't no use in trying.

"And where is we going, black soldiers of this Universal Movement? Where is we going? We is going back to the land of our fadders and mudders where we can rule ourselves and show de white races of de earth that we's jest as good as dey are any time!

"But we can't do nuthin' without money, fellow comrades. We need ships jes' like de white man. We need our own captains to run de ships and black sailors and soldiers, too. We can't walk 'cross de ocean, and white mens ain't

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going to take us dere, 'cause he need us in dis country to do his dirty work, so dat's dat, brothers and sisters, dat's dat! We'se got to raise money, and all dis movement that we got here today and all de other movements dat I'se perjected over the face of the four waters of heaven from de Caribbean Sea to de China Ocean, we'se got to get our chil'rens and our chil'rens chilluns and all of us go back to the land where our great, green grandfadders come from in bars of steel and shekels many, many years ago. Dat land is Africa, *Africa!*" Marcus shouted. "All I'se asking the white man is: 'Let my people go,' " he ended.

At the mention of Africa there was a dense tumult of noise which lasted for many minutes. Jeremiah sat with a cynical smile curling his lips. Surely an African colony, or even a kingdom, to this fourth or fifth generation of Negroes was not an answer to the problems Marcus had posed in his colorful tirade.

"Who in hell wants to go to Africa?" Jeremiah repeated, as in the earlier part of the afternoon, and yet this illiterate gibberish was undoubtedly making a profound impression on these people.

Again Jeremiah gazed around him. On every side there was deep, grim, absorbing attention. It was gripping in its intensity. Here, close beside Jeremiah, sat a little bald Negro with a slanting forehead. He was trying to tease his smooth, unyielding brow into encouraging wrinkles of approbation with quick, nervous finger strokes. Occasionally, he cocked his head first on one side and then on the other; and, his forehead not sufficiently responding, his eyebrows were taking up the burden with marvelous little twitches like those a playful chimpanzee might make.

Over yonder, to the left, a black giant hunched forward on the edge of his seat, his jaws puffing and his eyes bulging, was following with gestures every word of the High Commander. Occasionally, a deep grunt issued from his froglike jaws.

Across the aisle another lantern-jawed Negro had reached

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a state of ecstasy. Head thrown back, eyes tightly closed, wide-lipped, he smiled most happily. Visions that black man had—visions far greater than those of his High Commander, Marcus Cox, could ever evoke for him. A little thatched hut . . . a crooning river . . . heavy laden forest . . . rustling leaves . . . a dreamy sundown . . . peace and quiet . . : and the rapture of an African jungle home. Back a few hundred years, nay, back a much lesser span, and this man was seeing with the eyes of his African ancestors. Here in Harlem nothing but pavements, rumbling noises, hustling life. Nothing but work, work all the time. Yesterday the same, today the same, tomorrow the same, morning, noon and night. Working to pay the rent, working to buy bread, working to get a few clothes, No time to stretch, no time to loll, no time to lie down and get a good sleep . . . always working, working for the white man.

No wonder this dreamer of a Back-to-Africa Movement was smiling. His body was in Harlem, just as the body of his slave ancestors had been on a North Carolinian or a West Indian plantation before he was born, but the soul of this dreamer of dreams, like that of his father and mother before him, was in Africa, shouting its African heritage, voicing its African aspirations. Had a Negro spiritual burst forth at that moment, that black man, unlearned in the art of music, would instinctively have carried its tuneful plaint, for in it was made articulate the cry of his starving soul.

From whence had this ability to emit such harmony come to these Negroes? Was it or was it not some contribution of worth to so-called civilized man? And deep in this Negro's being there might be other qualities of equal worth to the world deserving cultivation by free and unbounded opportunity. The Lord of creation had made the mountain as well as the valley, the lion as well as the mouse, the great storming winds as well as the gentle breezes, each to fulfill and round out their turn and purpose in the Eternal Plan. Who was there who dared put into practise any way of life

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which would enslave the bodies or souls of these creatures of God?

And Marcus, the High Commander! Marcus, rude, primitive, atavistic! Marcus could evoke dreams and visions for these people. Jeremiah King, educated, cultivated, refined could not reach these people's hearts. Marcus was one of them, Jeremiah was not. What a power existed in Marcus' grasp for good or evil! And to what account was Marcus intent on turning this power?

"As you all well knows," Marcus' voice was ringing on, "de principal purport of dis meetin' and dis promenadin' parade we undertook today is to complete de displeted treasuryship. We'se had much disbursements to make, and de treasury is well-nigh empty-handed; so, brothers and sisters, collection of dues is now in order, and de 'sembled members knows well dere is a special 'sessment of $25 per mens and $15 per womens which we got to make up tonight. We got to make a fust deposit on our new ship we goin' contract to purchase, and de name of dat ship, as yo' all well knows, is *Goddess of Liberty*. De hour is gettin' 'long, and we'll jes now proceed to de bizness of collectin' de money. De honorable chamberlains will 'tend to dat bizness."

As Marcus Cox concluded his speech and resumed his seat on the black throne, prolonged handclapping and feet-pounding resounded throughout the hall. He arose, bowed many times, and sat down. There was a far-off look in his eye as if he glimpsed things visible only to himself. As a matter of fact, from the corners of his eyes, Marcus was warily following the collections being gathered up.

Beneath the platform on which Marcus sat in solitary grandeur was a railed-in space containing small tables. At each table sat an honorable chamberlain, small black book in hand, taking money and marking down beside each contribution the name of the contributor. Soon the flow of persons going forward to pay ceased altogether. A whispered conference took place among the chamberlains, and then

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the chief of this band went forward and handed Marcus Cox a basket filled with bills and coins and a slip of paper.

Marcus Cox rose: "I'se glad to 'nounce de receipt of $2,675.85 We should o' raised tonight no less dan $4,000; but we got to take what we got and do de bes' we can."

"Ghee!" muttered Jeremiah. "That's surely easy money!" And, leaning back in his chair, he chuckled.

The Negro by his side who had been teasing his forehead jerked himself around and scowled ferociously. "What's de matter wid you, mon?"

Jeremiah hastily composed his features.

He decided that he must meet Marcus Cox without delay. There was no plan or scheme in his mind. He had seen a great many astonishing things in Harlem since his arrival, but this performance, with its coincident golden shower, seemed strangest of all.

For more than a half-hour after the last straggler had emerged from that temple dedicated to black men's hopes, Jeremiah walked up and down before the building. He proposed to wait until morning, if necessary, to meet Marcus Cox. He was willing now to admit that he had been wrong in his prior estimate of Harlem as being without a Moses; and since this Moses was none other than his former man Friday, he proposed—well, there was no harm in making himself known to him.

He was so absorbed in these thoughts that an automobile rolled up and all but brushed him from the sidewalk.

"Look out dere what yo' doing, Nigger; don't you see me drivin' up? Don't you know dis car belong to de High Commander? Git out de way, mon," shouted the driver.

Jeremiah was about to respond; no living man could with impunity address him as "Nigger." He had never before in his life been accosted that way. He proposed to chastise him in the only way a gentleman did those things—with his cane. Fortunately, at this moment, Marcus Cox himself appeared. The chauffeur immediately came to attention and saluted his chief. Jeremiah stopped, hesitated,

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and then advanced with hand extended to meet Marcus Cox.

"What a pleasure to meet you on this side of the water, Marc . . . Mr. Cox!" he greeted.

They met under the arclight on the sidewalk. Marcus carried a small black bag in his right hand; and at Jeremiah's approach he instinctively clutched it upward to his side. For a moment he stared blankly at Jeremiah; then, whether in relief that the black bag seemed in no danger, or because of his genuine pleasure in recognizing Jeremiah, his face relaxed into a broad smile.

"We—ll, we—ll, we—ll, counselor! I'm sure glad . . ." but noting the look of consternation on the face of his chauffeur, who had just been abusing the friend of his chief, Marcus concluded in a crisp, businesslike tone:

"Jump in, King, if you're going my way." And, to the chauffeur: "Home! Ebeneezer, I'se tired!"

Jeremiah did not know whether Marcus Cox's way was his way or not, but he jumped in.

As the door swung open, a shaded light in the ceiling of the limousine spread its tiny glow within. Jeremiah became aware of another occupant of the car, a young woman —perhaps a very young woman—he could not immediately determine. He became conscious of a pair of dark eyes glowing like two black pearls into his.

"Hullo, Lido," Marcus greeted; and, nodding towards Jeremiah, "This is a friend of mine, Counselor King;" and to Jeremiah: "King, this is my secretary, Miss Jones."

And the Lincoln limousine rolled off.

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CHAPTER IV

THERE WAS very little of conversation in the car as Marcus and his companions were driven home. For one thing, the rush of the car and the street noises rendered conversation difficult; and, for another, there had sprung into being almost instinctively a faint prescience of adjustments to be made which could not be attempted hastily and in the presence of a third party. For the succeeding moments, however, this third person, Lido Jones, in such close proximity to his senses, stimulated Jeremiah's curiosity.

A subtle perfume, delicate, illusive, but all-enveloping, seemed to radiate from this young creature of whom he had had but a flashing, yet arresting, glimpse. Soft, cream-color complexion with two glowing pearl-like eyes that had momentarily transfixed his! And this essence which exuded from her presence and filled the car as a totally exotic influence! What connection could there be between portly, squat black Marcus Cox and this striking, exotic creature? Perhaps it was that Jeremiah's nerves, stimulated by the happenings of that day, were unusually alert, made edgy by every untoward circumstance. Whatever the cause, Jeremiah felt himself charged with the same kind of excited expectancy as had come to him on a particular occasion only once before in his life.

That had been long ago in his final school year as a law student in London. He had just returned to his lodgings

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from a walk in Hyde Park with a girl—Jennie Stallings. Jennie and he had come to see quite a lot of each other, more or less secretly, but constantly just the same. They had agreed that Jeremiah should write to Jennie's parents and ask permission for an open engagement. He had sat down, filled with youthful emotion and glowing with hope, to compose a letter to Jennie's parents asking for the desired permission. Draft after draft he had attempted and destroyed. It was important—most important—to express all the things he wanted to say in exact fashion and, especially, to close his missive in terms that would adequately disclose the glow and warmth of his devotion to Jennie. But words eluded him and, finally, in a last moment of frustration at being unable to find the language with which to close his love-declaration, he had determined to appropriate the words and phrases of some famous author—at the moment he had forgotten whether it was Carlisle, Huxley, Spencer or another writer of note of a past generation—to the object of his adoration on a similar occasion, and he had brazenly copied that language. "I am poor, without place or position," he had concluded, "but I am young and I am sincere and true. I love your daughter, and there is no wealth or circumstance in the world which can equalize the devotion of a true heart."

He had felt a great tender melting in his heart as he had thus concluded his letter. He was young and in love. There was nothing in the world that he could not grasp and lay at Jennie's feet.

He had gone out and dropped his letter into a mailbox, then turned into Hyde Park and sat on the little bench under a spreading tree where Jennie and he had sat a few hours before. As the moon came up over the trees and flooded the greensward with its soft light, he had speculated on what Jennie's parents would answer. That answer came a few days later—dust and ashes. He had never been able to see or make contact with Jennie again. . . . And so, in

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due season, he had completed his law course, returned to the West Indies, and . . . married Dora. . . . But now, here was Harlem! . . .

The limousine came to a quick, almost abrupt stop, and Jeremiah's musings were at an end.

As he and his companions alighted and lingered on the sidewalk for a moment, Jeremiah found himself standing before a four-story brownstone dwelling of distinguished appearance. Along its side, bordered by flowering plants, an iron-gated courtyard ran back and toward the rear. Around them on each sidewalk, lazily swaying with softly rustling leaves, a lane of maples, flanked on either side by a row of other substantial houses, extended througout the entire length of the street. In the peaceful quiet of their shade, it seemed that both the trees and the buildings were gently nodding themselves to sleep.

A moment before they had faced the glaring noises of the avenue; and now here, at the mere turn of a corner into this side street, was a charming seclusion which mocked those noises and made them seem remote and far away—like stifled echoes from another world.

And this imposing residence was Marcus Cox's! And it was in this dignified atmosphere that he had been able to establish a retreat! An amused chuckle escaped Jeremiah's lips.

"Some house, ehn't it, boy?" commented Marcus as they turned to ascend the steps.

"I'll say so," hastily agreed Jeremiah.

Reaching the vestibule of Cox's house, Lido Jones, in the van, drew a key from her handbag and inserted it into the door. The vestibule light shed its rays upon her; and as she turned and gazed upwards for a moment, her full face met Jeremiah's. Of a complexion as light as his, her cheeks and lips colored and flushed with the healthy bloom of perhaps some twenty-odd years, she was a striking figure. Those sparkling black eyes which he had first sensed shot

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him a fleeting smile. Curiously, Jeremiah's gaze traveled over and encompassed the black squattiness of Marcus Cox. Musingly, he looked down at her slim, dainty figure.

"Damn funny!" he breathed as they passed inside together.

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CHAPTER V

"WE'LL HAVE a bite to eat!" announced Marcus soon after he had shown Jeremiah to a most sumptuous washroom and Marcus himself had returned from the place.

From the kitchen, off the dining-room, came sounds of clinking dishes and cutlery; and soon Ebeneezer, miraculously transformed from a uniformed chauffeur into a white-jacketed butler, passed silently around them filling their plates and glasses with fine food and drink. Marcus took water and, a little later, tea. Jeremiah took a cocktail, several glasses of wine, and so did Lido. Conversation at the table languished. Perhaps they were all hungry; perhaps the atmosphere of restraint still lingered.

Supper over, Marcus said to Lido: "There's some money in my bag—reckon it and put it in the safe." Then, turning to Jeremiah:

"Come on into the li'berry, King. You smoke? But o' course you do! I remember. Have a seegar!" And from a console nearby, as they passed on into the library, Marcus extracted a box of cigars and held them out to Jeremiah.

"H-m, Carolinas!" noted Jeremiah. "Nothing but the best for Marcus!"

"Sit down and make yo'self to home," Marcus said.

His stomach filled with satisfying food, his brain pleasantly stimulated with Cox's cocktails and wine, the aroma of a good cigar in his nostrils as the smoke curled up from his initial puffs, Jeremiah became conscious of a generous glow in his insides.

"Well, how in blazes are you, Marcus? You seem to be

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doing mighty well by yourself," Jeremiah exploded, as if he had for the first time become aware of his friend, at the same time letting himself sink down among the inviting cushions of a large nearby sofa.

Marcus Cox had taken a pipe from a nearby stand and was slowly filling it with tobacco. He turned his gaze musingly on Jeremiah without immediate answer.

"I'll tell you, Mr. King," Marcus finally responded—and there was undoubtedly significant stress on the word "Mister," "these United States of America is the greates' country on God's earth, de greates' for white mens, for black mens, for yellow mens, and every other kind of mens and womens in de world. Lot of people comes to this man's country from de bottom and dey's soon at the top; and a lot of other people comes from de top and dey's at de bottom. You comprehends me, King?" And, after a pause, "But yo' done right to come to dis country, mon. De West Indies is no place for a mon wid brains."

"And yet, Marcus," Jeremiah found himself replying, "a few short hours ago you were advocating an exodus of all your people to Africa. Are you thinking of going there?"

Marcus did not reply immediately. Stalking over to a smoking stand in a corner of the large room, he snuffed the match with which he had been lighting his pipe and carefully laid it down.

"Maybe . . . and maybe not," he slowly responded.

There was momentary silence between the two men. Jeremiah pulled at his cigar, and rings of white smoke began to curl from the bowl of Marcus' pipe.

"How long yo' been here?" suddenly queried Marcus.

"Just five weeks today."

"On a vacation?"

Jeremiah hesitated.

"Dora and I . . ." he began, then checked himself. "Mrs. King and I had a little disagreement, in fact, ehr . . . ehr . . . well, we decided . . . I decided to pull up stakes and come to this country . . . for good," he ended abruptly.

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"So you couldn't make it—you split up, eh?" with what seemed to Jeremiah to be an ever so slightly cynical note.

Jeremiah subtly resented Cox's tone. He resented thus discussing his private domestic affairs with a man who, after all, had been his handyman, but he held his countenance and rejoined: "Call it that if you like."

"Well, that's neither here nor dere. The impohtant thing is that you is here"; and, after a pause, "What yo' thinks o' doing?"

Jeremiah shot a quick glance over at Marcus; then some mischievous imp prompted him: "I'd like to be a High Commander."

They both laughed.

"Yo' thinks that a joke, don't yo'?" queried Marcus.

"Not by a damned sight," hastened Jeremiah. "That $3,000 you collected tonight was real money, wasn't it?"

Again Marcus emitted a chuckle.

"King, yo' ain't changed a bit; yo'se jes' as sa'castic as hell! I bets yo' never seen so much money in yo' bawn days."

"Not at once and not so easy."

Marcus was silent for a moment.

"Yo' was in de hall, then, tonight, was you?"

Jeremiah nodded.

"What yo' thinks of my speech?"

"Rotten!"

Marcus shot a quick glance over at Jeremiah.

"I 'spose you thinks you could ah done heaps better, don't you?"

"No, not half so well with . . . them," Jeremiah retorted. "They understand you. They wouldn't understand me."

"Then what is yo' kickin' 'bout?"

"I'm not objecting, but you asked me and I am telling you."

"But de $3,000 was all right—no kick 'bout that, eh?" drawled Marcus.

"No, nor about a great many other things."

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"Udder things like what? For instant?" urged Marcus, as Jeremiah hesitated.

"Well, *this*—for example," with a sweeping gesture of his hands around the room.

"Mighty unctious, ehn't it?"

"Yes, mighty *sumptuous,*" but Marcus gave no heed to the correction.

"Say, King," he resumed cautiously, "I may . . . I may be able . . . to . . . to use you."

Marcus held his pipe poised in one hand, and his gaze roamed out through an open window as if to some distant vista beyond.

"Ye-s-?" drawled Jeremiah slowly, with a half-curious lift of his eyebrows. He had not expected this offer.

"Yes," mused Marcus, "we needs above everything else a good lawyer, a good couns'lor. I don't trust no white mens no furder than I kin throw a greased bull by his tail. We has a young fellah, a couns'lor, but he don't know nuthin'; he ain't on to contracts and co'porations and such things, and we'se involved in a lot of sich things. We has a big organization, a pow'ful organization, and I aims to make it more pow'ful. We aims to shake de world, King. We'se a sleeping race, King, and I'se de man who kin wake 'em up. But right through here, I needs help; I needs a man with brains. I needs a man to front for me sometimes, to plan and scheme while I holds my people's interest and keep dem in line and get some money—a lot of money. I wants to put my people in politics . . . to learn 'em how to use dere votes. I wants to make much publicity, publicity among de white race. I wants to reach dere hearts. This Africa preachment is jes' one of those things. We has to have a dream to lead us by, King. De Bible say mens can't live by bread alone, and we black people ehn't satisfied with jes' eatin' and drinkin' an' . . . workin'."

"Blood, sweat, an' toil!" he continued. "We'se had enough of dat. We wants some of de *easy* things. Look out

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dat window, King. Yo' see all dem houses out dere? You see dis one? We grab all dese from de white folks. How? Dey jes' gets scared and runs away. One Niggah, one skunk; two Niggahs, two skunks. Dey smells us and dey skedaddles. Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed ironically. "We don't care why dey runs, so long as dey runs. If dat is de only way we kin do it we'll jes' stinks dem out. I tells you, King, dis is a race, a race to de swif' and de strong, to peoples wid brains. I'se got a pow'ful lot of black Niggahs entered in dis race; and if we jines together dey can't stop us. We boun' to get some of de things we wants. We black people is goin' to do it widout you white rhiney Niggahs if we has to, but it's up to you'se, too. You'se eder wid us or 'gainst us."

Marcus Cox had become as animated and alive in this tirade as he had been in Liberty Hall earlier that night. His right fist clenched, his left clutching his long black pipe, he gestured wildly.

Jeremiah was regarding Marcus out of half-closed lids shrouded by cigar smoke. He wondered how much of real seriousness there was in this man and how much of pose, of bluster—but he was intrigued.

While working at odd jobs in Jeremiah's home and office in the West Indies, Marcus Cox had never impressed Jeremiah as having any latent potentialities. If an appraisal of Marcus had ever crossed Jeremiah's mind, he had merely seen him as one of the many human beings of low degree who came and went remotely across his horizon, existing, mainly, perhaps, to cater to the comfort and well-being of Jeremiah and such as he. That early afternoon and tonight, however, and here, there and everywhere around him, in that room and house, were costly furniture, rugs, pictures, and lavish decorations of worth and taste! These were tangible evidence of this man's arrival at a status far beyond Jeremiah's most extravagant fancy and far beyond what, had he been asked a few hours ago, Jeremiah would have been willing to concede that a man of Marcus' attainments could ever have aspired to, much less achieved.

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But this was Harlem! Harlem's reputation had but faintly penetrated the distant confines of Jeremiah's island home. On occasion, vague rumors had floated across the ocean of the opportunities in this Land of Promise. It was, indeed, these reports which had influenced Jeremiah to come to New York rather than return to London, where he could easily have resumed his practice of the law. But if Marcus Cox could achieve this—and his eye roamed around Cox's library once more to take in all the sumptuous evidence—what was the matter with him, Jeremiah King? Surely the education which he had acquired meant something! And surely the ripe experience of his years at the bar in San Fernando was equipment of some worth! There might be more in this man's ravings than he, Jeremiah, had given him credit for.

There was a knock at the door. In answer to Marcus Cox's "Come in," Ebeneezer's head showed in the doorway.

"Is dere anything else you wants, Chief, before Ah turns in?"

"Is Mrs. Jones in yet?" queried Marcus.

"Yes, sir, but Miss Lido has gone out," replied Ebeneezer.

"Then bring me some whiskey, some soda and ice," ordered his master, "and, say—bring me a piece of dat apple pie we had for dinner."

Marcus caught the question in Jeremiah's eyes.

"De apple pie is for me, the whiskey for you. I don't drink. At least, not as a rule," Marcus explained.

This arrangement suited Jeremiah perfectly.

"What is the general purpose of your organization?" Jeremiah ventured after a while.

Helping himself to a whiskey and soda from the bottles deposited by Ebeneezer on a nearby stand, he was now meditatively observing the bubbling beads of his drink as they chased each other up and down his glass. At the same time he thought: "Marcus is certainly a darn fine host!" Slowly he imbibed a first long sip from his bubbling glass.

Marcus was very hesitant in answering Jeremiah's latest

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query, but Jeremiah had now become accustomed to the careful manner of his host.

"I'se tole you already, King, but just through here we needs to collect money."

"And then what?"

"Collect more money . . . and still *more* money," Marcus continued as though communing with himself.

Jeremiah had by now unreservedly committed himself to his drink. Before wafting it a final farewell, he tenderly shook the last remains of the clinking ice and bubbling soda and slowly drained the glass. Rising and moving over, Jeremiah helped himself to another of his host's cigars. Lighting it, he was about to resume the conversation, but Marcus was saying: "You see, King . . . and there was something in Marcus' manner of saying "King" that still grated on Jeremiah's sensibilities. Jeremiah sensed that this was Marcus Cox's subtle method of conveying to him that a great change had taken place in their relations. "What the Negroes in this country needs more than anything else is money . . . more money . . . and still more money."

"Yes," rejoined Jeremiah, inwardly reminded that some rehabilitation of his own finances would be very welcome.

"Yo' see," continued Marcus, "de white man runs dis country because he's got all de money. Niggers don't 'mount to much 'cause dey ain't got nutten. Why, mon, suppose I has a lot of money. I could do anything. If things was diff'rent I might be President of dese United States—you dawmed jockass!" he ended in a sudden burst of fervor.

Jeremiah was slowly stirring another highball. His spirit, his mood, his reservations were expanding. Had Marcus desired to be bugler of note in the legislative halls of the nation, he might have been prepared to suffer it. But Marcus Cox as President of the United States—indeed, of any country! What a hell of a country that would have to be, even though his friend had proved himself a wonderful host!

Jeremiah smiled noncommittally. Apparently, however, the man before him was serious, for coming forward and

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bearing down upon him like a ship in full sail, Marcus was almost shouting: "Yo' sees me today," he challenged, "yo' sees me ridin' my white horse and leadin' dose Niggers up Seventh Avenue? You sees me speechifying to dem in Liberty Hall? You sees dem shelling out dere bucks? Well, what yo' thinks of it? All I needs is a couple more mens with brains like mine, and . . . I bets . . . I bets yo' . . ." he groped, "I bets yo' hist'ry will send Marcus Cox's name down de sands of time!"

In the short ensuing pause, Jeremiah became aware that Marcus Cox was perhaps making a final appraisement of him. He seemed to be looking through him.

"Yes, King," Marcus continued, "I thinks . . . I thinks . . . I . . . can . . . use you. Down in de West Indies I thinks you got brains, lot of brains, but you was lazy, King, lazy as de debil; but you has plenty of brains, King, and I is de man dat can use dem."

Aside from supporting Marcus Cox in his ambition to be President of the United States, Jeremiah was not in a frame of mind to oppose any other of his aspirations, especially such as appertained to himself, so he soothingly agreed: "Yes, Marcus, I think I could possibly be of some help to you."

"I thinks so, too," replied Marcus, appearing not to notice this time that Jeremiah's tone towards his High Commandership was much the same as in the old days when Jeremiah had ordered: "Marcus, go buy me a cigar!"

"We could prob'ly put you in as Gran' Couns'lor of de organization . . . at a salary," he added, looking questioningly at Jeremiah.

But Jeremiah did not press the point. Instead, he stared back inquiringly at Marcus Cox. Marcus, however, did not proceed. Abstractedly, his gaze sought the ceiling. Finally, after a pause: "Will you come over to de office tomorrow mawning 'bout eleven? You knows where 'tis—down on Seventh Avenue."

Jeremiah nodded his acquiescence.

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As they sat and talked later into the night, talked of the West Indies and things and persons of interest there, relaxation came to them. Before Jeremiah departed, it seemed to him that he had been able to whittle away the last vestige of formality in the demeanor of Marcus Cox. On the part of Marcus himself, there was a secret conviction that Jeremiah King had been suitably leveled to his proper status in the newly conceived order of things and that he might become a very useful adjunct to Marcus's aspirations for the downtrodden black people of Harlem and other portions of the world.

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CHAPTER VI

DEPARTING FROM Marcus Cox's home and reaching Seventh Avenue, Jeremiah gazed down its sprawling electric-lighted length. In the immediate distance, not two blocks away, a twinkling chop-suey sign offered its onioned invitation to late stragglers. The pleasant stimulation of Cox's whiskey, the rather surprising denouement of the night's adventure and what it might open in the way of immediate prospects had had their effect upon Jeremiah. The twinkling sign, with its suggestion of exotic things, was definitely alluring. He had had quite a session with Marcus; a little midnight snack might afford just the opportunity he needed for further reflection.

Bending his head low to avoid collision with the upper basement sill, Jeremiah descended, as it seemed, into the very bowels of the earth to partake of chop suey.

A small, compact, low-ceilinged room—overly small and compact for the purposes to which it had been adapted—hot and stuffy, greeted Jeremiah. In the center was a railed-in space where couples were dancing; at the far end on a raised platform, an orchestra blared forth a lilting tune; all around were small and large tables at which a few stray couples sat huddled together. In the ceiling, over the dance space, a revolving bowl-shaped chandelier, jewel-cut and faceted with prisms of glass reflecting all the colors of the rainbow, shed its kaleidoscopic light on the struggling dancers below. Dim, shadowy, ghostlike, the varicolored lights multiplied their numbers many fold, and the silhouetted figures appeared like so many frolicking wraiths.

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Jeremiah found a seat at a vacant table cluttered with empty glasses and the remains of a late supper. The orchestra continued its teasing, dreamlike waltz. The refrain blended with Jeremiah's airy mood and, unconsciously, he hummed it. He had heard that particular melody again and again at night spots during the past weeks—"Although you belong to somebody else, tonight you belong to me."

This was, indeed, the way he felt; and he applied that feeling to Harlem. Others had created it, but tonight, tonight Harlem belonged to him.

One of the band, with a soft, crooning voice, broke into song, and the group of dancers on the floor, lost in ecstasy, cuddled together. A generous glow of pure warmth and good nature permeated Jeremiah. This room filled with merrymakers, lithesome saunterers, swaying shadows! This was what life should be—expansive, gay, friendly. That gliding couple here, for instance, almost brushing him as Jeremiah rose from his seat to lean over the edge of the brass rail, the girl's arms encircling her partner's neck and her head resting upon his shoulder, his arms about her slim waist as if to draw the last measure of entrancement from her swaying body to his—contentment, satisfaction, nay, a sweet, gentle sadness suffusing her face as she nestled more closely to him—surely, no greater bliss, no diviner solace could ever again be snatched from Life's cup by these two creatures than in this fleeting moment!

Jeremiah smiled his approval at the gaiety around him.

The music came to an abrupt end. The dance was over. The prismatic lights of the central chandelier grew dim. The multiplied shadows drifted away like ghosts. The normal lights of the room flared up.

The couple Jeremiah had particularly noticed, followed by two others, were coming towards the table at which he sat. By Jove! Those in the van were Lido Jones and a coffee-colored young man. Jeremiah rose. Lido Jones smiled her recognition.

"Why, Mr. King, you here?"

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Jeremiah held out his hand.

"Meet a friend of mine, Mr. Webb," she chirped gaily.

"Didn't catch the name," Webb bubbled. "Oh, yes, King. . . . Counselor Webb's my name."

"Glad to meet you, Counselor," Jeremiah replied. In his social code no one ever stressed his professional title during introductions. Maybe his English training had made him somewhat of a snob; but that, together with many other things, would disappear with time.

Lido's other companions joined the group: Dr. Proudfoot, with a fair, blue-eyed girl of dashing appearance; and a white man, of medium height, thick-set, with an olive-complexioned brunette bringing up the rear.

Introductions followed, and Jeremiah was about to move away.

"Sorry to have appropriated your table," he murmured.

"Oh, no, not at all; please don't go. Sit down and join us," Lido invited. "I'm sure we'd all like to have you stay," and she looked around for approval by the others.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Webb. "Make yourself at home." Then, turning, he fished under the table and brought out a bottle. "Have a drink with us. How about you, Lido? And you, Ruth?" turning to the olive-complexioned young woman. "I don't need to ask you, Owen," he flashed towards the male white member of the party.

Proudfoot and his companion had drifted over to an adjoining table and were now chatting with a group assembled there. Webb's hands wobbled as he officiated. His straightened hair was much touseled and tumbled, and there was a sparkling uncertainty to his stare as he poured and talked at the same time.

"No, none for me, George," remarked Lido Jones; and, as he insisted boisterously, with, "You sure am one little quitter, Lido," she looked severely at him and turned towards Jeremiah.

Another dance had struck up. Lido Jones stood poised like someone inviting a flight. She looked up at Jeremiah,

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and there seemed the slightest flicker of her eyelids. Jeremiah was somewhat uncertain of himself. He had not danced much of late; besides, he was not sure that his West Indian style would do justice to this young Harlem flower. Still, Lido Jones evidently wanted to dance, and so did he.

He extended his arm: "May I?" and they jostled their way into the dancing enclosure.

A peppy, spirited tune was lunging forth from the band. It came to Jeremiah snappily, alluringly, temptingly. He found his feet moving in time to Lido's and in rhythm to the music. This slim, curling creature in his arms, wrapped in a faint aroma of the same perfume that had assailed his nostrils earlier that night in Marcus Cox's car, was very pleasant. Was it the whiskey which had so stimulated him, or was it some latent thing in his blood coming to life?

A gentle pressure of Lido's arms about his shoulders caused him wonder. He looked around at the other dancers, then down at the little black head of bobbed curls almost brushing his cheek.

"Cutting a hog?" he murmured.

Taking her head from his shoulder, she looked quickly at him. Then, replacing it, she murmured, "I thought you were a lawyer."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Do lawyers . . . cut . . . hogs?"

"Sometimes . . . on dance floors. Am I?" he persisted.

"Not any more."

"Before?"

"Hopping a little—and . . ."

"And what?"

"Your shoulders."

Jeremiah smiled. "Wiggling too much, eh?"

"A little bit stiff."

"Damn them!" he breathed.

She once more took her head from his shoulder. Her eyes smiled into his.

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"You're not a bit like a West Indian. You don't talk like one."

"That's encouraging."

"You're a friend of Mr. Cox?"

"Are all his friends West Indians?"

"Oh, no—lots of Americans, too; but you talked about Jamaica at dinner."

"They just let me escape from there."

"Honest?" she questioned. "You're not a bit like one."

"Is that fortunate or unfortunate?"

"They're mostly pains."

"Am I a greater pain than usual?"

"No, you are very—different."

"In my dancing, you mean?"

"I'm afraid I was rude," she apologized. "I forgot. I'm so fond of dancing, and for a moment you were just . . . my partner."

"I hope I still am."

"Yes, but I might have waited."

"For what?"

"Until I knew you better."

"Why delay pleasant things? This helps, doesn't it?"

"Maybe."

"How am I doing now?"

"You're going fine."

She had again taken her head from his shoulder and they were now talking face to face.

"I guess I do need a little loosening up—in my legs," he ventured.

"Your time's all right. You hold yourself a little stiffly. Relax some and you'll be it."

"Oh, I see—just let myself go and sway and glide—like this," and he wrapped himself more closely around her and took her more tightly to him.

"That's it," she breathed.

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"What, relaxing?"

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"Yes."
"Why?"
"I can be a cave man."
"At such short notice?"
"Yes, why not? If eventually, why not now?"
"Violent, eh?"
"The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent—you know the rest?"
"Bible stuff, eh?"
"Who told you?"
"My Sunday-school teacher."
"Where is she?"
"She's a he."
"Where?"
"Dancing with me."
"That's a good one," he laughed. "Do you know any more like that?"
"Yes, hunching shoulders again."
"Damn the shoulders!" he repeated.
"Yes."
"You agree with me?"
"Surely."
The girl referred to as Ruth—Ruth Dennis—and her white partner almost collided with them.
"Look out, girlie," shouted Ruth to Lido.
"Oh, you downtown express!" Lido shouted back at the galloping couple.
"Who is the blonde?" inquired Jeremiah.
"You met him, didn't you? He's an assistant district attorney."
"I haven't much memory for names"; and, after a pause: "What's he doing in Harlem, slumming?"
"The same thing you're doing, enjoying himself, I suppose," she replied coldly.
"I'm sorry. I was merely curious."
"He's a friend of George Webb's and comes up quite

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often from downtown," she pursued. "Mr. Cox also knows him."

"I guess Harlem draws them from all over; it's so colorful and attractive."

"Do you find it so? Most people from the Islands take a long time to get accustomed to our uncivilized ways."

"That's their misfortune, and your good fortune . . . that you don't see so much of them as you otherwise might," he added.

"I'm sure that's not true of you, though. You seem more like one of us."

"That's because I want so much to be and am trying so hard, perhaps. It's nice to be able to meet people so freely and so informally as I met you all here tonight. Down where I came from, this meeting wouldn't have been possible—not in the same way."

"That must be an awful place in which to live. I guess if I ever found myself there I'd be cutting a hog all the time."

"No, I think you would always be very . . . refreshing, wherever you went," he ended.

"And I hope as . . . diplomatic as I notice some people are," she rejoined.

"Thank you," he murmured. "It's the truth, nevertheless."

"Do you know," she remarked after a pause, "I think if one used one's intuition one would always be safe in meeting people."

"And what did your little intuition tell you in this instance?" he quizzed.

"That one should not be overinquisitive of a lady," she bantered.

"Stingy!" he rejoined. "You hold the cup of hope to my lips and then cruelly withdraw it. Tell me what your intuition discloses."

The music came to an abrupt stop. Lido's lips were

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parted in an engaging smile. Jeremiah permitted her slowly to disengage herself from his arms.

"A wonderful dance!" he breathed.

"Yes, I enjoyed it immensely," she agreed.

They returned to their table. Webb was talking at the top of his voice to Proudfoot. As Owen Murphy and his partner approached, Webb turned to Murphy.

"I was just telling the Doc here about that case I tried against you the other day. That was a great piece of cross-examination I conducted, wasn't it now? Tell the Doc about it."

Dr. Proudfoot sat, one arm encircling the chair in which his fair partner sat, his upper lip curled backwards in a sort of grin, disclosing a single gold tooth. He was obviously bored with Webb's recital. A patronizing look was on his face.

"I permitted you to get away with murder in that case," answered Murphy. "I just wanted you to earn the fee that I knew you'd get if you won, that's all."

"You did in the pig's neck!" retorted Webb. "I put it all over you that time, and you don't want to give me credit."

"I'll tell you what I will do. The next time I try a case against you, I'll convict your client, just to show you; and you'll have to come to me on bended knees to get a suspended sentence for him."

"You mean, with empty pockets after you're through," laughed George Webb, looking at Owen Murphy uncertainly but meaningfully.

Murphy gave Webb a sharp glance. "You're drunk, George," he said. "You'd better go home and sober up," and he turned towards Lido Jones.

"Come on Lido, let's have this last dance."

As the party broke up Jeremiah was glad to have met Lido Jones so soon again, but, absentmindedly, as he passed out of the cabaret and strolled up the avenue homewards, he pondered: "I wonder where in hell does that fellow Murphy fit in in Harlem?"

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CHAPTER VII

ALL UPWARD movements have their blatant and, very often, their comic phases.

To the youthful blatancy of Negro aspiration, which becomes gleeful at the thought of misfortune overtaking its traditional white enemy and oppressor, there must have been a full measure of satisfaction in the occupancy by Negroes of the fine old mansions and residences of upper Harlem formerly possessed by whites. To a sympathetic spirit, however, jealous of old melodies and lost in rapture for well-preserved things of a bygone day, this change like most other radical changes, is as pathetic as . . . death.

No need to preach on the inevitability of all such changes. That is granted, and is not here in question. But in the silence of the night, or on other occasions when departed spirits venture abroad—and there must be such times, or else why does the torch of racial antipathy burn so unbrokenly if it be not fed by the breath of the dead?—can we not imagine the consternation in the ranks of the white masters when they come to revisit old haunts in search of beloved survivors, nay, in search even of a mere memory? What gall and wormwood to the disinherited Negro-baiter and militant Negro-hater! What horror to the gentle departed soul unaccustomed to black hordes! And even to the tolerant spirit able in life to conceive of a place in the sun for all God's children, yea, even to such a spirit, what a pang of regret!

A few more years, and when these present black dwellers shall have passed on and, in due season return as well to

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disport themselves, there may be a meeting of black and white ghost-revellers; and some night hell is likely to break loose in Harlem. The police riot call will, no doubt, be sounded, and then the gigantic discovery will be made that there is no cessation, even in death, for racial hatreds.

True it is that the streets are still softly treed and shaded, by night even as by day; true it is that the courts and courtyards are still blossoming and flowering as of old; true it is that, wherever one passes in and about these old mansions, order and beauty is still preserved, here and there even increased and added to; but—and the greater the pang that it should be so—the people on these shaded sidewalks sitting and droning in the soft summer night are not the old masters. The jeweled candelabra, the tesselated mantels, the tapestried walls within—all this, the natural and divine right of the fine lords of Caucasia, is now possessed by . . . Niggers!

These were some of the fanciful thoughts that came to Jeremiah after a more prolonged stay in Harlem; but the morning after his initial visit to Cox's impressive brown-stone mansion, and his later meeting with Lido Jones at the Chop Suey Palace, Jeremiah's mind was most immediately concerned with Cox's suggestion of the possibility of gainful employment.

Accordingly, and promptly at eleven o'clock next morning, Jeremiah presented himself at the headquarters of the Universal Negro Movement on Seventh Avenue. When the occasion demanded, Jeremiah could easily forego his leisurely tempo. He had done so that morning. Reaching his lodgings in the early hours of the dawn, Jeremiah had mulled over some of the events of the past day, but he had soon drifted off into blissful sleep.

The building before which he now stood was a four-story brownstone structure set in the middle of the block. It had evidently been a private residence converted into what seemed now to be an office building. On its southern

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exposure an iron-gated courtyard ran back the entire depth of the structure; and this, together with a green canopy extending from the curb to the entrance, gave the building a somewhat pretentious air. Marcus and his Movement undoubtedly had a flair for the gaudy.

The door was opened by a white-gloved, uniformed attendant. As Jeremiah passed through, he found himself in an outer reception room amid a crowd of pushing, gesticulating Negroes. These stragglers wandered here and there, some curiously examining the pictures of Negro celebrities hung along the walls, others idly scanning the handbills, circulars, and pamphlets upon the tables around the room.

Jeremiah took note of the glaring headlines of Marcus Cox's propaganda: "Back to Africa!" "Build a kingdom in the home of your fathers!" "Let my people go!" and similar appeals.

Jeremiah strayed over toward a more than usually noisy group assembled before a large picture painted, it seemed, overnight, so fresh, so bright the colors shone upon the gilt-framed canvas.

"He sure is a li'l runt," one irreverent bystander was remarking.

"Hush you mout', mon, dat's King Tut! Doan yo' knows a king when yo' sees one? Dat's de fustest Nigger king dere ebber was."

"Wah yo' talkin' 'bout?" interjected another. "Yo'se full o' nonsense. Cannibal was de fustest Nigger king."

"Ka! Ka! Ka!" shouted a pygmy on the outskirts. "Hear dot Nigger talk! Cannibal, dat's man-eatin' shark! You' means *Honnibel.*"

"I means Cannibal," returned the first speaker. "What yo' bets? I'se got six bits dat says I'se right."

"Yo' lose all dot money, mon," jeered the small, wizen-faced Negro. "Yo' better goes out and buys yo'self six bits of g'ography befo' yo' talks to me."

Their argument was interrupted by a thin, cadaverous,

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purple-clad Negro who burst into the group. Gold stripes on his sleeves, chevrons on his shoulders, he must have been a captain, perhaps a major or even a general.

"Foh de edi'cation of de honahed visitahs hey assemble, I rises to 'nounce dat a frame pictuh of King Tut, de fustest Nigger king in de worl', goes free to ebery new membah who jines dis organ'sation today. Step right in de office and de hon'able Chamberlain Phillips will fix yo' alls up."

"Hear dat, Nigger, ain't I tole you so? King Tut is de fustest Nigger king," shouted the Negro who had so announced in the beginning, running forward and trying to get the official announcer by his sleeve.

"Majah, say dat again, will yo? Will yo'?" he pleaded.

"To whom is you speaking—to whom? I'se Captain Gen-'ral, if yo' please. To whom hab I de honah of addressin' myself to?"

Before the Captain General could receive his answer, he was touched on the arm by a fellow purple-clad figure, who, saluting, remarked: "Yo' is wanted on de 'phone, Captain Gen'ral."

Within a brass-railed space persons in authority were officiating. One could readily distinguish the latter by the purple uniforms, which, Jeremiah now realized, consttiuted the official garb of this Movement. Bells were buzzing, telephones were ringing; on every side noise, bluster and disorder prevailed. Jeremiah wondered what kind of real work occupied all these people. It was talk, talk, jabber, jabber—a bedlam of sound everywhere.

For some minutes Jeremiah was lost in the confusion. A passing wonder assailed him as to whether he could ever fit himself into these people's affairs. Back in the West Indies he had had some contact with such Negroes, but that had been as a lawyer dealing with stray clients. He had never seen them thus massed in a body for such a purpose as this Movement purported to be. Above all, he had never had to go *to* them; they had always voluntarily sought him. Today, however, he was here among them in search of em-

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ployment from their leader. Impulsively, he hesitated and retraced his steps towards the door through which he had just entered; then, turning, admonished himself: "I think you're taking this thing too seriously, old man."

Approaching a wicket gate at which a brass-buttoned clerk half-sat and half-reclined before a broad desk, he presented this card: "Take that in to Mr. Cox and say that Mr. King is here."

The man took Jeremiah's card, scrutinized it, and, then, with a suspicious leer, inquired: "Yo' means de High Commander President Gen'ral?"

Jeremiah nodded. "I'm here by appointment."

"What yo' bis'ness? Eberybody got 'pintment wid de Chief. Can't let you by on dat," and he grinned cynically up at Jeremiah.

"I don't want to see your chief—your chief wants to see *me;* and I'd just as soon get out of here as not, so you may suit yourself about it," replied Jeremiah, irritated at this Negro's demeanor. "I'll give you just two minutes to take that card to Mr. Cox or leave it."

Jeremiah's manner had its effect. The cynical grin on the attendant's face changed to a scowl; and, shambling leisurely down a short hallway, he unlocked an iron gate with one of a number of keys hanging at his belt and disappeared upstairs. Here, indeed, was the Saint Peter of this Movement!

Soon the brass-buttoned servitor returned. "Come on," he jerked and, leading the way, showed Jeremiah up the spiral stairway from which he had just returned and led him into a waiting-room.

"De chief'll see you in a minute," he grudgingly explained, with the air of one who had plunged and lost on the turn of a wheel.

Jeremiah dropped into a comfortable-looking leather sofa nearby and lighted a cigar.

Many minutes passed. Jeremiah looked at his watch. "Half-past eleven!" His cigar was smoked to a stub. He won-

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dered whether he had been forgotten or whether, perchance, this were another of Marcus Cox's methods of impressing a visitor with his majestic aloofness. He rose and paced up and down the narrow room. The only sound from the inner sanctum was the faint clicking of a typewriter. Perhaps Marcus was dictating.

Another fifteen minutes passed by. Restless impatience gave place to petulant anger. Jeremiah approached a glass-paneled door and knocked.

Light footsteps came towards him from within. Soon the door swung open and Lido Jones stood before him, pink and fresh, as if she had had full twelve hours of rest instead of having gone home at four o'clock that morning, as Jeremiah recalled.

"How d'ye do, Mr. King?"

"Is Mar . . ." started Jeremiah, then corrected himself: "Is Mr. Cox in? I've been waiting out here for three-quarters of an hour."

"Oh, have you? That's too bad; Mr. Cox is a very busy man, and visitors have to wait on the High Commander, you know."

There was that in the mischievous light of her eyes and the mincing tone of her voice which convinced Jeremiah that his speculation had been correct. He had been made to wait outside to suit Marcus' pleasure.

As Lido softly tapped at another glass-paneled door and a gruff "Come" responded, Jeremiah's gorge rose and, no sooner had he been ushered into Marcus' presence, than he exploded: "Did you keep me out there all this time for the mere pleasure of having me cool my heels, Marcus? I thought we understood each other last night."

"I thought so too, Mr. King," dryly replied Marcus. "That's the reason I kept you waiting. After all, I'm de General of dis army, and you is . . . you *may* be," he emphasized, "only its Gran' Counse'ler. I only wants my couns'ler when I sends for him," and Marcus Cox looked at Jeremiah with cold, level eyes.

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Jeremiah stood hesitantly for a moment. Whatever there was of humor in the situation suddenly overtook him and chased away the petulance.

"Oh, I say, Marcus, can't we cut out this . . . this . . . buffoonery?" he suggested; and, as he noticed the glare which leaped into Marcus' eyes, he hastily corrected himself: "I mean, can't we get down to a man-to-man basis and talk things over together chummily . . . as you know we must . . ." Jeremiah smiled at Marcus, "if I am going to be of any use to you?"

Jeremiah had an engaging smile. It was perhaps the best feature in his rough-hewn face. Marcus' bad mood changed as suddenly. Going forward, he grasped Jeremiah's hand: "All right, King, let's get down to business," at the same time waving him toward a red morocco armchair.

"Since talkin' to you last night, King," he began, without further introduction, "I've been thinking. What yo' think you kin live here on? How much money you wants?"

Jeremiah had turned this matter of money over in his mind also; but there were so many things at which he had to guess—the ability of Marcus and his organization to pay, what his duties were going to be, and other phases of the proposal—that he could form no reasonable estimate. Life in Harlem was expensive. He had already spent pretty nearly all the cash he had brought with him to New York. Yes, two thousand dollars had all but drifted away. Jeremiah was about to venture, with some misgivings, that about four or five thousand dollars a year might be necessary when Marcus broke in: "Yo' think ten thousands per year would be sufficiency to help you rep'sent de dignity of our organ'-zation?"

Jeremiah's heart stopped beating for a brief instant, then leaped forward tumultously. "Ten thousand dollars! My God, ten thousand dollars!" Why, he, Jeremiah, could . . . but he must be calm; he must not get excited; so, in what he hoped was a casual tone, he replied: "I figured about that. We can start out on that and see how the cat jumps."

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Marcus Cox pushed at a button on his desk. A brief silence, and the door separating Lido Jones' office from that of her chief opened. Lido's head appeared in the doorway. "Want me, Commander?"

"Bring in dose credentials for Mr. King dat you prepared dis morning; and—say," as Lido's head was about to disappear through the doorway, "enter Mr. King's name on de sal'ry roll at ten thousands per year—payable?" and his eyes questioned Jeremiah's.

"Weekly," hastily prompted Jeremiah.

"Weekly," ordered Marcus. "Let's see, dat's how much? Oh, you work it out Miss Jones, whatever it 'mounts to. Put it down dat way."

It did not escape Jeremiah that, in his office, Lido was "Miss Jones" to Marcus Cox.

Lido soon returned with the credentials. She handed them to her chief. Marcus Cox came over to Jeremiah and ceremoniously placed in the lapel of his coat a mysterious purple enamel-and-gold button, with a small lion rampant in the center. Then, as one who performs a solemn ritual, he chanted: "I, Marcus Cox, High Commander of the Universal Negro Movement of the United States and of de World, hereby appoints you, Jeremiah King, Gran' Coun-'selor of de said 'sociation, so help me God!"

At the same time he handed to Jeremiah an imposing-looking, plentifully beribboned parchment scroll, red-sealed and gold-lettered, with a border of gay purple. Jeremiah took it and was about to place it on the desk.

"Read it!" ordered his High Commandership.

And Jeremiah read: "Know all Men by these Presents that the bearer of this, Honorable Jeremiah King, is, in virtue and token hereof, the duly appointed Grand Counselor of the United Negro Movement of the United States and of the World, Inc.; and I do hereby in virtue of my authority duly delegated to me by the Supreme Council of said Association so to do, empower the said Jeremiah King

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to represent the said Association in all matters appertaining to his said office as Grand Counselor and Advisor, and I command each and every member of the said Association to honor and recognize these presents, into whosesoever hands these said presents may come.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the Universal Negro Movement of the United States and of the World, this day of July, in the year of our Lord, Nineteen hundred and—.

Marcus Cox,
High Commander."

Jeremiah read it to the end, even to the signature. He recalled vaguely now that he had wondered at the boldness of this man's signature—a strong, flourishing stroke—when Marcus had been in his employ at San Fernando. The public schools there had at least taught Marcus Cox the art of writing, even though, with respect to his speech, they had not done so well. His broken, idiomatic English still persisted.

For a moment Jeremiah's mind toyed engagingly with the prospect of ten thousand dollars divided into weekly installments. This grandiloquent parchment, evidence of his appointment, was so much dross beside that contemplation.

He suddenly realized that it was incumbent on him to do something. He leaped to his feet. Cox was still standing before him. "Shake, Marcus," he said, "I'm with you."

Lido Jones was standing nearby. He subtly felt her to be included within his good fortune. The impulse came upon him to shake with her also. Were they not all members of a common conspiracy? But, coincidently, and, in time, Jeremiah recovered his caution. He must be dignified, even as Marcus was dignified. He was now Grand Counselor of this Movement. Whatever real purpose it had, there would be plenty of time to discover; but there was one thing about which there could be no doubt: a meticulous regard for external appearances, respect for rank and titles, seemed to

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be a dominant policy of the Movement. Much as Jeremiah would like to have extended his generous mood to embrace Lido Jones, he merely smiled at her.

Marcus rose. "I got a 'pointment down town at de public attorney's. I's got to tell you 'bout that later, King. Jes' now I'll leave you here and have Miss Jones show you 'roun' and interduce you to my 'sociates."

And so saying, a bulging brief case clutched within his grasp, Marcus bustled off.

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CHAPTER VIII

As MARCUS COX took his departure, Jeremiah rose from his seat and passed over to the window overlooking Seventh Avenue. Lido Jones had seen the High Commander out and was now standing beside Jeremiah before he became aware of her return.

"Well, here we are again," he smiled as he turned and faced her.

"Yes, and now you are one of us. I congratulate you!"

"On what?"

"On being Grand Counselor, of course."

He replied, after a pause, "You take this thing seriously, don't you?"

"Of course I do. Why shouldn't I? I make my living here, you know," she answered, with a slight raising of her eyebrows.

"Indeed, is that the only reason?"

"That's hardly a fair question. It is one of the reasons, though."

"I suppose so. I suppose I'll take it seriously on that account after a while myself," he pondered as if to himself.

"Don't you believe in helping your race?" she queried.

"My race?"

"Yes."

"Who is my race?" he quizzed.

"All the colored people in the world, and especially in the United States."

"You mean the people who are holding forth downstairs and those I saw in Liberty Hall last night?"

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She nodded and made a gesture towards the avenue. "All the people out there and everywhere else like them."

"Who says they need help? They seem perfectly happy and contented. Hear that?" as a loud guffaw came to them through the open window. "Anyone with a laugh like that doesn't need help."

"Oh, don't be silly, you know what I mean. Everybody knows that Negroes are a downtrodden people and need their rights protected."

"Their rights? I didn't know they had any rights. I thought they had all wrongs."

"You're making fun of me. But you know very well what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean. Submerged colored people are just like any other submerged people. If they are poor and ignorant, they are imposed upon just like the poor and ignorant of the Irish, the Jews, the Italians, the Poles, yes—even like the submerged of the noble English. Even these gods of the world have their submerged who have more wrongs than rights. Why shouldn't I try to help *all* those?"

"Because charity begins at home, and you ought to help your own race first. Come on, let me take you downstairs and introduce you around. Mr. Cox told me to do that."

"Can't we do that some other time? Let's sit here and talk some more. What's your little office in this outfit?"

"Who, me?"

"No, who, I?"

"All right, Mr. Englishman. Who, I? I don't like particular people."

"I'm sorry," he smiled. "I shall be very unparticular hereafter."

"See that you are," she arched back; then casually: "I am first Grand Secretary."

"You are the only one of us who deserves a title. You are a *grand* little secretary, all right."

"Who, I?" she mimicked.

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"No, me," he bantered.

"I know what title *you* deserve."

"Tell me, and I'll ask the High Commander to make me that."

"Grand Kidder."

"What's that?"

"Don't you know English?"

"Yes, but not American—not yet, only a few words."

"Well, let's hope it will be soon; you'll be all right then."

"Well, how about now?"

"Not quite so 'forty.' "

"How did you guess it?"

"Guess what?" laughed Lido. "Did you think I was referring to your age?"

"Surely! What else is 'forty'?"

"When you're a full-fledged American, I'll tell you, but not now. I think you've learned enough for one day; also, I have much Grand Secretarying to do, and I must get to work."

"Oh, stick around a little longer, won't you?"

"Stick around? That's fine. You'll soon have your first papers."

"What first papers?"

"To be an American."

"You mean because I said 'stick around'?"

"Surely! You're learning."

"Oh, I know quite a few more. I'm not so dumb after all, am I? You remember? I know 'cutting a hog,' and others."

"You'll soon do if you travel that fast."

"I hope so. But tell me, what's the shouting all about?"

"What shouting?"

"The United Negro Movement of this world and the next?"

Lido laughed: "At least you have a sense of humor."

"Do you know," he said, becoming serious, "I only discovered that about myself last night when Marcus sug-

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gested that he could use me. I withstood the shock. I said to myself: It must be my funny side."

"What's funny about Mr. Cox employing you?"

He looked at her. "I'm afraid you wouldn't understand."

"It's one of those deep, dark English secrets, I suppose."

"I suppose so. But you haven't answered my question," he resumed, after a pause. "What's the purpose of this Movement? What do they aim to do?"

"I'll tell you," she said, her brows knitting, "it's best for you to wait and form your own conclusions as you go along. I couldn't tell you, anyhow. It isn't something to be explained. You'll have to live it and get on to it that way. You must come in and see Mother—she'll tell you."

"Your mother?"

"Yes, my mother. Didn't you think I had one?"

He feigned a reproachful look at her.

"Why, of course I did; only, I hadn't heard of her."

"Well, we only met last night, you know."

"That's so, but I seem to have known you for years and years."

"Yes," she continued, "I'll have you meet Mother after I come back from my vacation at Atlantic City. She was out last night when you had supper with us."

"Oh, she lives at Mr. Cox's house, does she?"

"Yes, we both live there. You see, Mother manages the establishment which the organization has set up for its High Commander. Mr. Cox is a bachelor . . ." she was continuing when Jeremiah broke in.

"Is he? What's become of his wife and . . . brats?" he ended shortly.

A surge of color swept Lido's cheeks. She stared evenly at Jeremiah and, with much of ice in her voice, questioned: "What's become of yours?"

"Oh, so Marcus has been talking to you, eh?"

Lido Jones nodded.

"Just the same as we've been talking about him," she

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added. "But it makes no difference either to Mother or me whether Mr. Cox is married and has . . . brats," she snapped, "or not. That is something which in no way concerns us. To us Mr. Cox is just a leader of a great cause, that's all."

Jeremiah felt sufficiently crushed. He almost hastened over to her side in contrition, not so much for the things he had uttered, but for the tone of his utterance.

"I'm sorry," he muttered, looking down into her upturned face.

"That's all right," she exclaimed, "but it's just as well to straighten you out. You're not the first who has imagined things. Harlem is a funny place, you know."

Jeremiah refrained from answering. In fact, there was nothing to say further on that subject, but he was greatly relieved, and he did not want to identify the reasons for his relief.

"So you're going on a vacation soon, eh?" as if recalling something that had been lost.

"Yes, at the end of next week."

"Don't you need a chaperone?" he bantered in an effort to recapture their former mood.

Lido was smiling again and looked archly at him.

"Maybe . . . and maybe . . . not," she lisped.

"Will you call upon me if you do?"

"Yes, but in the meantime I have much work to do," she smiled back at him as she turned and went towards her own secretarial sanctum. In a moment Jeremiah heard the swift rumbling sound of Lido's typewriter.

"Quite a girl!" he pondered as he resumed his stand at the window.

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CHAPTER IX

MARCUS COX concluded his downtown engagement and returned to the headquarters of his organization late that afternoon. Jeremiah was still in the office where Marcus had left him some hours earlier. He was lost in thought. The burden of his thinking was what he could best do to help the Movement of which he had just become a member—a member for pay, it was true, but a member just the same—in honor bound to further its aspirations in every way possible.

Subconsciously, Jeremiah heard the outer door open and close. He sensed that the quick, heavy footsteps invading the undercurrent of his consciousness were those of Marcus, who had returned from his downtown mission. Jeremiah made no effort to remove his feet from the glass top of Marcus' ornate desk to which he had elevated and propped them some half-hour before; he now lay back in a swivel chair puffing at one of Cox's fragrant cigars. Jeremiah found it easier thinking that way.

Marcus was standing in the inner doorway before Jeremiah became fully aware of his presence. A spreading grin wreathed Cox's countenance as he noticed Jeremiah's posture.

"Mon, dis takes me back over ten years to down home. Yo' 'members when you'se had a tuff case and you use to loll back wid your feets on de table communin' wid de spirits? You must be doin' some pow'ful thinkin', mon?"

"Yes, I have been thinking," replied Jeremiah; and,

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after a pause: "How did you make out with your business down below today? You seem to be in mighty good spirits."

Marcus rested his brief case and hat on the desk and slumped down into a chair across from Jeremiah, who now removed his feet from the desk top and resumed an upright position.

"I'll tell you, King, I'se far from being in good spirits," breathed Marcus in a tired voice. "I'se jes' weary. I'se had one hell of a time wid dose people down at de public prosecutor's office today. We knows this fellow Murphy there a while now? Well, we's had contac' with him for some time now, but he's only an 'sistant. The big chief of the office is a man by the name of Smart—Jim Smart, dey calls him. He's a reg'lar man-eatin' shark when it comes to puttin' people in jail dat he have no use for. Dey say I'se been raisin' too much hell 'mong de Niggers in Ha'lem. 'Sides, dey wants money for dere political campaigning. De primaries is next month, and dis man Smart wants to run for gub'nor."

"Well, what has that to do with you and your work?" broke in Jeremiah.

"Yo' see, you'se much too young in dis man's country to know much 'bout dese things. Dis is a great country, King, but it's a funny country in some ways. It's a great politician's country. When a man wants to run for gub'nor, or president, or some big office, he jes' looks up some big shot on de other side of politics and puts him in jail. Dis man Smart has jes' jailed one of de big fellahs from de Free-Wheeling Party, dey calls demselves; maybe dey hang him. I don't wants to be eider hunged or put in jail."

"Well, you haven't done anything that you need to be scared of, have you?"

"No-o-o," Marcus drawled, "but yo' never kin tell. For one thing, we's been picketin de stores in 'twenty-fifth Street dat's been taking de cullud people's money all dese years and not giving them any employment, 'cept perhaps a po'ter's job here and dere or some sich menial slave work. We wants

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better'n dat, King—we wants clerks', bookkeepers', and managers' jobs. And not only de stores, but de banks, de telephone company, and every other blessed business dat is run up here in Ha'lem. We's part of dis country, King. We pays taxes jes' like all de other people—dat is, all de taxes 'cept, p'raps, income taxes; but dat's 'cause we ehn't got much income. We wants to pay dese income taxes, too, but we can't pay dem off a po'ter's job."

"Well, picketing is a perfectly lawful act, isn't it?" interjected Jeremiah.

"Sure, sure! But it depends on who's doin' de picketin' and who's yo' picketin' 'gainst. Dese stores and oder places that I'se talkin' 'bout is willing to spend dere money wid de politicians rather than pay it out in good wages to Negroes in decent jobs; and de politicians wants money to start things up next month when de prim'ries comes around. Dey say we has to stop picketin' till after election, and dey wants two thousand bucks contribution from my organization—or else."

"Blackmail," pronounced Jeremiah.

"Maybe," agreed Marcus. "Fact is dat is jes' exactly what Smart put dat big Free-Wheeling politician man in jail for; but yo' see, it's one thing when Smart's party does it and anoder thing when de oder party man does it. It all depen's," droned Marcus, "on whose bull is bein' stabbed. I don't want any 'countant from de prosecutor's office nosin' 'round our books. When we gets stronger, we gets even wid dese fellahs. Some day, King, I aims to have a hundred t'ousand mens and womens voters in dis man's town; and den, den—" Marcus gloated, "we gives fellahs like dis man Smart hell. We knocks 'em over like kingpins."

"Ninepins, you mean," suggested Jeremiah.

"Ninepins, kingpins, what's de diff'rence, King, so long as we knocks 'em over."

Jeremiah was viewing his friend Marcus, sitting on the other side of the desk across from him, with thoughtful eyes. His estimate of Marcus was undergoing a change. Jere-

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miah began to realize that this squat black man before him had more of sharp, practical wisdom than he had given him credit for. There was, too, in Cox's determination to right some of the Negro's wrongs a spirit which began to command Jeremiah's respect.

In many of the social and other gatherings at which Jeremiah had been present, he had sensed a sort of universal tendency for conversation and, very often, debate on the problems of Negro people in the United States—the discrimination to which they were subjected, the segregated neighborhoods in which they were crowded and compelled to live, and a thousand and other limitations suffered by them. Here and there in these groups he had met Negroes—or rather, colored people, as they preferred to be termed—who seemed to deprecate such discussions as if they themselves were untouched by racial hatred; but aside from this minority, ninety-nine per cent of colored persons felt that their situation was, definitely, a "problem" which they must somehow or other solve.

As a barrister-at-law from a British West Indian island, Jeremiah realized that he could not automatically take up the practice of his profession in New York from where he had left off in San Fernando. It seemed fitting that he should mention this difficulty to Marcus.

"Oh, that's all right," replied Marcus, "we don't have no co't business anyway; leastways, not much, and Obadiah Jackson can 'tend to that. He's our co't lawyer."

In Obadiah Jackson Jeremiah recognized the lawyer who had "razzed Jedge Laz'rus to beat de band," as he had lustily recounted to him at a Seventh Avenue meeting some few days back.

"It ain't dat dat's worryin' me jes' now," Marcus explained. "Fact of de matter is that t'ings has come to a standstill, an' I doan seem to be able to move 'em. We got lot o' expense, and money doan come in fas' 'nough. 'Sides dat, dere's a few fellahs right next to me dat I can't trus' . . . tryin' to stir up trouble. Oh, doan worry," as Jeremiah raised

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his eyes in some concern, "I kin handle 'em. What I needs is some new ideas. Dat's how I wants you to help. We'se got to keep dese Niggers' minds on de jump all de time. I reads 'em like a book. You think all dese uniforms and stuff is a lot o' tomfoolery, buffoomery, or what you call it . . . applesauce. Well, it ain't de means you takes but de results dat counts. I tell you dese Niggers hab got to be roused up, and de onliest way to rouse 'em is to rouse 'em. Yo' think 'tis fair for me to go down to de Waldorf Astoria and to be chased out if I has got de price of a meal? Why in de debil should I be? Ain't I as good as some of de Dagoes dat goes in dere? Jimminy crackie! De Niggers in dis country was here jes' as soon as de Indians, and dese furriners come here from all over Russia and China and Europe, and de Lord knows where, and jes' because dey has white skins, or ain't got black skins, dey can go anywheres and do anything. Even de Jews . . . they's a lot of prejudice against dem too, but dey has got all de money, see? And if de other white people in New York wasn't to do business wid de Jews, where de debil is dey goin' to get off at? Money is what count! I doan speak English in de same highfalutin way you does; if I did I couldn't hold dese Niggers. Where'd yo' think you'd get off at speechifying to them? They wouldn't understan' what you was talking 'bout; but dat doan mean dey hain't got de same brains as you has. Jes' because a Chinaman don't speak English, does yo' think he hain' got brains and don't hab de same thoughts as you and de o'der white folks?"

Marcus Cox rambled on without a pause, almost as if talking to himself. Jeremiah was listening with a patronizing smile.

"And what about Africa? Who the devil wants to go . . ." began Jeremiah.

"Dat's all right, boy," interrupted Marcus Cox, "maybe I doan want to go to Africa no more'n you do. I say *maybe*. I ain't quite sure 'bout dat myself; but we Niggers is differenter dan white people. We got ideas all our own. Why

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in de debil's name should Niggers want to copy de white man all de time? I say, let us quit imitatin' the white man, quit actin' like white monkeys and act like black monkeys.

"Jesus, what's money?" he continued vehemently. "You t'inks I'm a grafter like all de rest of dese Niggers in Ha'lem. I *uses* money, shucks! Yes, I uses money like water. I aims to keep on using it. I deserves it. I makes de Niggers respect me; but I aims to help 'em, and dey is going to get dere money's worth all de time from me, so help me God! I is goin' to make 'em know dey is living in a world where dey needs to wake up and do things."

Jeremiah sat somewhat mystified. He had not sensed any real sincerity in all that he had seen of Marcus Cox's ostentation. His hasty conviction had been that Marcus was just a plain charlatan living softly and easily on the gullibility of his fellow Negroes by exploiting their ignorance. But an attempt to raise this submerged tenth! My God, what a task! Other men, men with great brains, in other times and countries, had had similar lofty ambitions down the years. Jesus, the son of a Galilean, had tried it; but even this superman had been crucified—and by his own people, too. It was not the Jews who had acclaimed the Christ, but aliens and strangers who had found in him the virtues which his brethren had denied. An appeal to humanity at large was one thing; an appeal to particular racial instincts quite another. Was he, Jeremiah King, equipped to contribute any real help to this black dreamer and his followers? And if he were equipped, would his temperament enable him to do so? After all, he, Jeremiah, had not the make-up of the Crusader; and this would be some crusade if it were to be a real one.

Both men lapsed into silence. Marcus Cox's office, tastefully curtained and screened, commanded a view of Seventh Avenue. Up and down that avenue, as they both gazed out, men and women and children of their race swept past, some black like Marcus Cox, some brown, or yellow, or light like Jeremiah—but all, all for a common purpose, jumbled

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and herded together as one class of Negroes, Niggers, colored people, or whatever one's taste, or mood, or personal disposition might prompt him to name them. Thoughtlessly, aimlessly, a group banded together on the street corner; another was skylarking there on the sidewalk; occasionally, a loud abandoned guffaw resounded, smacking of primitive unrestraint; again, voices were raised in angry disputation. The afternoon sun beat down on the sweltering streets; and, everywhere, to Jeremiah's eyes, while there was the superficial appearance of a prosperous, bustling community, underneath the surface of things was tawdriness, gilt and brass besmirched with dirt, with incompetence.

He saw the cheap shops, with their bizarre, ill-kept show windows; he saw a certain run-downness at the heels in any and every place in which business was being attempted, much as if this community had but recently recovered from some blight.

Night time and the glare of lights! These hid a world of pathos; but in daylight, in the disclosing light of God's full sun, this "Nigger Heaven" was, perchance, all too close to a . . . "Nigger Hell."

It came to Jeremiah like a flash of lightning illuminating a darkened area. Harlem—this man's town, as everybody called it—Harlem was indeed there, but Harlem had not yet arrived, no, not by a damned sight!

Jeremiah stole a glance over at his High Commandership. He wondered whether, by any chance, Marcus was seeing the same things he saw.

There was so much about Marcus Cox that grated on Jeremiah's sensibilities: his English, or lack of English, for one thing, although he did not see why he should expect any more in this respect from Marcus; for another, Marcus' proneness to use the word "Nigger" so freely. He had no objection to Marcus Cox's referring to the submerged tenth as "Niggers." He himself thought of them in the same way; but Marcus might, by chance, include him, Jeremiah King, in that category.

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He interrupted Marcus Cox's musings: "You seem so fond of referring to your members, to all colored people, as 'Niggers.' Marcus, isn't that a fighting word? It used to be so in the West Indies."

"Dat's one of de things you'se goin' to git over in this man's country, King, and de sooner de better. Dere is really nothing about a white man or any other kind of man calling me a Nigger. Dat's jes' what I am. I is a Nigger, a Negro, what's de diff? Jes' the same as if I call a white man 'white man.' Suppose he says to me, yo' is a Nigger? I says to him, yo' is a white man. Den what? Is he insulted? Not less he's a fool. Is *I* insulted? Not less *I* is a fool. All you got to do, King, is to dignify *yo'self*. Ef you think dere is shame in being a Negro, or a Nigger, den dere is. Ef you don't den dere hain't. De only people who is insulted when dey is called Niggers is dese cheese-colored people who is so afraid dey is really Niggers that dey wants to be called 'cullud persons,' 'cullud ladies and gentlemens.' I thinks I sees them, porpus-like, struttin' aroun'. 'No, sir, I ain't no Nigger, I is a cullud gentleman," dey says. Cullud gentleman, hell! He's no mo' a gentleman dan a jockass is a lion when he swipes de lion's skin. De trouble is he want to be somethin' his mudder nor his fadder never purposed him to be—no, nor de good God who made his mudder and fah'der eder."

"Well," remarked, Jeremiah, "I'm sure I should resent a white man—any man—addressing me as 'Nigger.' I don't like the word, anyway."

"You is right, King, and I doan blame you. De trouble wid you is dat you is *not* a Nigger. If you was a Nigger you'd be all right; but you'se neder one t'ing nor de other. Yo' know, when you come to think 'bout it, we'se one hell of a lot of people—all mixed up. God A'mighty certainly did make one mess of a job when He jumbled us all up together de way He have! Shucks! I could a made a better job of it myself."

"Marcus," Jeremiah answered in a half-playful, reproving tone, "I'm afraid you're just an old renegade."

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"Renegade nothin'!" rejoined Marcus. "I bets you I could had you 'rested fo' what you t'inks of de whole damn mess. You is sittin' here wid me and you'se jes' as squeamish of me as a cat is of water. You looks down on me, you looks down on all de blacks jes' the same as de white people looks down on all of us. You mulatto people are only kiddin' yo'selves when you t'inks you is different from black Niggers; you'se just de same Niggers yo'selves. But what's de diff? De white people is jes' the same. We has our mulattoes 'spising our blacks and browns and what-nots, and dey, de white people, why, dere's de Germans dat hates the Italians, de Italians hates de Austrians, de Russians is always knocking de debil out o' de Jews, and de English—hell! dey hates everybody else in de world 'cept 'emselves. So I says again, what's de diff, King? What's de diff?"

"Well, if that is so, what's all this fuss about then? Why are you trying to build a Negro kingdom on the black man's troubles if everybody, white and black, is subject alike to these common annoyances? Suppose you had a whack at the remaking of things, what would you do?"

"Say, is yo' tryin' to kid me, King?" Marcus answered, rising, and his face lowering. "What would I *do*?" Then he sat down. "I'll tell you what I'd do . . . yes," he added, his face now radiating as with a pleasant thought, "I'd get some kind of machine dat turns out all models alike, jes' like Mr. Ford; and I'd make dem all wid legs alike, wid feets alike, same color skin, same hair, same everyt'ing."

"And then," quickly chimed in Jeremiah, "every time you looked into the other fellow's face you wouldn't know whether you saw yourself or somebody else. And your wife—hell! You could pick up every other fellow's wife and make believe you had made a mistake . . . thought she was yours. Ha, ha, ha! Good idea, Marcus. Beautiful world! You're going strong, old man; go ahead, tell me some more of what you would do."

"Talking 'bout womens," Marcus replied, "I feels strongly 'bout dat. When I has a woman, I aims to hab her

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all to myself. I doan aim to hab her messin' around wid other men. Yellow niggers like you, King, you wants every woman you sees—white, brown, black or yellow, dey's all de same to you. Yo' see how quick you was to talk about de other fellow's wife. Dat's de fust t'ing comes to yo' mind. Yo' perambulates aroun' jes' like a bunch o' mustard seed spreadin' itself in grass. I guess yo' inherits dat. You gets dat from your white fahders. Dey comes down from de mountains on de little Nigger gals in de valleys. and widout sayin' nuthin', not even so much as 'If you please,' dey takes a Nigger woman and, cripes! befo' yo' knows what you is talkin' 'bout, *you* is de result, you and all de udder yallow niggers in de world, wid your light skins and kinky hair—jes' as kinky as mine. Yo' is one hell of a mess, you sure is."

"I suppose you prefer your pure charcoal, eh, Marcus?" retorted Jeremiah sarcastically.

"Yes," snapped back Marcus Cox, "I does—I prefers my charcoal. Dat's pure just like—white lead. Dey's both pure, charcoal and white lead—black man, white man. Dat's where de white man and niggers like me has it on you fellahs. Dat's de reason white men doan want any you Niggers messin' roun' wid dere womens; but shucks! dey may as well tell de sun to stan' still, 'cause any time a woman wants a man, she's goin' to git him, jes' the same as she gits her dresses, her ribbons, and her furbelows. I doan blame 'em, either. I'se just like dat myself. If I lubs a woman, I lubs her. I'se goin' to beg for her; I'se goin' to steal for her; I'se goin' to fight for her, and if dere is any killin' to be did, I'se goin' to kill for her. I aims to gi' her everyting her little heart desires, and I doan care whether she is black, brown, white or yellow. Dey is all alike to me. And womens is jes' the same. If a white woman sets her eyes on a black man, and dere is somethin' 'bout dat black man that she lubs, she wants him; she has to have him—same as when a white man wants a nigger woman. What in hell is either of dem goin' to care about de purity of de race. and whether de one is charcoal and de other white lead or not—If dey can't

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go in de front room and gits what dey want, dey is goin' in de back yard, in de bullrushes and steal it, jes, like down in Egypt when de 'gyptian king's daughter went in de bullrushes and finds her—Moses. Ha! Ha! Ha! Say, King, does yo' believes all you reads in de Bible?" questioned Marcus, his broad face spreading in a grin as if the humor of his own remarks surprised him.

Then, his mood suddenly changing, he did not wait for Jeremiah's reply.

"Jokin' aside, King, we'se got to place our race in a position dat if de white man doan likes us, he can't 'ford to hate us, just as de Jews does."

Marcus Cox's past dissertation had tumbled itself on Jeremiah so suddenly that he was really at a loss whether to resent, whether to agree, or whether to keep silent altogether; but this last remark more intimately concerned his business with Marcus Cox, so he replied: "Yes, you're right. But how is that to be done? You know Negroes are a young people, young in accomplishment, young in everything. We haven't had the same start as the white races of the earth."

"Yes, we had too. The 'gyptians was black people. *Dey* had a start, but you know what happened. A lot of white people come in and messed dem all up. Dey was soon neder one t'ing nor de other, just like you. You can't be a black man, and yo' can't be a white man; but me—" and he thumped his chest with his hand, "me," he repeated, "I'se a black man and I'se proud of it! I aims to continue being a black man. I aims to do everything I'se minded to do jes' as I wants to do it. If I'se black in my insides I'se goin' to let it show outsides. When I laughs, I'se goin' to laugh as loud as I likes. When I sings, I'se goin' to sing strong and hollow like a big trombone; when I cries, I'se goin' to croon like de woods asighing at night. If I wants a red hat I'se goin' to wear a red hat. What de hell does I cares what de white man t'inks of me? Suppose he like black clothes and I like red clothes—ain't my red clothes as good as his black clothes? I doan mean that we should spill water

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all ober de parade, but what I means is dat Niggers ought to find out what dey are good for and do jes' dat thing. I'm tired of all dese black and brown people who is always tryin' for to copy de white man. Dey's jes' like monkeys trying to shoot a gun. De monkey ain't 'customed to any gun, and de fust t'ing you know he shoot himself. What de monkey need is a stick same as he know about in de woods. 'Course, I'se only illustratin', but you gits my pint, does yo'?"

Jeremiah nodded, and added: "The only flaw in your reasoning, Marcus, is that you forget that when one's in Rome, one has to do as the Romans do. Now, the Negro race in New York, or anywhere else, can't do anything else but try to measure up to its surroundings, to acquire the civilization it finds itself in. Negroes can't go strutting around like a lot of bushmen; that's just the trouble with them. I suppose that is what your Movement means, that you want to improve their effort, and by improving their effort, improve their condition."

"Say, King," responded Marcus, "you has smart brains, but you is awfully shortsighted. Man, let me tell you something. You knows why de black man can't build towns and cities like de white man, like out dere?" and he waved his hand towards the buildings out on Seventh Avenue. "I'll tell you. It's 'cause for generations back dere mudders and fahders been building mud huts, and you can't take a man from de jungle who'se been building mud huts and 'spects he's goin' to build a Wool'ruff Tower. De trouble ain't wid his hands; his hands and his head's all right; de trouble is wid his *instinct*. He ain't feel like foolin' wid any towers; he jes' wants a little mud hut where he can lie out in de shade and jes' eat and sleep. De best t'ing to do with de Niggers is to take 'em all back to de place where dey was born and let dem start fresh. Yo' doan train a race hoss on a farm; all yo' train on a farm is a truck hoss. Dat's what I believes in; and even if I doan wants to go back to Africa myself, dat ain't proving dat Africa is not de best place in

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de world for de Negro race in de whole. I bets you dat in de next fifty years dere won't be a Nigger—a real Nigger—in dis country. Dere will be black people, no doubt; but not *real* Niggers. If dey are black, dey will be washed out, no pep, no snap, no ginger, jes' like dey are here in Ha'lem, jes' imitation Niggers; and dey will all be de most unhappy people in de world—jes' like you, King, neder one t'ing nor de other. Why, mon, if you was a black man, wid a lot of snap and pep, not lazy and lolling-like, wid your brains I bets you you'd be a—Hannibal," Marcus exploded.

"Look here, Marcus, I don't like your use of the word 'Nigger'—to me, anyway. It grates on my nerves, and I wish you'd cut it out. I just don't like it! The chances are if I were black like you I wouldn't have any brains, so that let's me out of being Hannibal or anybody like him."

Then, suddenly, tired of the whole discussion, he added hastily: "We get nowhere with this line of talk, Marcus; we're simply wasting time. Let's talk of something more practical, or, better still, let's go out and eat."

"All right," agreed Marcus. "I'se hungry myself. Let's go."

As the two men strolled down Seventh Avenue, Jeremiah came face to face with Dr. Proudfoot.

"By Jove! Counselor King, just the man I was thinking of! I'm having a few friends gather at my apartment on Saturday night, will you join us?"

"Thanks, Doctor. What time?"

"Oh, any old time—say, eleven, half-past, or as late as you like."

"Righto," returned Jeremiah. "I'll be there."

Jeremiah noticed that no sign of recognition passed between Dr. Proudfoot and Marcus Cox. How strange that these two prominent persons of Harlem should not be acquainted. "Don't you people know each other?" he questioned.

"We all have heard of Mr. Cox," grinned the doctor, "but this is the first time I've had the pleasure of meeting him. Glad to meet you, Mr. Cox," and he bowed, some-

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what stiffly, Jeremiah thought. "I'd be glad to have you with us, also, Mr. Cox—just a few friends.

Marcus Cox bowed but made no direct response to the doctor's invitation.

"Are you going to Proudfoot's party?" Jeremiah inquired as they continued their way down the avenue.

Marcus did not answer immediately. He was meditatively stroking his chin.

"How well does yo' know dese people?" he finally inquired.

"Dr. Proudfoot? I met him soon after landing. I met him again last night after I left your house, in that chop-suey joint we just passed below your offices, him and a young fellow by the name of George Webb . . ." and Jeremiah stopped. He determined to say nothing of the female members of the party—Lido, for instance.

"Oh, you met dat young upstart lawyer George Webb, eh? Was that white district attorney fellah wid him? Dey always travel 'roun' in Ha'lem together."

"What's his name?" asked Jeremiah.

"Murphy, Owen Murphy," replied Marcus.

"Yes, he was there too."

"Webb and Proudfoot good friends?" questioned Marcus.

"They seem so," answered Jeremiah.

"Yes, I think I'll go to the party," finally said Marcus. "De doctor only ring me in to be polite; but I'm goin'—for a reason," he ended, as they stepped into Eddie's Chop House. "I'se sure to meet Owen Murphy dere; and besides, it's time for me to show des Ha'lem swell-head mulattoes a thing or two."

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CHAPTER X

JEREMIAH KING had no illusions about himself. He had always made it a point as far as possible to know exactly where he was tending. During the many years he had dawdled away in San Fernando, Jeremiah had by no means missed the essence of things. It was simply that he refused to be concerned whether his course of conduct brought joy or pain to his contacts. He was essentially a realist. If advantage came to him, it was because he measured up; he ascribed his discomfitures to a mere lack of fitness which, he told himself, he could overcome were he to strive sufficiently. He had no tearful self-pity for his failures, for accomplishment to him did not necessarily mean striving in the market place. He dreamed of a Perfection to which he might bow down not because he was akin to it, but because of his sheer unholiness, and he had no excuses to offer for the latter.

Quite early in his matrimonial venture with Dora, Jeremiah had come to the conclusion that his wife would always be to him a crass spirit, a kind of thick, beefy affair which only needed meat and drink and raiment for its sustenance. Of industry his wife had had an abundance; of push and hustle there was no lack; of imagination she had none; and of that intangible quality which unites two human souls at times when food is nauseating, when drink is beside the question, and when raiment is but a paltry possession, Dora King had not even the makings. Thus, he had come to despise that soul, to condemn it, to resent being hemmed

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in by and with it. And yet, withal, he had been tolerant. His aloofness was not an intolerant aloofness; it was simply a vague distaste which brought with it deep silences.

Strange and unnatural enough, Jeremiah had found himself possessed of the same distaste towards his father—a large man, of powerful physique, with flat, broad, black face and spreading lips adorned with stubby side whiskers; a face not by any means cruel, and yet a face to disturb, perchance, the dreams of a child. But his mother—ah, his beautiful mother!—with her frail body and pale, white face set with two mystic blue eyes that seemed perpetually pleading for soft things and never to encompass them. She may not have been beautiful to any other person in the world, but to Jeremiah, his mother had always been the most angelic, the rarest thing in all creation, an imperishable memory.

Many and many a time he wondered how it had come to pass that this frail white creature, his mother, should have joined herself to this thick black creature, his father. He had heard the story over and over again from her lips, but had never ceased to wonder.

His father, a Negro missionary sent to the African Gold Coast from the British West Indies, had met his mother, the daughter of a Scotch missionary, engaged in the same work of saving black souls. And this pure white soul had joined herself to this black soul in the hope that, thus united, there might come to their credit on God's account a larger bag of black native African souls. He, Jeremiah King, had been the sole result.

After many years of striving in Africa, his mother's health had given way and his father had been only too glad to accept the pastorate of a church in San Fernando. Jeremiah had grown up there, had been sent to college in England and, finally, had studied law in London. His mother had died while he was in England, and he had not even been able to see her in her last moments. His father also had died soon after his return to San Fernando. And now, here he was in Harlem, pursued by the same strange des-

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tiny that had overtaken his father and mother: he was Grand Counselor of a Movement dedicated to the uplifting of black souls. What irony of Fate!

Thus did Jeremiah muse as he wended his way to Dr. Proudfoot's home in response to the invitation extended to him.

The taxi in which he was riding drew up with a jolt, and Jeremiah pulled himself from his revery and got out. As he paused on the sidewalk, his gaze swept aloft to encompass a white Indiana limestone apartment building extending for six stories from the corner far into the middle of the block. Dr. Proudfoot was alleged to own this building.

"Not so bad for a little black man," Jeremiah murmured as he entered the doctor's building.

"Yas, sir, going right up; mind yo' step," the elevator boy was saying as he grinned pleasantly, and the car shot upwards to the top floor.

"Which way is the doctor's apartment?" Jeremiah queried.

"De whole way—doctor got de whole floor for heself," at the same time pointing to a push button.

Dr. Proudfoot himself opened the door, a short, dapper little man, pince-nez struck pertly on nose, upper lip covered in the center with a mere rake of a moustache and bared back in a perpetual smile to show a single shining gold tooth.

"How are you, old chappie? Awfully glad to see you," greeted the doctor. His accent was a cross between that of Boston and the east side of London.

Jeremiah passed down a short hall and entered a fair-sized room in which a phonograph was pouring forth a breezy, jazzy tune. Fully a dozen couples were swaying and "bumping" in harmony to the music. Close-linked, they heaved together in semidarkness backward . . . forward . . . forward . . . backward, rising, falling, rolling in one united movement like the swell of an undulating wave. Soon the

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instrument blared out its closing notes. The dancers stopped —a happy, perspiring, noisy group. Somebody touched a push button and a large overhead chandelier sprang its becrystaled glow upon the doctor's guests gathered immediately before Jeremiah as well as in a connected sweep of rooms, alcoves, and cozy corners spreading farther within.

Jeremiah recognized many faces. It was incredible, the number of acquaintances he had made during his short residence in Harlem! "Hello, Lido!" "How-dye do, Mr. Murphy?" "Glad to see you, Webb!" "Well, Sam, when did you get back?" "There you are, Ruth!" It would have taken him a lifetime to meet these people in the same way in Jamaica.

Soon, more acquaintances here, more introductions there. In the brief space of a half-hour Jeremiah seemed to have met every person of wealth, honor, and distinction in Harlem, above Harlem, and below Harlem; for there were as many white people as brown people, as many brown people as light people, and as many light people as black people—the latter mostly men, the former largely women.

Among the guests were reputed bankers, brokers, social uplifters, and even an author of note. There were several authors of note, but this one in particular, of medium-height, broad—broad of body as of manner—a heavy white man, strutted pompously from group to group, the center of attraction. Jeremiah learned that, but a few short days before, this man's latest novel had been published, a thing done grossly in black, which had set Harlem by the ears, for the simple reason that it had dealt intimately (from firsthand contact) with Harlem's elite and non-elite, and most everyone was occupied in unmasking the characters and guessing "who was who," in this way tagging the lions, the lionesses, and the . . . rats.

The doctor's alcoholic refreshments were circulating freely about the rooms. The doctor was certainly a generous, even a reckless host! Jeremiah drank sparingly and

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roamed from room to room. This gathering was quite unlike Marcus Cox's cohorts, but it contained many things in common.

As the liquor circulated, spirits expanded, and even the stiffly dignified began to unbend. Loud noises, louder than usual, much feet-tapping, indrawn cries, were coming from the dancing-room. A human ring encircled a tall brown-skinned beauty. It was Ruth Dennis doing a "Charleston." Skirts working high, dainty silk things and occasional glimpses of brown skin beneath, she twisted and turned and whirled and kicked in delightful abandon. The noted author half-stood, half-crouched in the center of the inner circle. Pop-eyed, his tongue continuously licking his lips, he seemed like some crouching animal about to pounce on its prey. A desire for emulation seized him, and he jumped into the ring towards the kicking performer. Not to be outdone, a tall rangy blonde, the wife of a publisher, threw herself in beside the author. The little brown girl, with sparkling eyes, edged out of the ring. She smiled. All the black, brown, and light-skinned males also smiled. George Webb, next to Jeremiah, nudged him in the ribs and threw him a sly, knowing wink. The white lady's skirts, working high, also disclosed dainty silk things and occasional glimpses of white bared thigh beneath. Dr. Proudfoot, at the edge of the crowd, with his neck out from his short shoulders like the lunge of a turtle's head from its flat body, craned forward for a closer peep. His upper lip, bared backward, froze in an ecstatic smile. He breathed deeply: "Oh, boy!" and around the group of black, brown, and light-skinned males, the echo replied: "Oh, boy!"

Jeremiah raised his eyes. They encountered those of Lido Jones. She was standing somewhat apart, arm in arm with Owen Murphy, who, much the worse for liquor, sagged every now and then in an effort to maintain his balance. A sickly grin overspread his face. Lido's brow was puckered with a little frown and, as the echo of "Oh, boy!" resounded

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on every side, she turned disdainfully away. Her escort barely avoided collapse.

The air was suddenly punctured by the angry burring of the door bell. How often and long it had been ringing, no one knew, but it now sent its metallic summons distinctly above all other noises. Dr. Proudfoot rushed toward this belated guest. He had maintained his position at the door all night, the first to welcome his visitors. Soon he returned with a companion treading behind him—no taller than the doctor, but almost twice as broad, as ponderous and as heavy. It was Marcus Cox, dressed immaculately in evening clothes, and with his "High Commander" gold sash across his broad white-shirted chest. There was a moment's hush which seemed to communicate itself to the farthest confines of the doctor's apartment. The silence was broken by a large, brawny black woman — Madame Castanet by name, the richest black woman in America, or was it in the world?—whose mother had made a fortune out of uncurling curly hair.

"My God!" she ejaculated. "Look who's here! Well, I swear . . ."

She did not complete what she wanted to swear; but, whatever it was, her immediate circle seemed to be in entire accord with her, for, as Marcus advanced farther into the room, there was much gathering of skirts and raising of shoulders and eyebrows from the coterie of ladies gathered about Madame Castanet.

Lido Jones, however, was there to save the night for her High Commander. Whether she sensed the atmosphere of chilliness or not, she swiftly disengaged herself from the wobbling Owen Murphy's arm and, going forward, greeted: "Oh, Mr. Cox, how glad we all are to see you!"

Marcus took both of Lido's outstretched hands, smiled down beamingly upon her, and bowed right and left to the assembled company. Then, with his quick, roving eyes, his glance detected Jeremiah in a little foyer nook in an ad-

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joining room. Passing Madame Castanet and her attendant ladies-in-waiting with the tiniest perceptible gesture of scorn, he pulled up beside Jeremiah.

"Well, I came, King."

Jeremiah made room for Marcus on the small sofa underneath a huge palm.

"Yes, I see you're here—and in full regalia," his smile taking in Marcus' sash.

"Oh, sure, why not?" His tone and manner were full of a certain austere dignity which Marcus carried very well at times; and Jeremiah noticed, too, that, whenever Marcus Cox assumed this manner, his English became almost perfect, as if some disembodied spirit of another mood and person were temporarily in possession of his black frame.

"I see no reason why you shouldn't; after all, you're the only king Harlem has so far anointed."

"Stop your kiddin'! Do you think I came here for the pleasure of foolin' 'round with these highfalutin mulattoes and browns?" he questioned, looking disdainfully at Madame Castanet and her assembled court ladies. "I'm here to meet Owen Murphy, that public-attorney fellow. Have you met him or seen him?"

"Yes, he was in the front room a moment ago with Lido," replied Jeremiah.

"Yes, she runs aroun' with him and that fellow Webb quite a deal," he remarked, and then added: "I'se supposed to have a talk with Murphy here tonight, and I wants you wid me."

"All right, whenever you're ready," Jeremiah replied, at the same time wondering what it was all about.

"Say, dis is one hell of a party, ehn't it?" resumed Marcus after a while.

"I'll say so."

"A lot o' whites. too."

"Didn't know there were so many in the world," laughed Jeremiah.

"Who is de pompous fellah over yondah?"

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"You mean the one with his hair sticking up like a mop?"

"Yes."

"That's a famous author."

"Not de one dat writes dat story, *Blackbirds*?"

"The same; he's all mussed up from doing a Charleston just before you came in."

"I reads dat book. Damn funny! You know Niggers doan know when dey's made fun at."

"No? It's a virtue to be funny, you know; and if Negroes are really humorous, it is real art to create them so. No objection to that, is there?"

"I 'spose not."

"Would you like to meet him?" offered Jeremiah. "He might want to put you in his next book."

"I'd bust 'im in de mout' if I ketches 'im."

"They say that book made him a fortune. He might divide the gate receipts with you as his next hero. You'd make a perfect 'Jake.'"

"Who's dat man 'Jake'?"

"Didn't you read *Home to Harlem*? Jake was the roystering sweetback in that story, but a real he-man just the same. How would you like to be such a character?"

"Hush yo' nonsens, King. You know, dough, white folks is crazy about Nigger doings—what dey eats, what dey drinks, and what dey does."

"Yes, especially their sex performances. To most white men and women, every Negro man is a black stallion and every woman a mare for the entertainment of all the stallions in the world, white or black. It's the jazz age, Marcus, the age of whoopee, freak movements, and long chances. That's the reason I'm beginning to think that even you may land somewhere."

Marcus looked over frowningly at Jeremiah.

"Yo' knows, King, sometimes you gets my goat. I'll get mad as hell some day and cuss yo' all out. I believes sometimes yo' means dose t'ings."

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"As you once said, Marcus, you could have me arrested for what I sometimes think; but I guess we're both pretty frank with each other."

"Look at dat stringy, rhiney Nigger comin' ober heah—looks like a swelled adjective! You knows 'im?"

Jeremiah rose and extended his hand in greeting to the newcomer.

"Awfully glad to see you, Mr. Hutson. You know Mr. Cox of course?"

"No, never had the pleasure. They just told me the King of Harlem was here, and I came over to bend the knee to him."

Hutson's tone was slightly cynical, his gaze curiously critical, as he looked Marcus up and down.

"I hear your hall and that large plot is for sale, Cox," Hutson remarked crisply. "If you'll name me a figure I'd like to handle it. I've been wanting to meet you for some time."

Marcus did not reply immediately. His head cocked slightly to one side, his eyes glowered into Hutson's.

"Nothin' I has is for sale," he replied coldly.

"Huh?" and then, "Ha!" broke from Hutson's lips. "Well, when you take all your Niggers back to Africa, let me know and I'll take that plot off your hands. So long, King!" and Hutson moved off.

"One ub dose bankin'-brokin' fellahs, eh? Takes all and puts nutten. What yo' say his name?" queried Marcus.

"Hutson."

"Where de hell dese niggers gets dere name from?"

"Where in hell did you get yours—Cox? It's much the same as Hutson, King, and all the others."

"I suppose some white man hands it to my fahder de same time he hands 'im his top hat and old swallow-tail coat."

"I suppose so," agreed Jeremiah.

"I aims to change it some day. No kiddin'," he persisted as Jeremiah looked quizzically at him. "I'se 'shamed of it."

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"Well, 'Marcus' isn't so bad. Might shorten it, though, and make it 'Mark' like Mark Antony, you know."

"Mark Antony! Who'se dat?"

"Don't you know? I thought you knew all about Shakespeare. Heard you quoting him the other night in the hall."

"Shucks! Man, you doan hab to read Shakespeare to know 'bout 'im. Eberybody knows t'ings in dat man's book."

"Well, Mark Antony was the fellow who made the famous speech at Caesar's funeral. Maybe the same speech I'll make over you some day," smiled Jeremiah.

"Not ef I knows it! Say, King, yo' knows what I'd like to be?"

"High Commander? You're it already."

"No! Jokin' 'sides, I'd loves to be a lawyer. Mon, I tinks I sees myself in co'te: Gen'mans ub de juries—and I knocks 'em dead wid my speech! Den again, mebbe I gets real sassy-like to de jedge, and he says to me: Now, Council; and I butts in: No, yo' Worship . . ."

"Your Worship? That's not how you address a court in this country. You say: May it please the court."

"Yes, dat's it: Please yo' gracious hon—— hey's Lido comin'," he broke off.

"You've been neglecting me tonight, Mr. King," smiled Lido Jones as she bore down on them and waved a playful finger at Jeremiah. "Come on and dance with me."

As Jeremiah was about to move off, Marcus called him back.

"Say, King, lean over heah. I wants to tell yo' somethin'. . . . Ef I eber gets to be a real king I'se goin' to take you wid me. Yo' knows what fo?"

Jeremiah looked at him, and he looked mischievously back at Jeremiah.

"I aims to 'heads you," he popped out with a sudden laugh.

"To what?"

" 'Heads you. I chops yo' head off jes' like de ole kings

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used to do to dere chamberlains in de ole days. I jes' itches to do dat."

Jeremiah burst into a hearty laugh. Marcus had a quaint sense of humor.

"What are you laughing at?" questioned Lido as they moved towards the dancing-room.

Jeremiah told her.

"What a funny idea!"

"Oh, that's only Marcus' way of showing his love and affection."

"Yes," she agreed, "he seems very fond of you. Only the other night he was telling us of a famous murder case you had down in San Fernando—the one in which you defended the Indian girl's husband who became jealous of you and killed her. Marcus said she was your sweetheart."

"Marcus talks more than he knows about," he returned gruffly.

As a matter of fact, this incident of Tahiti, the little dancing Indian girl, was a thorn in the side of Jeremiah. After the discovery of Tahiti's mutilated body and the arrest of her husband, Jeremiah had felt it a sacred duty to defend the man; in this way only he felt he could atone to Tahiti. And he had succeeded! He had always felt proud of that.

"You don't seem so jolly tonight."

"No?" he queried. "What makes you think so?"

"I don't think so—I *know* so."

"Well, *you* are having a good time."

"The time of my life," she agreed. "Isn't it a great party? Isn't Doctor Proudfoot a regular brick to turn this party on for me before I go away?"

"Oh, is it your party? Where are you going?"

"Surely, didn't you know? I thought I told you the other night. I'm going on my vacation to Atlantic City for a week, maybe; then I'm going down to Washington, and from there to Arundel-on-the-Bay for another week."

"That's fine; wish I were going along with you." he remarked gallantly.

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"Well, wouldn't that be great! Why can't you? You'd like Atlantic City—a great place," she bubbled on.

"Maybe I will"; and, after a pause: "Where's Murphy? I think Mr. Cox wants to see him."

"I think he's back in the dining-room," she answered. "He's pretty well pickled; been drinking too much whiskey, or gin, or whatever else he drinks," she explained.

"Didn't notice you drinking much."

"No," she answered. "I can't stand the taste of whiskey or gin; but I do love wine. The doctor told me he had some for me; and if you're very good I'll let you have a drink with me."

"I'll *always* be good—to *you*," he answered in low tones near her ear, and with the faintest suggestion of a tighter pressure about her waist.

"All right, we'll be regular pals," she agreed.

As they stopped for the second time, Marcus Cox was standing beside a chair nearby. He beckoned to Jeremiah. Marcus seemed somewhat perturbed.

"What yo' think?" he complained. "That damned Irishman's drunk as a lord; he's layin' off there in one of Proudfoot's rooms, and me nor Webb can't get any sense into his head. Guess we'll have to postpone our meetin'."

"What's it all about, Marcus? I don't know the first thing you are talking about."

"Oh, dere's a little matter of a indictment—they got it 'gainst me durin' de war. De blasted English was back of it; thought I was raisin' too much hell and might stir up the Niggers all over—all over de world. We'se very strong on de African Gold Coast and in Capetown. I managed to squelch de indictment; cost me a heap o' money; but Murphy phoned me some time ago that he had to dispose of it one way or de udder. He said he was comin' up to dis little racket Dr. Proudfoot was havin' in Harlem and axed me whether I'd be there. I tole him no, I didn't 'tend no such foolishness; but when you and me come down de steps on Seventh Avenue and meet Dr. Proudfoot, den it 'curs to me I'd trot

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along and we could hab our conference with de blasted grafter here."

"Oh, I see," observed Jeremiah; and again: "I see!"

As Jeremiah and Marcus proceeded through an arched doorway beyond the dining-room toward one of the other rooms beyond, they were met by George Webb coming out.

"No use, Cox; he ain't in any shape to talk tonight. We'll have to put it off for some other time. Suppose we phone you?"

Marcus Cox thought a moment. "All right, Webb. Let's see. I has to go on a tour the first part of next week. I'll get Mr. King to telephone you when I get back and 'range it. Good night." he added shortly, and, taking Jeremiah lightly by the arm, they found their way out.

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CHAPTER XI

THERE ARE cities and communities in the world which have their own special flavor, atmosphere—call it what you will. London breathes its own particular air; Paris envelops you with its own distinct aura; and New York! there was something about New York which, to Jeremiah, was as authentic as the flavor of either London, Paris or Berlin.

These are the highlights of the world; but here and there, in America as in Europe, in Asia, Africa, or wherever one may roam, there are lesser lights of cities which have a gentle or, perhaps, a lurid perfume all their own; and once scented, or glimpsed, or felt—according to differing tastes—the stray sojourner's heart returns in memory even as a long-swirling sea bird drops back to the breast of mother ocean for snatches of sustenance and repose.

Atlantic City, "playground of the world"—as its sponsors have so grandiloquently christened it—spreading itself along the New Jersey shore line, with its minaret-towering hotels, its boardwalk, and its crowds perambulating by day as by night in one endless, never-ending procession. . . .

Atlantic City! No poet has adequately sung its praises nor expressed his love! No painter has yet encompassed its sprawling spirit within the narrow confines of his palette and brush, for like many another place in the world, its tunes, its tones, its moods are so diverse, so varying, so changing and changeful that nothing else in, about, or around it is typical save its glowing sands and the perpetual swish and wash and roar of the breakers as they roll unceasingly to the shore.

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Broadway! Broadway alight at night had been a dazzling, an awe-inspiring sight to Jeremiah. Coming, as he had, from a little one-horse town in an insignificant West Indian island where oil lamps and candles shed their archaic light in homes and where one had to walk the streets with a lantern when caught after dark, no wonder the blaze of Broadway's lights struck him so staggeringly, even as one who emerges from darkness into the glare of a noonday sun.

Atlantic City had, however, its subtle difference. Its lights seemed as blatant as those of Broadway, yet not so blatant. Its boardwalk throngs flowed along in squirming streams even as those of Broadway, yet not so squirming, so pushing, so silently and purposefully occupied. Here the crowds streamed on more blithely, more giddily, seeming to walk forward and onward towards those aimless and unheeded things of life which are all too few, all too fleeting—those things of which the Lord God Almighty, in a moment of pique, had decreed that posterity should possess so few—idle moments.

While Marcus was away on his business tour, Jeremiah made it a point to visit Atlantic City during the time Lido Jones was vacationing.

Jeremiah and Lido were now on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, being gently perambulated northward in a roller chair towards the Inlet. A soft breeze fanned their cheeks and tumbled Lido's riotous, bobbed curls about her eyes and face. She was radiantly alive, chirping and perking like some little bird in the sunlight. In and out of the crowds, weaving his way, their black Jehu wheeled them, stopping a moment here to stare into shops, lingering a moment there along the rail to gaze silently and far afield over the ocean. There was a feeling of satisfaction and elation within Jeremiah. His fancy carried him years and years ahead of the present. He was envisioning great things. America was, indeed, a wonderful country, a land of opportunity, a Canaan flowing with milk and honey. It was a land to prompt one's energies to their uttermost. It hardly occurred to him at this

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moment that heretofore his life had been a mere sauntering, strolling affair. Today he felt quite different and he was going to . . .

Jeremiah was roused abruptly from his musings.

"Oh, look, Jerry, sea food, lobsters, a shore dinner!" Lido was bubbling. "Do let's go in and have a shore dinner! I do so love 'em, only" she hesitated, "I wonder whether it's all right? I wonder whether they will serve us?"

"What's a shore dinner, and why do you wonder if we will be served?" smiled Jeremiah, abstracting his gaze and thought from the ocean.

"A shore dinner? Don't you know? Oysters on the half-shell; soft, oozy steamed clams; broiled lobster, chicken and watermelon—nice, sweet dripping watermelon with black little seeds peeking up at you and wondering whether you are going to bite them or not," purred Lido.

Jeremiah knew nothing of shore dinners. His little island home had no doubt possessed the ingredients, but he had never asked for a "shore dinner" before.

"Well, what do you mean by, '*if* they will serve us'? Isn't that what they have 'em for, to serve people?"

Lido looked covertly over at her companion. She had forgotten. Jeremiah was a West Indian. She had often heard these people boast that they had no complex color problems in the Islands; but surely it couldn't be altogether true. There wasn't a place in the world where colored people could go wherever they pleased and do whatever they liked—except, perhaps, in the jungles of Africa.

"I've heard they are very prejudiced in Atlantic City and don't serve Negroes on the boardwalk," she explained; and then, musingly, "But that's hardly different from anywhere else."

"If that's so, how do you know about shore dinners? Never saw any lobster palaces in Harlem," he retorted.

"Oh, I've had shore dinners lots of times, and not in Harlem either," she boasted.

Jeremiah pondered as he looked musingly at Lido. Black-

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haired, black-eyed, her complexion in its natural state a light beige, but now, with her cheeks blushed with rouge, a creamy peach color, it seemed to him a thoroughly Caucasian face, Latin, perhaps, Jewish, perhaps—except for the nose—a possible representative of the innumerable caravan from Europe, one of the many types which populate New York's east side, and west side, and south side, and north side.

"In New York I go out a lot to Hunter Island's Inn, to City Island, and other places with Mr. Murphy, that white friend of George Webb's, whom you met," she confided. "We go to any old place we like."

"Oh, is that so? You travel around with white men, eh?" rejoined Jeremiah, looking at her as from a distance.

"Not 'white men,' " mimicked Lido Jones. "I said a white *man*."

"All right, we won't quarrel about the plural—a white man. What's the matter with me? We're both pretty white," he added, taking up one of her bare arms in his and playfully patting it.

"It isn't a question of lightness. With your . . ." and she hesitated, embarrassed, fearing to offend, but looking at his hair.

"Oh, I know—you needn't hesitate; I'm not a bit sensitive. You mean that with my hair curling up like Marcus Cox's there could be no mistake."

She could not tell whether Jeremiah, in spite of his smiling frankness, were offended or not, so she merely nodded.

"Well, do you suppose I want to hide, or disguise myself, behind a light skin? I wouldn't change my hair for any other in the world."

"That isn't it at all. It isn't a question of hiding. We want what they have, and if we are fortunate enough to be able to get it without question, why not take it? I am never going to deny my race or my color, but I certainly am not going around pinning placards on myself. They'll serve a white man and a very light woman, or vice versa. They'll take a chance, not being sure. There are so many different kinds of people

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in this country you can't *ever* be sure. Besides, one carries the other along; but when both are doubtful, like us—you're a little and I'm a little—I don't know, they may *not* take the chance. I do wish I could have some lobster, though," she added very wistfully.

"We are certainly going to have lobster if you want it," he replied, as if that ended the whole matter; and calling to the Negro wheeler to pull up alongside "Jack's Lobster Palace" at the Inlet, they jumped out.

"Let me fix up a little," Lido said sprightfully, taking out her omnipresent compact case and dabbing at her nose and cheeks. "Maybe that'll help some"; and, resting her arm lightly in that of Jeremiah's, they entered the restaurant.

Was there a slight feeling of self-consciousness on Jeremiah's part—just the smallest tincture of expectancy, as, pausing for a moment to select seats, they found their way to a table near a window overlooking the boardwalk and the bay? When it was all over, Jeremiah tried to recall his feelings, but never settled the matter to his satisfaction.

A waitress came over, laid a menu card on the table, and passed on. There was no welcoming smile on her face, no air of greeting, not the slightest hint of: "This restaurant is glad to have you come in, and we're going to take care of you well for the minutes that you are here." Just a quick, searching look. Jeremiah had known ever so many eating places where both the food and the service—particularly the service—gave you a kind of homey, chummy feel. But, possibly, there were too many transients coming and going for this place to have developed such an atmosphere. Still, on this occasion, the place was not even half-filled; and the night was a lazy, strolling kind of a night, the air coming through the windows from the ocean soft and balmy, with just a sufficiency of tang in it to add piquancy. One got the feeling that it was a night in which to be generous, to be cheerful, to be expandingly gay.

Lido placed her wide-brimmed Leghorn hat on a chair beside her and rested Jeremiah's alongside it. She again ruf-

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fled her curls and settled down to the pleasing prospect of a shore dinner.

The waitress returned. She laid napkins and glasses of water beside their respective places. Lido was chirping joyfully. "You're going to enjoy it," she was saying, "even if it is your first shore dinner. I've heard they are just wonderful in this place."

In the far distance of the restaurant, however, over on the other side of the room where there was a railinged space with a high desk surmounted by a cash register and an elevated chair on which sat a thick, matronly woman with great masses of blonde, wavy hair, a conference was going forward between the waitress, the cashier, and a man—a short, stocky, red-haired man who seemed to be in authority, perhaps the proprietor. Jeremiah recalled that this stocky man had but a moment or two before passed behind their table and held a whispered conversation with a fat woman and her companion a seat or two removed from theirs.

Now the short, stocky man was coming towards them. He was even at that moment standing beside Jeremiah, his hands lightly resting on the table beside him. He was saying something. It suddenly occurred to Jeremiah that something very unpleasant was about to happen.

"Excuse me, sir," the man was saying. "what is your nationality?"

Jeremiah looked steadily into the man's gray eyes before replying; then, slowly, as if measuring his calibre, his quality, he permitted his eyes to travel up and down his figure until they rested again on his face. Finally, with deliberate slowness, he answered: "What in hell is that to you? Who are you, anyhow, and how dare you come over here and ask me a question like that?"

"I am the manager of this restaurant. I suspect that you two people are colored people, and we can't serve Negroes here. It's a hard-and-fast rule—sorry."

The man was not rude in manner. He was civil, polite, apologetic, in fact.

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"Yes, we *are* Negroes, we *are* colored persons," answered Jeremiah, "but we propose to be served here or anywhere else we may choose to go."

Lido was about to say something, but he silenced her with a gesture, and continued: "You know, of course, that it is a breach of the law to discriminate because of color, and we are going to be served here if . . . if I have to get the whole police force of Atlantic City to make you do it!"

Even in saying it, he felt the futility of his threat.

"Sorry," the man replied, a cynical sneer on his lips. His mood perceptibly changed; in a moment, he became ugly. "You may suit yourself about it," and he turned on his heels and walked abruptly away.

Jeremiah looked over across the table at Lido Jones. Lido looked back at him. "Well, of all the nerve!" she muttered, and turned towards the chair beside her where the hats were.

"Wait a minute," said Jeremiah, "let me think a little."

The blood had left his face, and a cold, chill fire was passing through his body. Alternate flashes of a beserk mood —a desire to run amuck in this place, to clean up the whole shebang by acts of mad violence, came to him at the same time as little murmurs within which told him to be calm, to be gentlemanly. . . . Hell, gentlemanly! What in hell had gentility to do with this situation? These people were white people, members of *the* highly cultured race! He, Jeremiah King, had absorbed their civilization. He had been striving all of his life to imbibe more and more of it, to catch its remotest essence, and by distilling it in his being, thus enable himself to feel that he was a more perfect being. Kindness and civility; a gentle refrainment from inflicting hurts, bruises, wounds was, to Jeremiah, the quintessence of that culture and that gentility to which he had loftily aspired; but what did these people know of that? What, if they knew, did they care?

Jeremiah laughed—laughed suddenly, shortly, abruptly. It was not a pleasant laugh. It had more in it of a grunt,

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a snarl, a curse issuing from between the corners of his lips as they opened themselves in a forced smile in Lido's direction.

"Well, that's that!" he finally remarked, strumming on the table with his fingers; then, quickly rising, as if waking himself from a dream, he remarked, turning towards Lido Jones: "Come, little girl, let's go."

As they walked down the restaurant aisle and passed through its doors, heads held high and eyes scornfully sweeping group after group of other diners who had witnessed their discomfiture, a little snicker from the fat overdressed female sitting behind them was wafted to their ears.

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CHAPTER XII

"AH COULD ah tole yo' so," confided their Negro wheelchair-pusher as Jeremiah and Lido Jones settled themselves for the journey back down the boardwalk.

"Told us what?" questioned Jeremiah sharply and irritably.

"Tole yo' dey doan serve no cullud people in dat rest'-rant. Dat's de most prejudicest place dere is in Atlantic City. De mostest patrons of dat place is s'utherners—crackers from de Sout'—and dey doan serve we people atall, atall! No, sir! no chance whatsoever or howsoever," and he shook his head vehemently.

He had stood alongside the window and witnessed the entire proceeding.

Jeremiah, however, had no immediate inclination to discuss his troubles with this man—their chair-pusher, their servant. After all, the mere fact of a common heritage did not, by that very token, make this man a fit auditor of his woes. As a matter of fact, it had not been a southern man or woman who had caused their rejection. He had distinctly seen, now that he recalled it, the beginning of the whole affair. It was the large, stout, overdressed, overdiamonded female sitting with her companion at the table behind them who had beckoned the manager of the restaurant and, in a whisper purposely designed, no doubt, to be disquietingly loud, had made objection to dining with—"Niggers!" There had been some doubt expressed by the manager; and, finally, after a conference with his assistants, he had come over to their table.

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There was an empty feeling at the pit of his stomach. His lips were so dry that he found himself wetting them repeatedly with his tongue. His hands shook. He was flabbergasted, upset, enraged—for himself and for Lido Jones. He glanced covertly at her. He wondered how she felt, what was going on in her mind. He heard her voice coming as from a distance. It took him a few moments to pull himself together and determine what she was saying.

"Don't take it too hard, old boy. You know I warned you I was afraid of just that."

"I didn't think it possible," he muttered, more to himself than to her.

"Yes, not only possible, but most probable—absotively probable," she said, reverting to playful slang in order for him to snatch some measure of cheer from her lightness. "But we mustn't let that spoil our evening. That . . . would . . . be . . . a . . . crime!" and her eyes and smile encouraged him.

"I guess you're right," but he lapsed into silence immediately afterward. It was not so easy to shake off as that. Suddenly, he turned towards his chair-pusher.

"Tell me something, George."

"Mah name ahnt George."

"What is it?"

"My name is Abraham Lincoln Douglas. *Mr.* Abraham Lincoln Douglas, dat's me, sar!"

"Abraham Lincoln, eh?"

"Yes, sar, de same who freed de slaves; but dey calls me Link for short."

"So the slaves are free, are they, Link?"

"Sure dey is, befo' ah is bawn!"

"And how long has this kind of thing been going on here?"

"What yo' means—dey doan serve cullud people?"

"Yes."

"All de time, and ah bin livin' here nigh to fifty yeahs."

"Didn't you ever think of doing anything about it?"

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"Me? Ah is only a poor wheel-pusher. Been doin' dat all mah life. If dese dicty Niggahs wants to eat on de bo'adwalk it's dem bis'ness. Ah mines mah *own* bis'ness."

"That so," agreed Jeremiah. "Do you know what I'd like to do right now?"

"No, sah, ah ain' no min' readah."

"I'd like to get about fifty of the blackest Negroes I can find in Atlantic City and march them into that restaurant and sit down until we had a lobster feast."

"Man, yo' shuh is looking to raise some hell, ain't yoh?"

"Yes, I'd like to do just that."

"You'd have a race riot befoh mohnin'."

"And then—?"

"All us Niggahs would be chased out o' Atlantic!"

"That wouldn't be such a bad thing. What's the use of living here if you can't have what you want?"

"Me? Ah gets *all* I wants. Doan lak no lobster, nohow. Ef ah did ah'd buy him at de stoh!"

"Well, what about your children? Suppose they should grow up and want to eat on the boardwalk?"

"Dey ain't got no sich foolishest noshuns in dah heads. Besides, I ain't got no children."

"No wonder!" Jeremiah breathed, turning towards Lido Jones. "I guess this is one of Marcus' problems."

"Yoh means de mayor, Mr. Marks? He ain't got no use foh cullud people, eithah. He's ah refohm man."

"No, I mean Mr. Marcus Cox, the High Commander President General of the United Negro Movement of the World—didn't you ever hear of him?"

"No, sah, nevah heard tells of him," replied Abraham Lincoln Douglas.

Lido Jones had sat silent during the whole bantering discussion. She sensed that Jeremiah was exhausting some of his steam.

"Come on, let's go on the pier," she suddenly suggested as Young's Million Dollar Pier showed in the immediate vista.

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"Well, what about something to eat?" questioned Jeremiah.

"Oh, I'm not hungry. I just wanted some lobsters. It doesn't make any difference, anyhow. We've saved that much money. haven't we?" and she took hold of his arm chummily.

"Hang the money!" he growled.

Jeremiah knew that Lido was lying. She must be hungry. She was attempting to soften the blow. He felt her manner and, because he felt it, he reproved himself for placing on her the burden of saving the evening's entertainment. So, taking himself in hand, he answered: "Yes, one swallow doesn't make a summer. Let's try somewhere else."

The experience of a few minutes ago, however, had had its effect. Automatically, doubt came to him; fear of a recurrence of what they had just passed through; and, as they descended from their roller chair and approached the caged window for tickets to the pier, a grim spectre was by his side, the same spectre, he suddenly realized, that must stalk beside every Negro man and woman in the United States in search, during their travels, of public accommodations in restaurants and hotels in cities and towns and hamlets all over the country.

He had heard many race discussions since he had been in America, in Harlem. He had heard about racial prejudice from Marcus Cox, from others. He had caught the sound of it in his walks about the streets of Harlem, but he had not heretofore measured its significance. Now it was invading his most inner life. In the past white people, to Jeremiah, had been just—people. People like himself and Dora and their many friends in the Islands were just—people. They had no distinguishing marks save their accomplishments, their achievements, their culture. People like Marcus Cox and his kind were . . . they were not just—people; they were *black* people. Marcus Cox was right. Jeremiah King had a color sense, a color complex, after all. He had had it without realizing it. Was it because he had unconsciously

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aligned himself with that other group which had just seared him with the hot iron of their contempt? Was it because the white part of him had made him feel that he was not like this—this other black kind?

For a moment he looked around. He and Lido had entered the dancing pavilion, and they were waltzing. The hundreds of other couples around him were white couples; but Lido—Lido, as he looked down at her was almost as white as any girl in that place. She was just as well dressed, just as dainty as the daintiest on the floor. He was proud of Lido as she swayed contentedly in his arms. Was it because of her light color? Or was it because of her grace and beauty and—manner? Perhaps color had something to do with it. He could not imagine himself dancing in this place with a black woman, nor with a fat, ungainly, slovenly white girl, no—not of any color. It was because Lido fitted so eminently well into these surroundings. It was that and something more. Now he realized it. It was because, light and pretty as she was, her lightness and prettiness had that quality in it akin to his, which made it possible for him to say: "You are *my* kind!"

There was that in his being which thrilled triumphantly. She belonged by virtue and token of her mixed race to him. And, by Jove! they were there in that circle of white beings who, at a beck, a nod, would deny them the right to be there, to compete with them; but they were there just the same; they were able to compete with them, and, by God! they were *going* to compete, not alone by virtue of their lightness of skin, but by virtue of their inherent quality, their culture, their attainments.

Unconsciously, Jeremiah held his partner a little more closely to him. Instinctively, he expressed the pride evoked inside his soul by the tiniest increased pressure of his arm around her waist.

The waltz floated on; its cry hung suspended as if in air. No words—just a tune and its haunting melody throated by the saxophones as they reached the crescendo of the com-

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poser's heartache. Jeremiah's mood and his fancy floated on also. It encompassed Marcus Cox and their recent conference in Harlem a few days back. Many of Marcus Cox's shibboleths now emerged clearer, as if painted on a blackboard—his openly expressed distrust, his resentment of the white man's dominance. Jeremiah also resented it—resented it not from the standpoint of color but from the standpoint of culture, of achievement. Damn it! That's where Negroes deserved all they got. They were not fit; they were not equipped to deserve any more. . . . Yet was this true? Was *he* not well equipped? Hadn't *he* as much refinement as any white man in the world? Didn't *he* have fine sensibilities, fine ideals, fine fancies? Yet how had *he* been treated? How much had all these assets weighed in that restaurant a short while ago? Marcus Cox was right! Marcus Cox was, so to speak, in the "right church but in the wrong pew." He would talk to Marcus on his return, and maybe . . . maybe, together, they could do something useful after all.

"Let's go outside and get some air," he remarked suddenly.

Lido Jones had enjoyed the waltz immensely. She loved dancing and would have liked to continue, but she was ready.

"All right, Jerry!"

They went out to the farthest end, where the last frontier of the pier met the ocean. Underneath them the tireless sweeping waters were roughing themselves against the huge concrete-pillar supports; and a thousand phosphorescent twinkles flashed up at them from below. They came upon a bench and sat down. From underneath the horizon, where vaguely dark water had met vaguely dark sky a moment or so ago, a moon, a more than full moon, arose gently and shyly.

They sat out there until late into the night.

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CHAPTER XIII

THERE ARE wild things of the earth majestic in their wildness—the eagle with its untamed eye, its cruel beak, its lancing talons. The lion, the tiger, the savage—all majestic because of their unfettered abandon. Even so the stormwinds and the stormwaves. Even so God, who strikes with asperity—yea, with laughter.

Shall human beings shrink? Yes, if they be not made of the laughter of the gods; if, bereft of the quality of the stormwinds, they come to be weak and sexless things.

Was he, Jeremiah, a weak and sexless thing? Had he, by virtue of his mixed heritage, become emasculated of the strength that might have been his had he been a purely white or a purely black man? Scientific men, men who were supposed to have made a special study of the subject, had often declared that persons of mixed blood like himself were prone to inherit the weak traits of their respective black and white parents. He wondered: could this be true in his case?

His Atlantic City experience had bitten deeply into his sensibilities. He had suffered a mortal affront—a hurt to his spirit. How would a white man have answered this assault had the situation been reversed? How would a black man have answered it? What explanation had he to give for it? How was he going to gird himself to meet it? For he saw clearly that it was not a question of the past but of the present and of the future.

He sat alone in his rooms—a small apartment on Edge-

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combe Avenue overlooking the park. He had chosen this apartment (on the top floor) because of the view it commanded over the lights and shadows of the big city. All of his past life in the West Indies he had lived close to the ground; never in those years had he moved in a house more than one story high. Here, however, he was on the thirteenth floor. He delighted in being as high up as possible. It seemed to afford elbow room for his thoughts.

To the north, east and south the lights of the city twinkled out. Almost immediately beneath, just over the housetops beyond Broadhurst, Eighth and Seventh Avenues, the vacuous shadow of the Harlem River wound its way north and south like a gloomy trail between the campfires of two bivouacking armies—New York and the Bronx. A cooling breeze came through the open window by his side, and, as he smoked, his thoughts were roaming far afield.

Civilization, he pondered, had a tendency to weaken human beings. Certain ancient civilizations were said to have never been so highly developed as immediately prior to their decay and fall. Men built cities of wood and stone to shield their degeneracy. They built Towers of Babel in their egotism and their weakness. At times it were far better, for one's own self-respect, to be a wild, primitive creature. Extreme culture made a man too proud to fight; but with ninety-nine per cent of the world not so highly refined, it was hell not to have the fighting spirit when the battle gauge was thrown down. A one-per-cent minority became a solecism, a mere nonentity. without even the moral justification of the martyr.

The habit and training of years called on him to laugh off the affair of the Atlantic City restaurant. Two weeks had gone by since his return from that trip, and he had not been able to laugh it off, to forget. It still gnawed into the bone and marrow of his spirit. He found himself actually becoming morbid about it. As he looked back over the occurrence, he wondered whether he had not been a little weak. Had it not called for the exercise of courage

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of some sort—physical perhaps, but courage of a kind which had failed to come to him at a moment when, of necessity, it comes to those who have it in the blood? Was his philosophy of life at fault? Did he not need a punch. a challenge somewhere in his scheme of things?

He rose from his seat and paced up and down the floor. Abstractedly, he bit off the end of a fresh cigar, lighted it, and took three or four short puffs.

He found himself in a new predicament. He was a Negro. That was exactly what the Atlantic City restaurant proprietor had told him; and it must be true, because he had not been able to refute it. Heretofore, he had merely thought of himself as a man, a human being; but now he was undoubtedly a Negro. That was different. He was face to face with a disadvantage which inhered in his physical appearance, a characteristic of which there was no way of ridding himself, and one which would raise for him the same problem over and over again in the future. How was he going to shape his course so as not to be hurt again? The question bothered him. Was he going to avoid insult and hurt by avoiding places of public accommodation he might long to enter? God! What a position for a free man in a free world!

"Hell," he muttered to himself, "this is a million times worse than being tied to a disagreeable woman. One can always get rid of a person, or failing, take himself out of the picture—exactly as he had done with Dora. But getting away from being oneself? No, damn it! That was impossible."

Pausing before a bureau in the room, he pulled an electric light chain. His face appeared before him in a mirror. Critically, he looked it over. Yes, that was it; his face was white enough; but that hair of his—unruly, stubborn, declaratory. It was just as crinkly and stubby as Marcus Cox's; and it had no such saving definite black color; it was of an indeterminate brownish hue. No doubt, that hair could be improved somewhat. He had observed most wonderful

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transformations among the men and women of Harlem by hair-straightening processes. He laughed aloud.

"My God! to think that even such a thought should come into my mind!" Flee from the question that way? Never! He recalled his boast to Lido Jones on the boardwalk in Atlantic City: "Do you think I'd want to hide or disguise what I am?" And that was still true—please God, it would always be true. He would stand or fall by what he was.

He saw clearly now the tight ring in which men of color, no matter of what shade, moved in the United States. He sensed that it was the same all the world over. Looking back upon his life in the West Indies, he divined that it existed as strongly there as anywhere else, although it had never obtruded itself upon his consciousness. He recalled that all the best governmental positions in the Islands had always been filled by Englishmen sent out from the home country especially for the purpose of preserving white dominance. No doubt about it—that was the reason—*white domination,* an intent to impress racial superiority. With the English in the colonies, it sprang as a governmental policy from the top; in America, this racial antipathy sprang from the people themselves. Marcus Cox's Movement had appeal because it expressed the growing rebellion in black men's souls against the iron ring of white prejudice and antipathy pressing on them from every side. It was an instinctive racial gesture of self-protection.

What was the answer—if there were answer at all? Resort to the courts? No, hell, law could not control deep-rooted prejudices. Law was only law in so far as it expressed popular will. Witness prohibition enforcement laws—all futile and doomed to everlasting failure. The answer could not, in the nature of things, be an immediate answer; it must be an answer of the ages, of time, of growth, of development in power and in dignity by the black race. It should be an answer in which every colored man in the world was interested; and one of the first ways of answering it was to nail one's Negro identity to the mast and place it there to

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be observed before every other consideration. White prejudice, hate, and oppression had kept the Negro race alive—that and something inherently capable of surviving in the race itself. What was that inherent something which had enabled it to survive? Clearly, it was a quality which the Indian race did not have, because that race had almost been exterminated. Was it the Negro's good nature, that carefreeness of spirit which was said to be fundamentally and peculiarly his, which the Great Force back of the world needed and preserved when He preserved the Negro? Was this happy-go-lucky spirit for which he was as equally condemned as lauded really a fundamental trait, or was it an acquired habit by virtue of which the Negro had bent under oppression and adverse circumstances but had not broken—like the Indian? The proud Indian had shot back fiery glance for fiery glance of the white man and had wasted himself away with lashings of his tiger's tail. The Negro, in the same position, had acquired the ability to laugh it off, to laugh it off . . . and wait, wait for the day of deliverance and power, when perhaps the tables would be turned. There was only one other race in the world with good humor equal to that of the Negro, and that was the Irish. Under centuries of English oppression they, too, had continued to smile and sing and dream. Had they not also survived? The Creator of the world, in making the Negro, had put something into his spine which, during an emergency, when the issue was either smile and survive or be gloomy and die, had enabled the Negro to smile and survive. Why should not he, Jeremiah, be proud of that part of his lineage which, being black and condemned, had the capacity for a surviving smile? And why should he not be proud, now that the battle gauge of "race" had been thrown down for him in a world where contests were waged by different weapons, to wage his own battle not as an indeterminate hybrid but as a Negro?

"By God!" he exclaimed in a moment of passionate inspiration. "Natural selection and all it implies, driving the

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Negro back on his own resources, has been and will be the salvation of the Negro race. It has kept the children of Israel alive, and it has and will fit the Negro for a fine struggle." With everything going easy for them, as Marcus had remarked, Negroes will be Negroes in color only. Their souls, their spirits, with no urge to keep racial traits active, will be imitation white spirits and souls—just like his, Jeremiah's, had been before his advent to Harlem. But no longer so.

The punch, the challenge, had come!

Jeremiah went over to a closet, took a bottle from the shelf, and poured himself out a drink of whiskey.

"I would damn Prohibition if it were worth the damning," he chuckled, "but it's too weak to be damned." Raising the glass to his lips, he continued as if addressing a companion: "Marcus, old boy, here's to you and African hopes; for it's by virtue of you that I am able to buy me this liquor. May all the Negroes in the world continue to live, prosper and—supply liquor; it's sure one little consoler."

He gazed contemplatively into his empty glass. There was a sardonic smile on his lips. He turned out the light and resumed his seat by the window.

The little bell in his apartment buzzed suddenly and sharply. He went forward and opened the door.

"Well, well, Marcus, glad to see you. When did you get back?"

"A few hours ago."

There was a hint of coldness in Marcus Cox's voice.

"Come on over here by the window and . . . wait, let me get you a drink."

"Don't want anything to drink. I want to talk to you."

"All right. Sit down and be comfortable, anyhow."

"I hears you been down to Atlantic City wid Lido," he said brusquely. "I don't wants you to be foolin' 'roun' wid dat little girl. Yo' see, King, you'se a married man; and you can't do Lido no good even if somebody was to wants you to do her some good."

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A hot flush surged through Jeremiah King and undoubtedly showed itself on his face. What did this man, Marcus Cox, think he was with respect to him, Jeremiah? Did he think he was his master, his boss? How ridiculous! He, Jeremiah, had only associated himself with Marcus Cox out of desire to be of assistance to him in his unwieldy and stumbling efforts. What was Lido Jones to Marcus Cox, anyhow? What business was it of his that—

"I has a strong interest in dat little girl, King. Yo' know dat little Nigger Webb that yo' met at de cabaret de fust night I meets you? Well, I had to get him tole 'cause he was runnin' 'round too much with Lido, and I didn't like it 'cause I doan t'ink he 'mounts to much or ever will 'mount to much anyways; and just as soon as I'se through with a little matter that I has with Owen Murphy, I'se goin' to give him a piece of my min' also. Oh, doan worry, I'm up to all de little tricks o' dese white men chasin' colored gals."

Jeremiah took note that, for once, Marcus had not used the word "Nigger" in connection with Lido, as he would undoubtedly have done in reference to anyone else.

He replied in what he desired to be a most casual tone: "I thought Lido—Miss Jones—was only your secretary."

There was no mistaking Jeremiah's tone. At least, it had a definite meaning to Marcus. His eyes blazed, and with a cutting sneer, he replied: "Yo' thinks everybody is like yourself, King. I ain't interested in Lido de way you t'inks. It wouldn't do me no good ef I was. Lido is jes' like a daughter to me. Yo' see all de swell t'ings I got dere—well, it's Lido's mother, Mandy Jones, that select dem all. She puts my house away like a palace—jes' as yo' see it, and you didn't see de half of it, either. No, King," he went on, noting the questioning gaze in Jeremiah's eyes, "yo's wrong again. Mandy Jones ain't my kept woman, and she ain't my wife; she ain't eder 'cause she won't have me for eder de one or de other. But I'se crazy to hab her anyways she wants me—ef she's only have me," and there was a note of tender sadness in his voice. "In de meantime she works for a salary

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from de U. N. M. for keepin' my house jes' like Lido and jes' like . . . *you*," Marcus ended pointedly.

So that was the connection! That was the mystery over which Jeremiah had pondered ever since he had become acquainted with Marcus Cox and Lido. Lido and her mother in Marcus' house. What a relief! Instinctively, he rose and went towards Marcus Cox.

"Shake, Marcus, you're a good sport. I think you are great, and . . . you needn't worry about any harm coming to Lido through me. I'd protect her as quickly as you would, as though I were—her father," he ended, no other relationship occurring to him at the moment.

The two men silently clasped hands.

"How are things out West?" inquired Jeremiah after a while.

"Things is going pretty well in de other branches, and I thinks we have 'nough money to make de final payment on de ship, conditionin' her and everything."

"Where is she?" inquired Jeremiah.

"Laying up in de Nort' River, where she's been all de time, ever since from in the war, leastways from the time when dis country jumped into de fighting. We didn't make the las' payment and we didn't do neary a t'ing to her because we was 'fraid de gov'ment might seize her; and I didn't aim to have us Niggers do a damn, blasted t'ing to help dose bloody English people out o' their troubles."

"You mean you sympathized with the Germans during the war?"

"No," replied Marcus slowly, sucking a long black pipe in his mouth, "I don't sympathize with any Germans; but as 'tween them and the English, I sure was rooting for the Germans."

"And the French, don't you like the French? They surely have always been fair to your—to our people."

"Yes, but dey was in de same boat as de English, and I hates England; I hates her very guts. What has the English ever done to any place dey ever been in but leech, suck

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it dry, and leave it—same as dey do in de Islands where you and I come from. Why, mon, why do yo' t'inks you had to come to dis country? 'Cause de English squeezed it so dry you can't make a living there. Dat's de reason. You got more brains dan I, but you doan see it. Who has all de nice places down in de Islands? Ain't it de English and de Scotch and de Ir—no, not de Irish, dey's all in New York," he added, with a chuckle.

"And do you mean that, even after America went in, you and your association still felt the same way about it?"

"Sure—leastways, I doan know 'bout my 'sociation, but I know *I* does. I bets you," Marcus continued, his voice rising, "I bets you yo' doan know why dis country jumped in. No, 'co'se you *doan* know. You'se too English to know. Dey jumps in beco's Mr. Morgan and all de other rich people of dis country had dere money 'vested with de English; and if de war had o' been lost, if de Germans had o' win, dey'd have los' every blooming penny, dat's de reason. Dey went in after their money, and not a damn thing else!"

"Ah, you're talking a lot of poppycock. You're talking just like a lot of other ignorant people talked. The Germans would have been over here just as soon as they had licked the Allies, as sure as sure."

"Sure as sure, *nothin'!* That shows you doan know nothin' 'bout it. Dat was a lot of 'ganda dat dey put out in all de newspapers; but dey wasn't a bit of truf in it. Why, shucks, mon, if de Germans had o' come over to dis country I'd been de first man to get out dere, wadin' out into de ocean to meet 'em. I'd been o' out dere fightin' like a hell-cat, 'cause I'll tell yo' somethin', King, I *loves* dis country. She is de greatest country on de face of de globe, barrin' none. De white 'Merican has no use for us Niggers, neder for you nor for me, but he ain't pretendin' like de English. De Niggers in dis country to the white man is just like a lot of burrs de white man ketch in his clothes in a briar patch. Dey is wid him and he can't turn 'em loose, but he doan want 'em. He tell you so; he call you "Nigger,"

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but, all de same, you get a chance to make a living. Where de hell yo' t'ink I could live like I living in this man's country? They let me 'lone so long as I let dem 'lone and don' fool wid dere . . . womans," he ended, looking significantly at Jeremiah.

"And I suppose you are safe, then, for a very good reason."

"You go to hell, Jeremiah King. Yo' t'inks dey'd want yo', don't yo'? I bets yo' I could get 'em as fas' as you could —only," he added quietly, after a pause, "I doan want any of dem."

"Sour grapes!" muttered Jeremiah; but Marcus Cox let the remark pass.

Instead, he took a bundle of papers from his pocket and, handing them to Jeremiah, remarked: "These is de contrac's for de ship, and this is a copy o' de bill o' sale they'll give us when we makes de las' payment. Look over dem and see whether dey'll be all right."

"All right, Marcus, I'll go over them later. In the meantime, I have a few things on my mind that I'd like to talk to you about."

"Shoot, King," replied Marcus.

"I'll tell you. Marcus, I've been thinking over things, and, in the main, perhaps, they are all right; but there is such a lot of wasted effort connected with them. I don't see, for example, why you have to be injecting Africa into your plans. These people don't want to go to Africa any more than you or I do. What would they do there, anyway? From all appearances, you seem to be spending a lot of money and getting nowhere with it. You talk about the white man and what you don't want him to do to you. Take, for instance, your building on Seventh Avenue. I imagine your rent there is pretty steep. Whom are you paying that to but to some white man who owns it? Why don't you buy? Why . . ."

"You're wrong there, King, dead wrong," corrected

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Marcus Cox. "We *owns* dat buildin'; we done bought it and paid for it."

"You do?"

"Yes, sir, I tends to dat; and, 'sides, I knows all yo' is goin' to say. You'se goin' to ax me why we don't 'vest in some mo' real estate, some mo' buildings; why we doan have groc'ry stores and laundries; and why we doan make t'ings as de white man does and give our people 'ployment."

"Yes," agreed Jeremiah, "why don't you do these things instead of wasting their money—instead of spending money on a . . . foolish dream?" he ended flatly.

"You ain't the fust man who's thought of them things, King. I'se thought of 'em too, long time ago. I'se tried some of dem; but dey doan work. Fust thing you know, we 'stablished a lot of dose things and dese Niggers all bust up in a row. Dey t'inks everybody is gettin' rich 'cept demselves. No, yo' can't call a plover with a siren; and dese Niggers is all plovers. Dey's all like a flock of dose birds in de air, and you got to stan' behin' a bush an' whistle to dem soft-like. Dey ain't many dat wants to go to Africa. Dat's true! All de same, dey'd 'tribute a million dollars to buy a ship to go dere when dey wouldn't put up a cent for a groc'ry store; and once I gets a ship and gets she sailin' de high seas, I'll work from dere. I'll come clean from heaven plumb down to earth, as a manner o' speaking."

"I'm afraid you're a dreamer, Marcus. You are not practical. What good is a ship sailing the high seas going to do you and all these people?"

"You eh'nt see 'cause you eh'nt got any vision, King. What you lacks is 'magination, mon. Dat's why I'se where I is. I has plenty of 'magination. I sees more'n my ship sailing de high seas. I sees she down in Jamaica. She goes in to de harbor dere, de fust ship of de Black Star Line; all de Niggers from all ober come running down to de dock. Whose ship is dat? Dat's Marcus Cox's ship! Who is dis Marcus Cox? Eh'nt yo' hear de news? He's de man who is raisin'

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hell in de United States, rousin' up all de Niggers dere. Dat is one of dere ships. De same t'ing in Africa! De fust thing yo' knows, dey wants to know all 'bout it. All our agents has to do is to jine 'em up, takes dere money, build more ships, send 'em all over de world. De fust time de ship docks in London, de English is goin' to laugh. Dey's goin' to say: What de hell dose Niggers knows about runnin' ships? De next time de ship reaches dere, dey ain't goin' to laugh so much. And when de third ship gits dere, dey ain't goin' even to smile. Dey is goin' to sit up and take notice. De same wid all de white people in de oder countries. Meantime, all de Niggers in de world is going to be wid us, and we is goin' to have plenty of money—for everything," he ended.

"And what about America? How are Americans going to feel about your ship project?"

"Oh dey'll loll along de dock and kid us 'long and say to demselves—tol'rant-like—let de Niggers amuse demselves. They is jes' playin' at ownin' ships. Then when dey sees we means bus'ness, dey'll say: See, dose is *our* Niggers; we trains 'em to do these things. Jes' like one time I was in a cab'ret in Paris, and dere was two black boys in dere, and man! you should a-hear those babies sing. A 'Merican man says to de white woman wid 'im: 'Dose is 'Merican Niggahs. Great, ehn't dey? We gives 'em de chance to do dose things in New York.' Pretty soon after they stops singing', a dance starts up. Den comes one of dese black boys with a white woman on de dance floor. Man, she was a peach—a Roosian duchess or princess or some kin' a thing like dat. But she was pretty 'nough to be anything. Dis black boy took hold a she and starts one real black-bottom wid she on de floor, and man; de white man from New York get up from de table as if something suddenly sting 'im and he says, loudlikes, so as everybody could hear: 'Come on! leh's get out a here. De idea of lettin' a Nigger man dance wid a white woman. Dey oughta be lynched.' "

"What happened then?"

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"Not a damn thing. De dance jes' goes on."

"Well, the dance always has to go on, doesn't it, Marcus?"

"I 'specks it does, King."

"You know something, Marcus?"

"What?"

"Your language is much more picturesque than real English. For instance, 'I 'specks it does' is much more euphonious than 'I expect it does.' There's only one reason why I use the unadulterated kind."

"What's dat reason?"

"Any time I copy anything that the white man does, I aim to do it as well as he does; otherwise, I think I prefer your pigeon English."

"Mon, I disagrees wid you. Ef I knows any oder kind o' tongue I wouldn't talk English. I hates dere very guts! I only uses such parts of dere language as I has to."

The bowl of his pipe was clutched in one hand, and he was waving it first one way and then another, puncturing the air with its stem. A small wisp of smoke, and the smell of burning arose from beneath his chair.

"Look out, Marcus, you're burning the carpet!"

Marcus looked down.

"Damn the carpet! Dere's plenty more where dat come from. As I was telling you—you know, King," he broke off, looking at Jeremiah reprovingly, "you has de damnedest way of misconcertin' me! I bet's yo' jest done dat to trow me off de track. You thinks all my talk is so much puffycocks; but I tells you, King, I'se been readin' a lot of hist'ry lately, and—say! I bets yo' doan know where de word 'king' comes from. I doan mean your name—dat doan 'mount to a damn —but de word 'king,' signifyin' ruler. It come from a old Latin, no, a ole German word named 'Konig'; dat means great, mighty, and dat's because in de ole days de Latins and other peoples use to choose dere rulers because dey was great men, great fighters. Wasn't like in dese politician days when any East Side policeman is likely to be President

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of de United States or of Russia. When I gets my ships running all over de world, maybe de people in Haiti or San Domingo or Liberia done invites me to rule 'em."

"Well, suppose you were President of Liberia, you would be under the wing of Great Britain. If you were President of Haiti, you'd be under the wing of the United States. You'd be only a figurehead in any event."

"I would, eh? Yo' t'inks so? I'd chase de blasted English out o' Liberia befo' you could say Jack Robinson; and in Haiti I'd teach de United States to respect me."

"Well, you'd have to borrow money, and they wouldn't lend you unless—"

"Dat's jest it, King. I wouldn't borrow dere damn money. We'd collect money of our own. Didn't I tells you de oder night dat money, *money* is de great t'ing? Doan you 'members I tells yo' so?"

"Sure you did, and that's just the reason I'm talking about all this waste of money around you. When you had your kingdom, then what would you do with it? Where would your subjects get the money to give you if you didn't establish things and industries from which to earn it—stores and shops and mills, and schools and banks, and all the things that God Almighty put people into the world for?"

"Dat's true and it ain't true. I ain't educated like you, but dere is something in me dat tells when t'ings is right and when dey ehn't. Just like a woman's 'tuition. Dere is many a place an' time when yo' has got to ask yo' heart and not yo' head. Dis practical worl', as yo' calls it, is all head. Look at de way dey treats us Niggers—all dey need is a li'l heart stuff."

"Not on your life!" returned Jeremiah. "The Negro should not ask for sympathy—that's heart stuff. You think Abraham Lincoln aimed to abolish slavery because he was thinking altogether of the Negro. No, sir! His big brain realized that slavery was more pernicious to white America than to black America. He knew that the United States

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couldn't get anywhere in the march forward with the cancer of slavery in its midst. He used his head, and he visioned a great fact. It simply happened that reason in that case coincided with the dictates of his human heart. Nature is so constituted that, when the heart tells you anything is right, it generally turns out right according to reason. You just test it and see. Half the time, when a man is cruel, he's just being unreasonable, that's all."

"You gets my head dizzy wid your arguefying. Yo' tells me one t'ing is wrong, and den yo' turns 'round and proves she's right as hell. If I was a lawyer man like you I could disputes you; but yo' has it all yo' own way. All de same I acts on my instinks. When I meets yo' dat night in front of de Hall, my instinks tell me suddenly: 'Dat's de man yo've been lookin' foh, Cox,' and straightaways I angles for yo'. Yo' is goin' to do me good, and yo' is goin' to do yo'self good—if yo' lets yo' li'l heart move yo' sometimes."

"But after all, Marcus, isn't this the place for us to start? You know the first thing a good general does is to cement his front-line trenches. And New York—Harlem—is the place for you to begin. We could use a little money here to great advantage, and it would be good practice, anyhow. Let us raise all the money we can, but let us spend it well, spend it for practical things that will pay dividends and make for real prosperity."

"For instant?" prodded Marcus.

"Well, there are a lot of Negroes in Harlem. Even your own members would be sufficient. You could establish some co-operative shops, stores, and businesses of various kinds. You might encourage thrift by forming a bank. You might erect a few apartment houses and give them living space at a low rate of profit, say, about four per cent, using their own money. You could invest their money in other operations which would give them employment of a superior kind even if, in the beginning, you had to hire a few whites to teach them. But what is needed most of all is to organize them—organize them industrially, economically, politically

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and every other way; teach them that, as Negroes, their only salvation is to band together for every purpose in the world, solidly, substantially, and not chasing a visionary fool thing."

"Maybe you is right, King. Dat's what I wants from you —ideas, man, ideas! Does yo' thinks you can look into dese things?"

"I think so, and," he continued, "there is one thing that should be done immediately. You should establish a legal department to protect all your members. If they are entitled to things within the laws of the country, and they themselves are orderly and law-abiding, you ought to fight for those things. It's all right to talk about Africa, but it's a long time before you transplant them; and, in the meantime, we are all in America. It's rot to talk about traveling along the lines of least resistance."

"Say, King, yo' is talkin' like a real man now. You musta had some ginger spring into yo'. But what yo' sayin' dere 'bout a legal department is jes' what de A.C.S. does.

"Who are they, Marcus? Never heard of them before."

"Dey calls demselves de 'Sociation of Colored Strivers; but I calls dem de 'Sociation for *Certain* Strivers, because dey's only two or three that runs de whole show and draws down most o' de money. Dey's jes' like a bunch o' undertakers; dey thrives on lynchings. One fellah, he talks about lynchings; de other fellah, he writes about 'em; and dey's one little mousey-faced fellah who travels all over de country smellin' out de lynchings. Every time dere is a lynching dey raises some money; den dey spends dat, see? And dey sits by and waits till another Nigger is burned in Alabama or Texas, or wherever dey burns us people."

"Is that the bunch who publishes the newspaper called the *Crucible*?"

"De same. Dat's run by de fellah that I showed you at Proudfoot's party dat night, de one who was standin' around in a corner like a billy goat hunchin' heself up on a rock on a rainy day. I used to reads dat paper; but man, it gives me de blues, so I stops! It 'minds you of a dawg sit-

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ting out in a field at night and bawling up at de moon. It doan get nowhere—just bawl and bawl like a little puppy all de time."

"Say, Marcus, you know the thing that has made more for Negro progress in the United States than anything else?"

Marcus looked questioningly at Jeremiah.

"The institution of Jim-Crowism. I am convinced that driving the Negro back upon himself and his own resources is the best thing in the world for the Negro as a race."

Marcus Cox stared his surprise. "My God!" he finally blurted out. "Look who's here! When did you get that idea?"

"I've been pondering things over, and I've come to that conclusion. Let me tell you of an experience I had in Atlantic City."

"Yo' means de time dey turns you down in dat res'trant?"

Jeremiah nodded. "You heard all about it, did you?"

"Yes, Lido tells me and Mandy about it, and I nearly lafs myself to death; but Mandy was mad as hell."

"And what did Lido think about it?"

"She? Oh, she says she gets even wid dem jes' de same. She goes back next evening wid Owen Murphy who was down dere, and she gets her lobsters jes' de same."

"Do you mean to say that she went back there to that restaurant with a white man?"

"Sure. Why not? Ef she *can* do it; and she *did*. De only reason you is sore is dat you di'nt have de chance to do it yo'self. Yo' wouldn't think it 'mounted to anything if it was me who was chased out. You'd say, 'Serves yo' right'; but jes' because it was yo'self, yo' ego is disgusted," and he chuckled mockingly.

Jeremiah said nothing more. He felt very much shocked, outraged. The affair in the restaurant had assumed momentous proportions to him. It was a very sore spot in his heart. And to think that Lido, his companion, his friend, should have returned to that restaurant after their discomfiture and dined with Owen Murphy, a white man!

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"Why doan you sues 'em and collec' damages?" Marcus questioned. "Dere's a law 'gainst dat kind o' thing, yo' knows. Go tell it to de 'Sociation for Certain Strivers," he again mocked.

Jeremiah stared at Marcus without answering. For the moment, he forget all about Marcus' presence. He was still thinking of Lido Jones and her disloyalty to him, as he viewed it.

"Yes, yo' should sue dem," repeated Marcus.

"Sue, hell!" retorted Jeremiah irritably. "What good would that do? Public sentiment is with the restaurant people. That's not the answer to the problem."

"What is de answer, den?"

"The answer is power, fitness, money, wealth. I'll bet if Negro capital existed which could go alongside that man's place and establish a restaurant of the same kind which would serve *all* comers, that man would soon be glad to serve colored people; and wherever that kind of thing happened, do the same thing until white people in business realized that Negroes had ability, power, a punch! Equality is not an abstraction merely to be mouthed. It's a fact to be accomplished, and not by begging on the part of Negroes of the white people to be permitted to have a place in the sun, but by securing it through sheer force of their own ability and power."

"Say, boy, I jes' loves to hear you talk dat way. Yo' musta eat some o' dose Nigger peppers from 'Badoes lately. What else has yo' got on yo' ches'?"

Jeremiah paused for a moment, then remarked: "You know something, Marcus?"

"No, what's dat?"

"Why can't we start a newspaper?"

"A what?"

"A newspaper, a weekly, maybe bi-weekly."

Marcus got up from his chair, walked over to the window, and stood looking out there for an instant; then turning, came eagerly towards Jeremiah.

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"Say, boy, you has an idea, all right. Dat's a spliffin' one. By golly! Why eh'nt I thinks of dat long ago? A real newspaper, and me all ober dē front page! Marcus Cox does dis. De High Commander does dat. De President General does de oder thing. Mon, you done earn all de salary I'se ever goin' to pay you," and he placed his arm admiringly on Jeremiah's shoulders.

"Well, that wasn't exactly my idea, having one person on the front page. My idea was a more serious—"

"When does we start, boy?"

"Well, we might go downtown and call upon some printers and see what terms we can make for printing."

"No, we ain't goin' to call on nobody. We'se goin' to print it right on de premises, down in de basement wid our own machinery. We'll print our own newspaper, den nobody kin shet us down." And, after a pause, as he gazed dreamily out over Edgecombe Park, "Say, King—"

"What is it, Marcus?"

"We two is going to knock hell out de world yet!"

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CHAPTER XIV

MOST PEOPLE have dreams. Some realize their dreams. Others, never. Yet, when the heart is young, there is consummate pleasure in mere dreaming which drifts on undisturbed until, sooner or later, comes a day when the dream bubble is punctured and the rainbow colors drift away.

For upwards of two years prior to the birth of Lido Jones, beautiful dreams had come to her mother Amanda. Daughter of a Creole cocoa-planter in the Island of Trinidad, she had secretly been courted by, and had finally eloped with and married, the son of an adjoining landowner, an Englishman who had converted the sugar lands nearby into a cocoa plantation. In due course, the secret was out, and consternation and dismay reigned in the camps of both families. Philip Boissere, Amanda's father, a proud, haughty Creole of French extraction, tracing his lineage from the time when man's memory ranneth not to the contrary in the Island of Trinidad, would have none of Maurice Fitz-Johns, the son of his "white-livered" English neighbor, as he described him. On the other hand, Hugh Fitz-Johns, Maurice's father, would have none of Amanda Boissere, this dark-skinned girl, with Negro, Indian, and other strains of outlandish blood flowing in her veins. Thus it came to pass that these two unrelenting fathers threw their respective offspring into the arms of each other, and each was told that never more, united, should they darken the domestic portals.

The Island of Trinidad was much too small for them. The families were prominent in their respective groups,

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and they would not be accepted in the circles of the one nor of the other. Young, passionate, and optimistic, neither cared to live without the other; and so, they went forth.

What other haven would these determined young persons turn towards than America, the Mecca of all immigrant hopes? Amanda was only eighteen, soon to become a mother, and Maurice was just twenty-one.

Fortunately, Amanda's mother, in dying, had left her some five thousand dollars; demanding this from her father, she and Maurice set sail for the United States. Unfortunately, they landed in Galveston, Texas. There Lido was born. Drifting at short intervals from city to city in the South, they finally found themselves in New Orleans; but, wherever they wandered, Maurice, with his dark-skinned wife and child, found himself out of luck. Not that he wasn't capable and did not make gallant efforts; but in the brief course of two years, his courage wore thin and, eventually, one morning Amanda came downstairs in the little ramshackle house they occupied in the Negro quarter of New Orleans to find a note pinned to the dining-room table stating that he, her husband, could stand it no longer and had departed.

Amanda Jones never ceased to love and to despise Maurice Fitz-Johns. She changed her name to plain Jones and came to New York. Lido, her little daughter, arose as the single new bubble filled with rainbow tints around which her dreams were recreated.

Mother and daughter struggled in New York with varying fortune. One day, some three years prior to Jeremiah's advent to New York, Amanda Jones met Ebeneezer Cole, Marcus Cox's chauffeur, on Lenox Avenue. Ebeneezer Cole had been one of her father's plantation laborers back in Trinidad. Overjoyed at meeting the daughter of his late master, he held her talking on the street for upwards of a half-hour. With the doglike loyalty of all his tribe, Ebeneezer dropped in occasionally on Madam Jones and her daughter, bringing little gifts of candy and flowers and,

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whenever he could manage it, taking them out for an airing in Marcus' car. Eventually, when Marcus Cox acquired his fine residence and was in need of someone to supervise his establishment, through Ebeneezer's procurement Marcus and Amanda Jones came to terms and she became housekeeper for the High Commander of the Universal Negro Movement of the United States and of the world. Her salary was substantial and so was Lido's. Whatever of spiritual discomfort there was in the situation she patiently bore, for, after all, New York—and especially Harlem—was a mighty complex place and one could afford to ignore appearances.

She was of inestimable help to Marcus Cox. There were times in the changing fortunes of his organization when, hard pressed by rivals who sought to unseat him, Marcus Cox had needed sound, practical advice. He found in Amanda Jones a shrewd feminine intuition which stood him in good stead. Amanda had, at times, been the power behind the throne. She fought not alone for herself, but for the bread-and-butter and existence of herself and her daughter. She watched over her broodingly, covetously, jealously, even as the heavens brood over the earth. Came a day, about the time when Jeremiah projected himself into the picture, when the Universal Negro Movement was at high tide, reaching out and expanding further and further into what promised to be a substantial affair. Just where it was tending, no one of its molders seemed sure, but there was movement and activity just the same.

Lido had but recently returned from Atlantic City. Marcus Cox was rusticating at his bungalow in the woods overlooking the Jersey Highlands; and Jeremiah had just departed after dining with Lido and her mother that evening. Mother and daughter were in a little sitting-room on the second floor of Marcus Cox's house, into which their respective adjoining bedrooms opened. Lido lay at length on a small chaise longue, puffing at a cigarette. Amanda Jones had never become accustomed to her daughter's smok-

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ing, but she was a wise, patient mother and deemed it best to hold a relaxed rein on this young filly. She realized that Harlem was by no means a cloister, and an attempt to make it so for her child might prove disastrous. Accordingly, she always sought to maintain very comradely relations with Lido; and, when differing with her, she differed as one equal with another. Amanda now sat in an easy chair alongside her daughter. The women bore a striking resemblance.

Amanda Jones was still handsome. Of a complexion more bronze in color than Lido's, she had the same glowing black eyes and nicely molded brow and features as her daughter. There was very little to suggest the Negro in either, and yet they were both obviously persons of color.

"I don't see why you don't marry Mr. Cox and be done with it," Lido was saying to her mother.

Amanda Jones looked intently at her daughter. "I'll never marry a black man on this side of Jordan, Lido."

"I suppose you are going to wait until another one like Father comes along."

Lido regretted immediately this remark. Her mother's eyes clouded in a passionate mist. "I don't want you ever to say anything like that to me . . . ever again! You hear me, child?"

"I'm sorry, Mother, I didn't mean to say that; but I don't see the difference between working here as you do and marrying Mr. Cox. Everybody thinks you *ought* to be married to him, anyhow; and, after all, when a man can give you as much as Mr. Cox can, I don't see what difference his color makes."

"Do you think I'm worrying about what people say, especially these Nigger women in Harlem? I suppose by people you mean Mrs. Castanet, Gertie Davis, Nina Langford, and that truck with their gin parties and pajama rackets that I hate to see you mixing with. Why, the whole bunch of them ain't one generation removed from the white people's kitchens. It takes more than money to make people, daughter; it takes blood, good blood. As far as what

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Marcus can give us is concerned, I am not crippled yet. I can still work for myself. I don't want anything but what I work for from him or anybody else."

"But. Mother, you talk about blood. Aren't we all colored people just the same?"

"Sure we are all colored people. I'm not claiming to be anything else. Fact is, I'd just as soon be what I am as anything else in the world. I'd certainly rather be your mother than your father, as far as blood is concerned; but I'm talking about class, child, class!"

"Well, I think there are plenty of nice people around, only you never go out anywhere, Mother. You sit back in this old house and mope, mope all the time. If you can't get what you are looking for, why not do the next best thing?"

"What's that? Marry Marcus, eh? I'd just as soon marry Ebeneezer. He and Marcus are just the same, no difference, only one's got a little more push than the other. But just imagine yourself tied to people like that for a lifetime, to be rubbing up against them; to have to do their bidding; to have to . . . succumb to them," she ended, not finding an apter word. "Faugh! The bare thought gives me the willies."

"Well, say, Mother! Tell me something. Of course, we are both in the same boat, and this isn't meant as criticism; we're only talking between us, understand?"

Her mother nodded.

"You talk about standards. Tell me, just what do we look like in our present position?"

"You mean working for Marcus Cox and his bunch of Negroes? I suppose, Lido, you think—and everybody else would do the same—that if Marcus Cox and his people were a bunch of white crazy people wanting to return to Jerusalem or Siberia or some other such place, it would be all right for us to be working for them just as we are; but just because they are black Niggers, it is different. I tell you, I

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ain't going to marry Marcus or any other black man; but I'm rooting for him just the same."

"I swear, Mother, I can't see it your way. You're just as inconsistent as you can be," all in the same breath.

"Well, I tell you, daughter, maybe I was a bit emphatic when I talked about black men. What I mean is, I couldn't stand a black man with thick lips and broad, flat face, and the kind of eyes that, when they look at you, you begin to think of a great big monster holding out his claws. It gives me the creeps to think of it. That isn't saying that there may not be some black men in the world whom I might not get crazy about. I certainly haven't seen any of them yet, though."

"Like Othello the Moor, for instance, eh?" smiled Lido.

"No, that would be your kind, child. You're slim and frail, just like Desdemona. I'm older and heavier. I'd more like to be choosing some crazy poet or artist or such like whom I'd have to take care of, but who'd be making love to me forever and forever."

"Well, well, Mother, I guess you didn't give me much of your romanticism. I guess I'm more practical—like Father," she continued musingly.

"No, God forbid! He—he's a straddler, neither fish nor fowl. I tell you, Lido, if you ever get a man who loves you, stick to him—stick to him," she repeated, "until hell freezes over. If you find you don't love him or he doesn't love you, quit—quick—like you'd drop a hot cake, and you don't want anything that he has. I tell you, child, that's one satisfaction I've had in this world. I've never taken a dime from your father, and I've had the biggest thrill in the world knowing that whatever you and I are, we did it ourselves."

"You mean yourself, Mother, dear," Lido corrected, leaning over and stroking her mother's cheek. "I'm afraid, though, we'll have to make the world over for you."

"No, the world doesn't have to be made over for me. I know what I am talking about, and you know too. The

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trouble with you is that you're so crazy about what you think is a nice time, dances and parties and such things, that you are not particular—so long as a man can spend a little money in showing you those times; but I—well, those things don't mean a fig to me."

"What's the matter with George Webb, Mother? He's a lawyer and doing mighty well, everybody says. And there's Dr. Proudfoot. He has plenty of money—made it all himself too. He was the first colored interne in any of the New York hospitals; and there is Obadiah Jackson, our lawyer. They are all nice men and will make our girls nice husbands."

"I'd rather see you dead than married to any of those Niggers," replied her mother vehemently. "You know what I meant by blood just now? I don't mean white blood or black blood. I don't mean color. There was your poor father; he was a white man, but he wasn't thorough. He was a *quitter!* All these men that you are talking about, they are just the same. The trouble with them is that they are not thorough; they just don't happen to be. I think the best place for all these people that you're talking about is the wilds of Africa, where somebody could go and train them for about fifty years and then let 'em loose."

"I suppose that's where Mr. Cox gets all his notions about Africa from, eh, Mother?" suggested Lido sarcastically.

"Whether you think so or not, it wouldn't be a bad idea," replied her mother.

"And what about Mr. King?"

Amanda Jones gave her daughter a quick glance. Lido had taken a deeper pull from her cigarette than usual, and was now exhaling it luxuriously through her arched, pouting lips.

"I don't know about him," replied her mother contemplatively. "He's a strange person, awfully cynical. You never can tell when he's laughing at or with you."

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"I find him very entertaining—has quite a sense of humor."

"Marcus tells me he has a wife in the West Indies," ventured her mother after a pause.

"Is that so? Hadn't heard about it. Tell me some more about him."

Lido's voice was well controlled, but as her mother again searched her daughter's features, she divined a slight blanching of the skin.

"Well, that's what divorce courts are for!" her mother remarked after a pause, as if answering a question.

"What in the world are you talking about, Mother? What made you say that?"

"Oh, nothing," and, after a pause, very wistfully: "Daughter, I wish you wouldn't run around so much with that white fellow, Owen Murphy."

"You see, Mother, there are lots of places that I can go to with Murphy that I couldn't go to with many of our young men around here; and, after all, I don't see why I shouldn't enjoy those places in the way I can."

"Yes, daughter, but there comes a time when one has to pay for all one gets; and in a case of this kind it's always the man's price that a girl has to pay. You understand, dear?"

"All right, Mother, I promise I'll take care of myself."

The door bell rang, once, twice, thrice, in quick succession. They both sat up alert. "Who can that be?" questioned Amanda Jones.

They heard Ebeneezer's shambling footsteps below and then the swinging open of the door. Soon Ebeneezer himself was coming upstairs.

"Gen'man to see you, Miss Jones."

"Me?" questioned Lido.

"No, de Madam."

"To see me?" queried Mrs. Jones in surprise. "Are you sure?"

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"Yes'm."

"Did he give any name? What's he look like?"

"No ma'm, no name. He's a white gen'man."

Amanda Jones turned to her daughter. "Come on down with me and let's see who the visitor is," and they descended the stairs together.

There was a short hallway leading from the entrance vestibule directly into a foyer in Marcus Cox's house. Descending the stairs from the upper rooms, one could look directly into this hallway. As Amanda Jones and her daughter reached the foot of the stairway, a voice came out of the dimness:

"Manda!"

Mrs. Jones' form stiffened instantaneously, and her hand clutched at her daughter's arm. A white man, of medium height, spare of figure, with finely cut features and steely blue eyes, came out of the shadow.

"Maurice!" Lido's mother gasped, and then automatically drew herself up and stood in her tracks. "What do you want here?" she added in a cold, hard voice.

"I came to see you," he answered, recoiling a little and twirling the straw hat in his hand. "Aren't you glad to see me again?"

"No, I hoped never to set eyes on you again—in this world," she ended passionately.

"My God! and I've travelled all the way from California to find you. Who is this?" approaching Lido. "Is this . . . our . . . little . . . daughter?"

He was standing before Lido, had taken her chin in his hands, and was gazing down curiously into her face. "I am Maurice Fitz-Johns, your father, child."

He leaned downward and kissed her upturned lips. Lido's arms found themselves reaching up towards her father's neck. A heavy mist enveloped her eyes.

Maurice Fitz-Johns turned towards his wife: "I came to take you and my daughter back with me. Things are dif-

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ferent out West, and I've finally made some money."

"Take us back with you?" almost shouted Amanda Jones. "Take us back with you?" she repeated. "Like hell you will! Why, if you were the only living man on the earth, I wouldn't trot two steps with you. If every hair on your head was a diamond, if you had all the wealth of the whole world, I wouldn't be seen in your company. I . . . I . . . I . . ." she grasped for words.

"Yes," he interjected, "I hear you are living with a Nigger man."

She looked with livid, bulging eyes at him. Her mood changed instantaneously. She grew grimly calm. Her voice acquired a cold, metallic quality. It had heretofore been almost hysterical.

"Yes," she said, "I *am* living with a Nigger man. That is my kind. You couldn't stand it because you were married to a Nigger woman. I propose to keep on living with him and—"

"Oh, Mother," gasped her daughter. "How can you say such things? Don't believe her, Father; there isn't—"

Mrs. Jones stayed her daughter's voice with a raised hand, and repeated: "I propose to keep on living with him, and I want you to get out of this house as quickly as God will let you and never let me see your face again. You deserted me; you deserted your infant child because you didn't have any guts. You deserted us because you were a white man and because we were Niggers. Now, go to your kind and stay with 'em, you dirty hound!"

Lido was now softly sobbing. "Oh, Mother, Mother!" and she held her father's hand.

A figure appeared in the doorway. Unseen, unheard, unnoticed, he had opened the door and was now standing there with a perplexed look on his face. Marcus Cox!

Maurice Fitz-Johns sensed a presence behind and turned. Coolly, he surveyed Cox from head to foot. Then he turned towards his wife with a jerk of the head: "Is this the Nigger?"

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Marcus Cox's mouth opened and his eyes glared. Was this man actually referring to him? He rushed forward with raised fists.

"Oh, please, Father! Please, Mr. Cox!" and, tugging at her father's arms. Lido led him through the open door and down the steps. She forgot that she had no hat; she forgot that only a pair of thin bedroom slippers were on her feet; but out to Seventh Avenue, down that Avenue to 135th Street, and then eastward she walked hand in hand with him to the subway station, unheedful of her friends who chirped to her, unheedful of the Negroes who stopped to stare at her, arm in arm, with this white man.

At the subway station, her father said: "Come, go with me, child."

"Where?"

"California."

"I'd sooner die than leave Mother."

At length he stooped to kiss her. Reaching down into his pocket he drew a thick roll of bills and pressed them into her hands.

"No," she sobbed, "I don't need them."

"Yes, take 'em—I *want* you to have them. Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," she whispered. "Maybe sometime I'll come to see—" and he rushed for a closing subway door.

Back in Marcus Cox's house, Lido's mother found her way into the dining-room and sank down upon a chair. Her elbow resting on the table, her chin cupped in one hand, she sat as if frozen. Marcus Cox occupied a chair across the table. He, too, was silent for many minutes.

"I thought you say he's dead," he remarked finally.

"He is—to me," she replied.

"You know I think I goes out there and kill dat white man."

She raised her head and looked at him. "What good would that do you, Marcus?"

"I think you still loves that man. If it wasn't for him

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you could learn to lub me. I think yo' would marry me, Mandy."

Amanda Jones continued to gaze at Marcus. Indeed, as it seemed to him, she was not gazing at, but through and past him, to some distant object beyond. Finally, she replied: "You're kidding yourself, Marcus. I wouldn't marry you or any living man in the world."

"You means that?"

His voice, usually sharp and rasping, was now almost plaintive.

"Yes," she nodded.

Marcus gazed long and searchingly at Amanda; then, rising abruptly, gathered his hat and cane.

A moment later in the outer hall—it seemed remote and far, far away—a door slammed heavily, and the house vibrated throughout its empty depths as from some lamentable assault.

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CHAPTER XV

HAPPY THE man without a background, who has nothing in his ancestry but—missing links. The past has no frowning ghosts to point with accusing finger; and the future must, therefore, of necessity, be an open sea. If failure overtakes him, he can but slink back into the obscurity from which he came; and if success crowns his efforts, he stands like a monumental figure, a rock-ribbed oak, the first of his line to establish a name and status for posterity.

In this respect most black Negroes are fortunate souls. In this respect, also, even light-skinned colored folk are equally fortunate, for the tincture of proud white ancestry which the Fates at times mete out to them is brought, for the most part, with such furtive secretiveness and from such a hushed liaison that one is often more prone to have it covered by the darkness of silence than to boast about it.

Marcus Cox was a proud, disdainful black man. Groping back into the past for a noble Ham Tree on which to hang his lineage, he found not even a leaf nor a twig. Had he had the good fortune to have been born in distant Africa, he might have manufactured for himself a royal heritage, no matter how primitive, how far removed from civilized sources; but, coming as he had from the Island of Jamaica, where for hundreds of years all imposing black lineages had been lost, he preferred to hug to his soul the conviction that it was supreme greatness in itself to have emerged from such a huge blankness.

Marcus had no memory even of a mother, much less

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of a father. Mothers, all the world over, are static, definite persons—but fathers? Well, from the day Father Adam denied responsibility to God for what had happened in the Garden of Eden, fathers have ever been somewhat illusive figures.

No beatific black female eyes, with blue-white irises, had ever gazed down lovingly into his infant cradle. No crooning black voice had ever lulled him to sleep. He had just found himself living as a boy, around the age of thirteen or fourteen, in the family and household of the Reverend Ezekiel King, Jeremiah's father, and, thereafter, he had lived as life came to him.

Jeremiah was not fully cognizant of it, but Marcus loved him, loved him even as a David loveth a Jonathan. To Marcus, Jeremiah, the son of the Ezekiel King who had harbored him in his childhood, represented the only link which connected him with the origin of his life. To his atavistic soul, Jeremiah was the sole surviving chieftain of the clan—*his* clan, *his* tribe. When they had met under the arc light in front of Liberty Hall many months ago, his heart had leaped forward to welcome the representative of the chief of his tribe. The only thing he later told himself necessary was to impress upon this clan brother was the fact that, in this new land in which they both found themselves, he, Marcus, also possessed chieftain qualities. They two, Jeremiah by virtue of birth, he, Marcus, by virtue of character, were the leaders of all the other members of the tribe in the world. Of blood relationship, he knew nothing; unknown heritage mattered not.

"I grow'd up jes' like a little tree from de earth," he would whisper to himself in times of stress, "but, by cripes! I'se goin' to make 'em all set up and take notice." And this was the spur that goaded him onwards, nothing to lose but—obscurity; everything to gain, perhaps an African kingdom, even if, failing to achieve the substance, he woke up some day to find the shadow erected within his black soul.

Amanda Jones, on the other hand, was also a proud,

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disdainful Negro woman—Negro by all the rules of the game, but not so accepted by her. To herself, she was a Creole, if you please. There was more than a difference in terminology. There was a difference in spirit derived from ancestry. Unlike Marcus, the pride that raged in her heart sprang not from the fact that no one could point an accusing finger to the blank void which lay behind, but by reason of the tremendous foliage which had bloomed about the tree of her pedigree. She was a Boissere! When the first neck of land of the Island of Trinidad had arisen from its watery sources, there had been a Boissere—no matter his race, color or condition; white man, black man, beggar man, thief—all the same when touched by the transforming rays of antiquity —perched on its topmost eminence; and the Boissere family ever since that day had carried on as only the Boisseres could. Their men had been proud, lofty, hot-tempered souls, owners of broad lands, spirited horses, famous gamecocks, wastrels at times, but universally gay, proud and lofty. Their women were equally famed for their beauty and for their spirit. No man, throughout the years, in Trinidad or in any of the numerous other islands for hundreds of miles around, who would not have accounted it a prize to have won the hand and heart of a Boissere woman.

One of the proud boasts of the family, one that it hugged to its pedigreed heart with a fierce joy, was that not for many, many generations had its blood—whatever its indeterminate character—been polluted by a black man or a white man. Amanda had become the exception. Urged on by young, hot love and by a father lacking in diplomacy, she had broken the family faith. Many and many an hour since then had she sat in sackcloth and ashes. She still loved her husband. She had to take her medicine; but, with the help of all the blood that ran in her Boissere veins, she would never betray the family faith again. No, she would not succumb to black Marcus Cox.

Marcus Cox realized this. Back in the West Indies, no matter what other good fortune Fate might have brought

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to him, it would have never yielded him the acquaintance of an Amanda Boissere, much less her soul and body in the holy bonds of matrimony. Still he had hoped, because, in this new land of the free and the brave where people and races were hurled together in indiscriminate mixtures and alliances, one never could tell. Anything was possible; and so, that indomitable spirit which had apparently come to him from the unknown wild things of Nature, urged him to hope and . . . to persist. When, however, Amanda Jones had cooly looked him over in the dining-room of his house a few minutes back and had said to him: "You're kidding yourself, Marcus," he had recognized a finality, a despairing finality, in her voice.

As he slammed the door and went down the steps, Marcus saw his Lincoln limousine still drawn up alongside the curb. Ebeneezer, with one foot on the running board, was chatting with a friend. Having arrived from Marcus' New Jersey bungalow just a short time before, he had concluded that he was home for the night.

"Leh's go, Eb," shouted his chief.

"Is yo' goin' back tonight?" inquired Ebeneezer in surprise.

"Sure! just drops in to see how things runnin'. Too hot in de city, anyhow. Me for de bungalow where de cool breezes blow. Say, Eb, dat's poetry I'se talkin'. Did yo' ketch it? Me for de bungalow where de cool breezes blow," he repeated and chuckled, apparently in high good humor with himself.

Ebeneezer, however, thought he divined an unnatural gaiety in the manner of his chief. Ebeneezer was a plain, simple soul. His master's moods and emotions were not his province. He knew only how to obey; and so, in a moment, he ceased to wonder what urge was driving his High Commander back to his bungalow in the Jersey Highlands. He leaped into the driver's seat, and the car roared into second speed.

As they neared Seventh Avenue, Marcus leaned over and

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shouted into Ebeneezer's ear: "Leh's go and get Mr. King; and we's three all goes down together."

They found Jeremiah delighted to make the trip, and soon the car was speeding south towards lower New York and Staten Island.

"Open 'er up! No cops to bother us at dis hour," Marcus directed as they crossed the ferry and approached the Hylan Boulevard. Then, turning to Jeremiah: "What's de matter with you? You hasn't said half-dozen words tonight. You'se as silent as a drownded rat. What yo' say we has a drink?"

As a matter of fact, the silence was no fault of Jeremiah's. In the early part of their journey down through the city, Marcus had been the one who seemed disinclined to talk. Two or three attempts at conversation on Jeremiah's part had been met with short grunts, and so Jeremiah had left Marcus to the thoughts which possessed him as he slumped back in his corner of the car. Marcus' invitation to drink was very welcome to Jeremiah.

"That's the first idea you've had all night," he rejoined, "I think we both need it."

Yes, Marcus *did* need a drink. Thinking of Amanda Jones was the one thing in the world which made him blue; and he needed optimism, a perpetual driving cheer if he were to carry on in the struggle to which he had committed himself.

Ebeneezer chose a level spot alongside the roadway and brought the car to a halt. Soon he busied himself in the recesses of a compartment near the driving wheel and brought forth a bottle of whiskey, another of ginger ale, and a thermos container filled with ice cubes.

"Go on, Eb, pour yo'self a drink and set down. We's all have a good time," invited Marcus after he and Jeremiah had clinked glasses.

They sipped their drinks in silence. Behind them a grass-grown pasture; in front a rolling field spotted with small trees and an undergrowth of stray bushes, from which

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gleamed the occasional flare of a firefly; above them, the stars.

Marcus' voice broke the silence. Its quality had changed from that of a few moments ago. He had evidently recovered his High Commander's spirits.

"Dis is a gor'jus night, ehn't it, King? Look at de stars."

"Yes, one forgets the stars in New York. Too many electric lights, I suppose."

"I never fergets dem, King. Sometimes I lies out on my verandah in de woods and I plays dat each star I see is a so'jer—a so'jer in my army; and I drills dem and orders dem aroun'. I thinks we'se marching on de moon. We'se got to take her—she's de enemy, see? And I forms my star—so'jers fust one way and den de udder so's we attacks unawares, like all de great generals does. We creeps up gradual-like and den we makes one gran' rush, and bing! we knocks her ober. Say, King, where de hell you t'inks de moon go ef we knocks her over?"

"Search me, Marcus, you're doing the knocking."

"Well, what de debil does we care so long's we knocks her over."

A loud roaring noise came to them from the distance behind; and, heralded by the steady gleam of a single headlight, a motorcycle flashed by, slowed down a couple of hundred yards ahead, swerved around and came back to stop on the opposite side of the roadway. The policeman shut off his motor, propped his cycle on its supports, and approached.

"What you fellows doing here?"

Silence a moment, then Marcus' voice.

"We's taking a drink officer, and I thinks there's some more left in dis bottle," as he held up a half-filled bottle to the glancing rays of an arc light a dozen paces away.

The policeman came over to the grass-bank on which they sat, looked them over deliberately for a moment, and then reached for the bottle in Marcus' hand. Putting it

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to his lips for what seemed to Jeremiah an ungodly long minute, he remarked: "Whiskey, eh? Don't you fellows know it's agen the law to transport liquor? What'd you say you come around to the station house with me?"

Both Marcus and Jeremiah gazed uncertainly at the officer. Was he serious? Of course not. That must be his little joke. However, he looked both tough and rough.

"Come on there; get a move on you'se. It sure's whiskey all right, and damn good whiskey, too," he added as he took another swig from the bottle.

Jeremiah arose. "Surely, officer, you're not serious?" and there was an anxious note in his half-statement, half-question.

"Like hell I ain't! Who's driving this car? Come on—get a move on you, I said; and that *goes*!" He swaggered over towards his motorcycle.

In the dim half-light, Marcus gazed at Jeremiah and Jeremiah gazed back at Marcus. Ebeneezer was standing somewhat apart.

"Say, chief," he whispered, bending over towards Marcus, "you and Mr. King jumps in. I gets in after and makes believe I follows de cop. Den I shoots by and drives like hell. Dis li'l car kin do ninety. I'se got a gun in de seat, and if he ketches us, dey's goin' to be one mo' dead Irish in the worl'."

Marcus pushed Ebeneezer aside. "You talks like a billy goat, Eb. Hey! hois' me up," as he extended his hand to Ebeneezer, "I knows how to handle dat cop."

And he went over towards the motorcycle where, for the third time, the uniformed guardian of the law had the whiskey bottle to his lips.

"Dat's damn fine liquor, ehn't it, officeh?" observed Marcus.

"It sure is, boy; best I've tasted since prohibition. What're you fellows, bootleggers?"

"We ought to be, but we ehn't. We jes' have two bottles. De udder one is over dere in de car. I has plenty more in de

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country where we going, though, and we doan need what we have here pertic'lar."

The policeman eyed Marcus knowingly. "Say, bo, you look like a reg'lar guy."

"Dat's my middle name, Marcus Regulus Cox. Maybe you hears of me ef you reads de papers reg'lar. I is de President General High Commander of the United Negro 'Sociation of the World."

The Irishman's face broadened into a generous grin. "That's some little title you got, kid. What else have you got with you?"

"Dis," at the same time displaying a yellow bill which he had furtively slipped from his pockets.

"And the liquor in the car?"

"Sure, I tells you I done brought it down here thinkin' as I'se meet you; and say! ef you's ever down at de Highlands, in Jersey, you know, drops over and sees me. Hey's de number. Eb," he shouted, "get another drink from de car for my fren' hey."

The guardian of the law collected his booty, straddled his motorcycle, and was about to move off. He shouted to Marcus as he moved away: "If any of my partners ever stop you coming through here tell 'em you're a friend of Officer O'Brien—Mike O'Brien," and in a moment he had roared out of sight.

"Good night, O'Brien," shouted Jeremiah when he was sure his voice could not reach the officer, "and may the good God Almighty take you into the lowest depths of hell!" Turning to Marcus: "What did you give him?"

"Twenty bucks."

"I'd have seen him in hell first."

"Well," mused Marcus, "de law is de law, you knows; and dere's no use seein' a man in hell when you gots to go 'long wid him to see him dere. He never 'tended to take us to any station house, nohow; but he's 'titled to his li'l graf'. Ef it wasn't for dat, prohibition would be as dead as hell."

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"That couldn't have happened under English law," remarked Jeremiah.

"De hell it couldn't!" returned Marcus. "But even ef it couldn't it was a damn good thing it could'a happen hey, 'cos we'd been in one hellova fix ef, instead o' de cop lis'nin' to reason, we'd have to ask de jedge fo' mercy. Me? I prefers de 'Merican way o' doin' things. To hell wid you Inglish. Inglish justice ehn't got any heart in it an' no reason eder. It's stiff like de English demselves. It stinks."

Ebeneezer's voice broke the momentary silence which followed: "You knows, boss, when we gets to Africa, I want's yo' to make me a bicycle cop. I'd jes' loves to patrol roun' loose-like."

"Shucks! Eb, I makes you my chief of police—dat's what I do. But," he added, "ef I ever ketches you graftin' I chops yo' head off."

They got into the car and moved off. Ninety Ebeneezer had said the Lincoln could do—ninety it did. Silent, steady, almost like an automaton, he shot forward the smooth, live thing of iron and steel, swerving around a curve here, grinding the brakes there, but always shooting forward with incredible speed, uncanny precision. He was king of the night which enveloped them, king of the breeze which lashed their cheeks, one with the drowsing trees and silent things which, moment after moment, flashed by and receded far behind.

Half an hour after their stop, they rolled into Atlantic Highlands and were soon driving towards the wooded slopes among which Marcus Cox's bungalow nestled.

It was Jeremiah who, glancing through the window beside him, first noticed the glow in the sky.

"Seems like a fire over there," he remarked, pointing.

"Brush burnin', I guess," muttered Marcus, following the direction of Jeremiah's finger.

Half a mile and they drove on in silence.

"Boss," ejaculated Ebeneezer, "dat looks like a fire for true, and mighty close to de bungalow, too," he added.

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"Doan seem to get no bigger, jes' burnin' steady-like," observed Marcus after a pause.

A thick growth of trees hid the view of the pathway which led from the asphalt roadway on the left up to Marcus Cox's bungalow. Ebeneezer, with caution, slowed down, and the car barely moved as they approached the intersection.

All three gazed in silence.

In the center of the sloping ground which graded upwards into a little plateau on which the bungalow sat, a huge cross was burning.

"De damn Kluxers!" murmured Marcus Cox, and Ebeneezer footed a restraining brake on the car.

In the circle of light, jumping backwards and forwards near the edge of the sward on the right where it led into a dense growth of trees, a police dog with straightened tail and hair bristling along his back and neck barked and growled and snarled. A beam of light as from a pocket lantern pierced an opening in the branches, followed in a second by the bark of a pistol. The dog leaped to one side as if seared by a hot breath; and then, in a moment, again leaped towards the edge of the woods with his fighting yelps. Another beam of light, another flash from the woods, and the agonized scream of Nig, Marcus' police dog, was heard.

"My God! Dey got 'im!" groaned Marcus. "Dey gots my dog!" and he began to fumble at the clasp of the car door.

Jeremiah laid a restraining hand on him. "Keep still," he growled. "This calls for caution, Marcus."

"Leh's try de back way," whispered Ebeneezer. "I thinks I kin make it."

"All right, Eb," whispered back Marcus, "ef we kin get into de bungalow, we'll give dem hell."

Ebeneezer let the car glide a hundred yards or so farther onward, then turned in on the left into what looked to be an impossibly narrow trail of sand. Curving around, swept by the overhanging boughs, whining as if intent on some set purpose, the motor, in first speed, zigzagged through the

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dense foliage. Soon, they emerged into a more open but still sandy roadway.

"Dis runs back of de house," whispered Marcus to Jeremiah. Jeremiah did not reply. Strengthening rage was welling up in his being. So the Ku Klux Klan had their little parties up North also!

The car came to a stop. Fifty yards away, through a lane of poplars, Jeremiah saw the back door of the bungalow.

"Keep de car running, Eb, and stay right here," cautioned Marcus. "We'se goin' in. Come on, King. Eb, has yo' got yo' gun?"

"Yes, boss," and the rakish muzzle of a forty-eight Colt showed in Ebeneezer's hands.

Jeremiah was not a fighting man. A lifetime of softening intellectual pursuits had dulled any primitive instincts with which he might have been endowed. For the last few minutes, however, at sight of the burning cross—at the sound of the pistol when it had barked the first and second time and the dog's death cry—a certain savage joy had sprung up within him. Had one been able to see his face, it was a chalky white, but it was not fear that possessed him—it was white rage; it was the fighting face of his mixed kind.

"What yo' got inside?" he questioned, unconsciously assuming Marcus's lingo in his tense excitement as Marcus raised a half-open window and crawled inside the house.

"Come on down to de celler and see," Marcus whispered back as he caught Jeremiah's hands and gave him a hoist.

They slipped down a dark flight of stairs and found their way to the front part of the house overlooking the sloping land and the burning cross. They could see but not be seen. Evidently, whoever were outside—for, up to the present time, they had only been able to guess by the pistol shots that there were human enemies lurking around—were all concealed in the far clump of trees around which they had skirted through the woods.

"Here she is!" confided Marcus, switching on a tiny

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electric bulb in the head of an ugly-looking machine gun, the muzzle of which protruded from an innocent-looking hole cut in the lattice boardwalk extending along the foundation of the bungalow.

"Creep upstairs, lie flat on de floor of de verandah, and see if you sees anything," suggested Marcus to Jeremiah.

Feeling his way up the stairs down which they had come a moment ago, Jeremiah found his way on the north veranda. Peering over the edge of the shrubbery rising close to the house, he saw, first one, and then, appearing gradually and stealthily, a dozen or more white-robed, white-hooded figures gathering in a clump of bushes fifty yards or so on the left.

He cupped his hand to his lips, and his voice broke the silence.

"You white-livered sons of bitches! Get out of there or we'll shoot you full of holes!"

The wooden cross had all but spent its flames; nothing but thin wisps of smoke and an occasional flare from half-burnt pieces of wood remained. The moving figures flitted here and there below among the trees like ghostly shadows.

There was a moment of stillness following Jeremiah's voice. Then, simultaneously, a dozen flashes from the woods and as many pistol shots rang out. Another fusillade and whistling things through the trees in front of him told Jeremiah that real, honest-to-goodness bullets were being hurled in his direction.

He shouted down to Marcus: "Give 'em hell, Marcus! Shoot into the far end of the trees on the left."

There was a roar of sound from underneath the piazza where Jeremiah lay flat on the floor, and then a steady rat-a-tat as Marcus' gun kept up its play. Shouts from the woods, cries of warning, of fear; a noise as of the scattering of a lot of crows from a dead carcass whipped away by some superior force. In a few minutes, complete silence, the silence of the woods.

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Jeremiah still lay flat on the floor. Marcus stood above him.

"Dey's gone," remarked Marcus. His eyes were shining large and bright, and he was perspiring profusely.

A little while afterwards, they sat out and breathed more freely on the porch.

"No use trying to go to sleep any more tonight—or rather, today, Marcus. It's daybreak," observed Jeremiah.

"No, I guess not, we kin take a nap later, whenever we feels like it," replied Marcus.

Silence for a while and then Jeremiah's voice: "This is one hell of a country, Marcus."

"Sure, what's de matter with it?"

"Nothing." And then, after a pregnant pause: "I'm beginning to be crazy about it myself."

"Yo' knows something, King?" Marcus' voice startled Jeremiah. He lay at full length on a rattan sofa—he must have dozed off for the moment. "Half of life is a bluff, jes' a plain bluff."

"There you're wrong again, Marcus," replied Jeremiah irritably. "It's resistance; its power—a punch—that counts. It was the force of those machine-gun bullets that drove those skunks away."

Marcus laughed a thin, cynical laugh.

"Yes, King, but you knows something?"

"What?"

"Dose cartridges that I fires is all blanks."

"The hell you say!" remarked Jeremiah, and soon they lapsed into silence.

A little while later, as dawn came over the hills in the north, they went down to the lawn and buried their dead dog under the charred and disfigured emblem of the White Man's Faith.

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CHAPTER XVI

THERE WAS great excitement in the offices of the Universal Negro Movement on Seventh Avenue. The first issue of the *Negro Trumpet,* the newspaper instituted by Jeremiah King, was out; and copies were being mailed broadcast to every member of the organization throughout the world, besides being distributed free throughout Harlem.

Marcus Cox had had his wish. He was there in half-dozen or more guises and disguises, spread all over the front and other pages. Jeremiah had cannily reasoned that if, as appeared obvious, Marcus was the magnet which drew the interest of all these thousands of Negroes, he should be played up for all he was worth, especially in this first publication.

It was on the editorial page, though, that the Movement sounded its clarion call. It read thus:

"The first issue of this paper is dedicated to Harlem. Harlem is a little city all by itself within the greater City of New York. It is populated by blacks. During the past few years the Negroes of New York, increasing in numbers and in prosperity, found themselves in need of a city, and they captured Harlem. Harlem is now the citadel of Black Men's Hopes. From its ramparts, the Negroes of America are daily sending forth their call to the world. It is supplying Europe with jazz bands, with singers, musicians, and artists of real merit. It is supplying Broadway, the capital of New York, with shows and with actors and actresses who nightly play to crowded houses. Within its own domains, it supplies

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palaces of laughter and fun for the entertainment of the world. But above all these trivial things, it has produced a man, Marcus Cox, its High Commander—Champion Crusader of his race. This man, a great leader, burns with the zeal of thousands of years of wrongs the Negro race has suffered. He yearns to serve his people. But he cannot do it alone. The truly great leader, the only saviour the Negro race can ever have is every man, woman and child born to it. That is its Redeemer, and it is through the alchemy of such creatures that its problems of life or death must be solved.

"Beneath its glitter, beneath its laughter-loving spirit, beneath its trivial casualness as one passes by, Harlem calls to *you*—to every Negro in America, to every Negro in the World. It calls with the voice of no mere dreamer, but in the name of Negro aspiration. It calls with the voice of Marcus Cox, who would teach every black man in creation to be proud of his heritage and to go forth, perform, and conquer in the name of his Blackness, in the name of the African Kingdom within his own heart and soul.

"To the Negroes of America—to the Negroes of the world—the *Trumpet* sends its welcome. We salute you in the name of Achievement!"

Marcus Cox, Jeremiah King, and Amanda Jones were gathered around the dining-room table in Cox's mansion. They had just had dinner together. Marcus had read the *Trumpet's* editorial for perhaps the twelfth time.

He turned to King: "You know, boy, that's great—that's a knockout!" he said, tapping the page. "De onliest fault I has to find with it is dere at de ending, where yo' says: 'We salutes you.' I thinks you should of said: 'Marcus Cox, President General High Commandah, salutes ye.' Don't yo' thinks so, Mandy?" turning to Mrs. Jones.

"No, I think it's just right. There'll be future issues, you know," she rejoined, winking at Jeremiah.

"I bets all de Niggers in Harlem is readin' 'about me now. I bets dey sits up and takes notice. Leh me see, I'se

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goin' call de office and finds out how many copies done distributed," and he took up the 'phone.

"Dis is de President Gen'ral talkin'. Is de newspapers all 'stributed? . . . Yes. . . How many copies? . . . Fifty t'ousand? Wow! Dat's good!" then, turning towards his companions: "Dey has sent out over fifty t'ousand copies. I tells 'em to pave de sidewalks of Harlem wid dem, and dey has done jest dat t'ing!"

"Don't you think, though, Mr. King," remarked Amanda Jones, "it was a mistake to answer that A.C.S. bunch?"

"You mean for attacking Marcus in their paper about his advocating pictures of black angels, and painting Jesus and the Virgin Mary black?"

"What yo' talkin' 'bout, Mandy? Dat's de greates' speech I ever makes. It's de truf, too. Why'n Sam Hill ehn't Niggers got dere own gods, dere own prophets, Jesuses, and sech t'ings. Jest becos de white Christians swipes de Jews' Christ doan means we's to follow suit. Don't de very Bible say dat man makes God in his own image?"

"Look out there, Marcus," laughed Jeremiah. "You're getting all mixed up in your quotation. It's the other way around"; and, turning to Mrs. Jones: "No, I think there is a lot of philosophy in Marcus' idea. After all, he's quite right in saying the Negroes don't sufficiently respect their color and race. English methods of conquest have been largely responsible for this psychology in foreign lands wherever Britain has gone. She has pacified and colonized insidiously through the instrumentality of the Episcopal Church. Her missionaries and ministers have translated the precepts of Christ into terms of obeisance to British sovereignity. That's their policy in a nutshell; and, unfortunately, there has never been any sufficiently well-organized religion to combat that. In Africa there was none; and in India there was so much religious and caste dissension among the natives that they failed to present a united front."

"Still," rejoined Mrs. Jones, "Negroes are intensely religious. The Bible is *their* book. They take it literally, and

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I'm afraid the Universal Movement draws most of its strength from the class of people of whom that is true."

"Well, I've noticed," answered Jeremiah, "that the religious Negro treats his religion almost superstitiously. There's a lot of elasticity about his fancy which can be turned one way or another; and, fortunately, there is just enough of uncertainty about all there is in the Bible to permit of clever deviation—about Moses, Jesus, and all the rest of the Biblical heroes."

"You'se hit de nail on de head, King," burst in Marcus. "I'se been tryin' to tell Mandy dat dese five years."

"You've been telling me nothing of the sort," retorted Amanda. "Everything that anybody says that sounds good, you have always been talking about. The 'Great Appropriator' ought ot be your name."

"Well, anyhow, it takes brains to 'propriate. I admires a clevah tief," and he grinned shamelessly at Amanda Jones. "Say, Mandy, when is yo' goin' to let me steal you?" he ended, looking roguishly at Amanda.

Amanda Jones was taken by surprise. She glanced quickly at King and then back again at Marcus. This was the first time Marcus had been prompted to declare himself before a third person, even her daughter; but she gathered herself together.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Cox," she answered lightly, "when you build your African kingdom I'll consider an application to be its queen."

"Oh, I was jest foolin'—I knows you ain't studyin' me," but he looked wistfully at her.

"What are you going to do about the challenge to debate with you issued by this A.C.S. crowd?" inquired Jeremiah after some moments of silence.

Marcus Cox had slipped off his shoes, drawn up another chair in front of him, and now was resting his stockinged feet across the second chair. "My feets hurt!" he explained.

Jeremiah continued to look inquiringly at him.

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"We ehn't goin' to do nary a thing. We's got our paper now, and we'll jest give 'em hell in de *Trumpet.*"

"And then you'll be sued for libel, perhaps."

"Shucks, man, what we care for dere suits? Leh'm sue and get fat. Dat's our meat, King—noise, plenty of noise. Every time dey hits us we's fifty times stronger. But say," he broke off, as if the fact had that moment occurred to him, "dey is havin' a meetin' down at Lafayette Hall to-night. What's de time? Half-past nine? Suppose we drops down and looks dem over, eh King?"

Jeremiah agreed.

Marcus scrambled up and began replacing his shoes. "Where's Lido?" he suddenly inquired, looking up towards her mother.

"She's out—had some kind of an appointment. She'll probably be back by the time you return."

Jeremiah's level eyes measured Amanda Jones. He had a shrewd guess that even at that moment Lido Jones was out somewhere with Owen Murphy.

At half-past eleven that morning, Jeremiah had ascended the spiral stairway and opened the door of Lido's office adjoining his and Marcus Cox's. Her back, as he entered, was toward him; and she was so engrossed in a conversation over the telephone that she did not sense his approach. "Yes, all right," she was saying into the mouthpiece, "half-past seven. I'll meet you. . . . Where, did you say? . . . Yes, Mott Avenue and 145th Street, downtown subway side. . . . Sure. . . . Goodbye. . . . Half-past seven."

Instinctively, Jeremiah had guessed that Lido was making an engagement for that evening; and, by the same token, his mind reverted to Owen Murphy. The man had called up on two or three occasions when Lido was out to lunch, and the call had been switched to his wire.

Ever since the night in his apartment when Marcus had let drop the information that Lido had returned to the Atlantic City restaurant the evening after they had been

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refused service, and had dined there with Owen Murphy, a certain coolness had sprung up between them. He had had to consult with her frequently, for she apparently had the affairs of the association, especially the financial affairs, at her fingers' ends; but, except for a studied politeness on his part and an equally studied restraint on hers, the cordiality which had united them from the time of their very first meeting now seemed to have all but departed. For reasons which he had not stopped to analyze, but which had grown in strength and intensity, Jeremiah resented Owen Murphy's attentions towards Lido Jones. Equally, he despised whatever there was in her which encouraged these attentions. As he gazed across the table now at her mother, he wondered whether Amanda Jones also knew; and, if knowing, whether she condoned these excursions and meetings between her daughter and Owen Murphy. What did she hope could be gained from such a relationship between her colored daughter and this white man? Had not her own experiences taught her anything? Or, was it that, in spite of those experiences, she was flattered that her daughter had arrested the attentions of a white man?

Marcus' voice broke in on Jeremiah's speculations.

"Come on, King, leh's go," and he and Marcus departed for the meeting of the Association for Colored Strivers at Lafayette Hall.

As they entered the hall, the meeting seemed in full swing. Scattered among the many colored people on the platform, there were a few white men and one white woman. The slim-headed, coffee-colored Negro whom Marcus had described to Jeremiah at Proudfoot's party as the "shouter" of the A.C.S. was speaking.

Whether he recognized Marcus Cox's entrance, or whether he had approached this point in his discourse or not, neither Marcus nor Jeremiah could divine, but the speaker declared: "Now, there is in Harlem an insidious, a dangerous movement among Negroes. Its principal purport seems to be to encourage and develop differences in the

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group itself, based wholly on the lightness, or brownness, or blackness of the individual. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a sinister, a damnable question. No man or woman in this hall or outside of it is responsible for the fact that he finds himself a Negro. No man or woman is responsible for the fact that he is a black-skinned Negro, a brown-skinned Negro, or a light-skinned Negro. That is his misfortune. But it is a fact that whether light-skinned, or dark-skinned, or black-skinned, he is a Negro under all the rules of life in this country just the same. And, united we stand, divided we fall!"

There was prolonged applause. Marcus began to fidget in his seat beside Jeremiah.

"And there is more than that to the story. I and my associates," and he turned around and bowed to the gathering on the rostrum, "and the large majority of the right-thinking and intelligent citizens of Harlem and, indeed, of the entire country, question—they seriously question—the sincerity of this movement. This movement, made up for the most part of certain illiterate persons who, by virtue of their background and lack of information and culture, utterly fail to grasp the lofty ideals of American citizenship and life, are committed to the dangerous policy not of acquiring American citizenship, but of encouraging the emigration of a substantial part of our population who might, under proper leadership and guidance, be of some assistance to the race in its hard struggle upwards. Furthermore, it appears that this deluded movement has not been honestly administered. I understand—we understand—that even now there is pending an indictment against the self-created leader of this movement for misuse of its funds."

There was a general craning of necks forward. This seemed news to most of the audience. Marcus Cox had now taken out pencil and envelope and was diligently making notes.

"And, my friends, I think it behooves every one of us here tonight as good colored American citizens to combat

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this movement, to rebuke it. How shall we do this? The answer is simple: by educating and informing the masses. There is no organization so well fitted, so well equipped to perform this task, as the Association for Colored Strivers. But it needs funds, my friends; and it's up to you women and men to support this association. My white friends here with me tonight are doing a great deal for us—" and he again bowed to those on the platform around him, "but we need not only your moral support but your financial support as well. Such donations as may be made here tonight will be applied to the purpose of widely and publicly combatting the Universal Negro Movement of the United States and the World."

The speaker sat down. There was a sprinkling of well-mannered handclaps; but, underneath, there was silence. Jeremiah thought he discerned in the audience quite a number of Marcus Cox's cohorts.

Marcus Cox arose. The handclapping had not yet abated. He raised his hand in an endeavor to attract the attention of the chairman of the meeting.

Finally, Marcus shouted: "Mr. Chai'man, I craves the privilege of a few remarks."

"What's the name, please?" asked the chairman, cupping his ear with one hand.

"I'se Marcus Cox, de same who dat elongated Nigger talkin' 'bout a few minutes ago—Marcus Cox, de High Commander of de Universal Negro Improvement 'Sociation," he repeated.

There was a whispered conference on the rostrum. Several of the white men leaned towards the chairman and nodded vehemently. "Let him speak!" The whisper carried itself through the hall.

The chairman rose. "It's rather an unusual proceeding, Mr. Cox, but my associates think it well to hear your explanation."

"I ehn't aimin' to explain nothin'," announced Marcus. "I jes' wants to tell you gen'mans a few things."

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It was now Jeremiah's turn to fidget and squirm. Little creepings of his flesh began to disturb him, and, for an instant of panic, he looked behind him towards the door. There he was with Marcus, and Marcus was about to spread his impossible gibberish to an intelligent audience.

But Marcus had already begun. With his favorite outward fling of his long well-shaped hands, he seemed to become a dignified person. A broad, benevolent smile was on his face.

"Ladies and gen'mans of de A. C. S.," he began, turning slightly to the right, "and de few fren's of my own organization who I see 'sembled here: de learned gen'man who has just spoke is full of words, beautiful words, but . . . just plain words. Dere's no sense to 'em; dere's no truf to 'em. De fact of de matter is, he doan know a damned t'ing dat he's talkin' about."

There was a sally of laughter at this blunt statement, especially from the right wing of the house. Jeremiah began to feel a little more comfortable. Marcus, at least, seemed to have complete command of himself.

"Now, my fren's, dere is many kinds of movements and organizations. Dere is movements dat springs from de head, and dere is movements dat comes from de heart. Our organization and movements springs from de heart of all de persecuted Niggers in de world—not only de persecuted black Niggers, but all de persecuted brown and mulattoes. Co'se, maybe we doan cater to a few fohtunate ones, light, brown or black, who has got de jump on us udder fellahs, like de heads of dis A. C. S. Dey kin 'ford to talk from a platform and beg de public for money all de time. Dere jobs depends on dat. Fact is, dey ain't talkin' for anybody but deyselves."

"Hear! Hear!" shouted a thin, piping voice from the right wing. "Give 'em hell, Commander."

"All right, Sam, I aims to," replied Marcus and continued.

"As I was sayin', I doan have to come here and ask de

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public for monies. De membahs of my 'sociation supplies dere own funds. I doan have to ask you white men and women on de platform for a penny. I never 'poses to. We'se too proud to do dat. We aims to pay our own way as we goes along. Now, dere must be some reason for dis state of 'fairs. All de mens and women membahs of our 'sociation all de world over is poor, hard-workin' Niggers. I admits we ehn't got many high-brown—all dem kind wid us is working for a salary."

There was a general snicker throughout the hall at this dig.

"But all our membahs is dat po'tion of de Negro race who craves a li'l place in de sun—not for deyselves, minds you—and I want you to get dat straight 'cause it's impohant—not for deyselves as individuals, but foh de Negro as a whole race! It's a very easy t'ing to pick out a Nigger here and there, no matter what his color may be, and push him along; but I tells you, it's one hell of a job to push along ten millions of undermerged Niggers. Dat's de job I and my 'sociation is undertakin'. If you gen'mans doan happen to like my membahs, you doan have to. Mos' of dem is as good 'Merican citizens as you highfalutin fellahs. But I'se wid dem; I aims to stay wid dem till hell freezes up."

There were whoops and catcalls from all corners of the hall. Apparently, Marcus had gotten to his audience.

"You'se right. Dere is a li'l matter of a indictment 'gainst me. It doan 'mount to nothin', though. I'll meet dat when de time comes. It' de blasted English who's behin' dat. Dey's scared stiff dat I raises up all de Niggers in South Africa and udder places where dey grinds dem down under dere heels. But I aims to 'tend to dat, too, after a whilst. In de meantime, my answer to you fellahs up dere on de platforms—and I doan have no ref'rence to de white gen'mans and ladies, I mean all you Niggers up dere who is jest seekin' foh to live off speakin' words 'stead of gettin' down and bein' real Niggers and doin' something for yoh race—

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my answer to you all is dat you kin"—and he paused for effect—"go to hell!"

Marcus plumped himself down and turned to Jeremiah; "Come on King, let's go." Jeremiah passed on down the aisle behind his High Commadership to the accompaniment of much noise and laughter and shouts.

"Three cheers for de High Commandah!" was the last Jeremiah heard from a thin, piping treble on the right side of the hall.

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CHAPTER XVII

NEAR A lake which spreads itself at the foot of a rolling hill beyond a narrow asphalted roadway, with an undulating greensward used as a golf course extending for as much as several acres back to the edge of a clump of trees in the distance, perched as it were impudently on the very top of the high ground surrounding it, there is a long, low rambling white house in Primrose Park, in the Borough of the Bronx, the City of New York. By day a sickly, half-yellow, washed-out color; by night, blazing electric signs outside and subdued lights shining through glass-enclosed verandahs from within, throwing out and taking back their reflection from the waters of the lake nearby. Innumerable automobiles are parked here, there, and all over its surrounding terraces, shedding their little red back-lights like so many scattered crimson eyes in the dusk. Tallyho Inn—for that is its name—lies just a step removed from the more blatant, garish lights of Harlem and looks, for all the world, like some little fairy temple set on the topmost eminence of a woodland glen.

As Owen Murphy and Lido Jones stepped out of Murphy's rakish Packard roadster and ascended its steps, the shrouded half-glow of descending darkness, punctured by the lights which sprang up all around, made of that woodland roadhouse a secluded habitation.

"Hello, Al," Murphy greeted the proprietor, "how's tricks?"

"Wie gates, Counselor?" grinned Al Grubber, fawning

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on Murphy as if he were both a close acquaintance and a person of some importance.

As a matter of fact, Owen Murphy was, as an assistant public prosecutor, a person of some importance to Al Grubber, proprietor of Tallyho Inn, in the Borough of the Bronx, in the City of New York.

"Here, Charlie," the proprietor called towards one of his waiters, "take care of the counselor; and," he added in low tones for Murphy and the waiter only, "bring the check to me when you're through." Then he laid a light, restraining arm on Murphy's arm. "Got a moment, Counselor? I would like to ask you a question."

Al Grubber and Owen Murphy sat for several minutes at an unoccupied table and conferred in low tones. Owen's head was bent over the table near the German's mouth, his fingers tracing an idle pattern on the tablecloth as he listened to what Grubber had to say. Soon Murphy nodded his head vigorously several times and, as he rose, he took Grubber's hand. "All right, Al, that's a bet. I'll do my part, and—you'll deliver," he ended, gazing meaningly at his host.

The waiter had shown Lido Jones to a table set inside a small recessed nook surrounded by a group of French windows overlooking the lake a few hundred feet away—the choicest spot in the inn for a happy little tête-à-tête. To the right of their table, beyond the rows of other tables with diners which lay between, was a small dance enclosure. The musicians, five Negroes, were at that moment ascending the platform and tuning up their instruments.

"Just agreed for a little retainer," confided Owen to Lido Jones as he reached his seat, enthusiastically rubbing his hands together.

"You seem to do business wherever you go," remarked Lido.

"Yes, got clients all over—that's what my office is for, you know, girlie," he responded cheerfully. "I wouldn't stay in that job for a minute if it weren't for what I made on the side—couldn't stand the racket. Why, the salary they pay me

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wouldn't even . . . wouldn't even take you and me out two or three times a week, Lido," he ended.

"Does it cost that much to—take me out?" she questioned a little icily.

But Owen Murphy either did not catch, or ignored, Lido's direct question. He was explaining to her: "These fellows, these roadhouse people, make theirs pretty soft, you know; and there's no reason in the world why they shouldn't be made to give up . . . a little. All I have to do is to play ball with the Federal people; and, say, Lido, I'll buy you a little car yet, girlie."

"Apple sauce!" murmured Lido, but the words were mechanical; absentmindedly she had just been thinking of Jeremiah's remark to her that morning in the office: "You sure are one little date-maker, Lido." What right had he to be nosing into her affairs? He had probably stood by her desk and heard her entire telephone conversation with Murphy.

"No kidding," Murphy was saying, "I mean it; but it's got to be fifty-fifty, you know."

Once more she rested her eyes on Murphy.

"You've been drinking again, Owen."

"I just had a couple of shots before I picked you up."

"How many's a couple for you? I suppose a dozen at least."

As a matter of fact, Owen Murphy had had just four drinks of alleged Scotch whiskey that afternoon; but they had been fair-sized drinks, and he felt very cheerful. As he had hung around the bar of the speakeasy on his way uptown with two of his office cronies, and had imbibed first one drink and then another, he had concluded, in thinking of this very appointment with Lido, that the time was ripe to approach the goal. There was no sense in any more finesse.

"What are we going to eat?" he questioned.

Lido was looking over the bill of fare.

"Could get you up a nice steak—a nice planked steak,

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with mushrooms, and any kind of potatoes you wanted; then you might like a little salad, celery and olives," the waiter suggested.

"That listens well to me!" murmured Owen. "What about you, Lido?" he questioned, calling her by her given name, which he always used when he felt very chummy.

"I'd like some oysters first. . . . Are oysters in season?" she questioned, turning to the waiter.

"Yes, ma'am, just in—September, you know. We just got some nice ones in a few hours ago."

"Well, then, I'll have an oyster cocktail," ordered Lido; and, as the waiter turned away, Owen Murphy called after him: "Make that two, waiter; and, say, bring us some drinks, will you? A couple of Martinis?" he queried, looking at Lido.

"Yes, I think I'll have a cocktail; I feel a little bit dull, and maybe that'll pep me up some," Lido responded.

"Righto!" rejoined Owen. "Nothing like a little liquor to liven you up. Come on, little girlie, let's dance."

They glided onto the floor as the music struck up.

"How's the old buzzard?" remarked Murphy after a brief period of silence.

"Whom do you mean?"

"The honorable—what do you call him?—High Commander, isn't it?—Cox?"

"He's all right," she replied coldly.

Then, after another pause: "I guess he's quite a big Nigger in Harlem, isn't he?"

She jerked back her head and looked at him. Murphy, apparently, did not catch the hostility in her gaze.

"He's getting away with murder, ain't he?" Murphy continued.

"I'd rather not talk of Mr. Cox that way," she replied.

"Well, how's that other fellow, the Englishman?" he persisted. "What's his name?"

"You mean Mr. King?"

"Yep, he's a funny one."

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"What's funny about him?"

"He struts around like Hamlet looking for his father's ghost."

"Is that supposed to be funny?"

"No, it's 'As You Like It,'" he giggled. "I'll bet you that's over your head."

"Yes, it is over my head," she mocked. "Mr. Murphy is the only person in the world who ever sees anything."

"I'll bet you don't know what I meant."

"You were trying to be smart by connecting Hamlet with Shakespeare's other play, 'As You Like It.'"

"Bravo, little temptation, you're there a hundred ways, but . . . I wish you'd be nicer to me."

"Like what?" she questioned.

But he was not yet ready to proceed.

There was a lull in the music, and the waiter was bringing their dinner. They returned to their seats. They were both hungry, and the food looked appetizing. Conversation lagged. It was merely a case of, "Hand me the salt, please!" "How about that pepper near you?" "Ghee, this steak is good," uttered by one or the other.

Owen Murphy had, in the meantime, changed his drinking order from cocktails to highballs—rye whiskey and ginger ale, but Lido refused to have her ginger ale mixed with whiskey.

Coffee was brought on, and Murphy lighted one of his long, formidable-looking cigars.

Lido, too, lighted a cigarette and exhaled cloud after cloud of thin, flowery smoke. Parted and pursed in the act of exhaling, her lips were pretty lips, cherry red lips, lips filled with warm, red blood, tempting lips—at least, so they seemed to Owen Murphy.

"Do you know, kid, you're a swell girl," and his eyes filled with desire.

"That so?" she breathed, looking over at him out of half-closed, half-veiled eyelids, smoke-laden, dreamy, and teasing.

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"I guess you don't know it yourself."

"Well, I sure don't hate myself!"

"Well," and he paused, "when are we going to make it?" His tone and look came across the table to her with significance.

"Make what?" She had had an uncanny feeling all evening that some disturbance was ahead. During the last few minutes it had left; and now—here it was again.

"Oh, you know jolly well what I mean. What's the use of playing dumb? When are you going out with me?"

The roughness in Murphy's voice irritated her.

They were in that little dining nook, secluded, very much to themselves. Below them an occasional car whizzed by along the narrow roadway. Far out on the lake, as far as one could see, little lights from gently gliding boats flitted here, there and everywhere on the dark surface of the water. Happy laughter—light, teasing at times—rapturous laughter, came to them.

"Why, I'm out with you now, am I not?" she returned with studied ingenuousness.

"Hell!" he replied quickly; and again roughly and crudely: "You know very well I don't mean that. When are you coming down to my flat and give me a night of it?"

His voice came slow, deliberate, demanding.

Lido Jones had sensed what was coming. She had been sparring for time. The female in her was now ready to meet the male in Murphy at his own game. She did not reply at once. Instead, she poised the half-smoked cigarette firmly in her fingers, placed the end daintily between her cherry-red lips, puffed a huge cloud of smoke therefrom, and covered him with a cool, reflective gaze. Then she answered: "Never!" and she hesitated just a trifle and repeated: "Never! Unless I am married to you."

No immediate answer came from Murphy. Instead, his lips turned themselves down in a sneering smile, and he stared across the table at her. An abrupt laugh, half-snort, half-grunt, sprang from him.

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"That's funny!" he finally snickered.

A thick cloud of cigarette smoke rose about her face and head.

"What's funny?" she questioned.

Another pause; another grunt; and then it came from Murphy, haltingly at first, then hurtling onward as if gathering momentum.

"Me—*me* married to a Nigger! That's a joke!" and he pushed his chair slightly back from the table.

It was out. There was no withdrawal of it; there was no thought in Murphy's mind of withdrawing it. Lido Jones was prepared for his advance; but she was not prepared for this—this inconceivable assault on her color, her race, by this man with whom she had been associating so pleasantly.

The cigarette dropped from her fingers to the floor, where it sent up a weak spire of gray smoke beside her. She propped her cheek on one hand and scrutinized Murphy with wide, staring eyes. Was this her friend, or was it some strange, brutish animal taking his place? Feature for feature, she looked him over. She looked deep, deep down—down—down into his very . . . guts.

Racial differences between her and this man with whom she had spent so many enjoyable hours as a playmate? No! She had not thought of that. She was merely a female consorting with a companionable male. She had partaken of his hospitality and, most of the time, had felt very close to Murphy. She had not given much thought to where their friendship was leading—might lead. She was free, had no strings tied to her, and was at liberty to follow her promptings, her impulses for human companionship, male or female. True it was that the companionship of the male was different, more thrilling—delicious at times. Such hours she had had with Owen Murphy. In those carefree moments anything might have happened so long as it came pleasantly, naturally, as the climax of impulsive promptings; but tonight his proposal had come bluntly, sordidly to

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her—and it had come in this way to her because he, this white man, felt that such illicit temporary relations as he had suggested were the only ones that could ever exist between them. To him she was just a . . . Nigger.

Suppose, in some of their dallying moments in the past when life had come tumultously to her, and Murphy's kisses and caresses had sent waves of fire flashing through her, suppose . . . that had . . . happened! Suppose she had surrendered and after . . . after that surrender, this . . . this "Nigger" had been hurled at her . . . this awakening had come! She thanked God that she had held her head.

It was but a moment, but a lifetime's span was concentrated in her glare at Murphy. Her wide eyes narrowed, narrowed, until, from their corner slits, black fire seemed to be spitting in his direction. Little twitches, like dimpling creases, came to the corners of her lips, and she said in cold, hard tones: "You son of a bitch!"

The words came to her naturally, without choice, without heat. They were words of the street, of enraged Harlem's streets, of enraged streets all over the world. She had often heard them in and about the thoroughfares of Harlem. They had assailed her ears. They had struck her as insufferable words, causing her to wince. To her the words were pregnant with deadly hate, with unutterable contempt, and, perhaps, with . . . frustration and despair. She had never dreamed that the occasion would arise when such dark hate would come to her and prompt her to use them. Now, however, in her moment of horrified disillusionment, she wanted these words—she wanted them more than anything else in the world.

"You're a son of a bitch!" she repeated. She joyed in their sound. They had just the amount of satisfying ring, of pitch, of intonation.

What he saw in Lido Jones' eyes sobered Murphy almost instantaneously. Awakening came to him.

"Oh, I'm sorry—I didn't mean . . ." he began, and attempted to take hold of her hand across the table.

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"Don't touch me!" she shouted. "Don't you dare lay your filthy hand on me!" and she clutched a butter knife beside her and held it poised in her right hand.

"No need to make a scene," he said in muffled tones. "People are all looking at us."

Lido Jones was not sensible of the people around her; and, if sensible, she cared neither for what people saw, heard, or thought. Another moment, her head dropped to her arms on the table, and she sobbed . . .

Owen Murphy rose hastily from the table and wandered off in the direction of his Packard car.

When he returned, Lido Jones was nowhere to be seen.

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CHAPTER XVIII

PARTING FROM Marcus Cox on the sidewalk in front of his home after the meeting of the Colored Strivers at Lafayette Hall, Jeremiah had just reached his apartment when the telephone bell rang—softly at first as if in summons to some gentle encounter, then anxiously and stridently as he opened the door of his bedroom and took the receiver from the hook.

"That you, Jerry?" The voice sounded distant, far off, and, somewhat plaintive. "Been trying to get you for some time."

"Hello, Lido!" At the other end of the wire, there was something in the welcome of the "Hello, Lido" which reassured Lido Jones and told her she had made no mistake in calling her grouchy friend, Jeremiah.

Leaving the restaurant as soon as Owen Murphy had wandered out of the room, she had hurried over in the direction of the lake and sat down. For many minutes she was unable to think clearly. Gradually, she became calmer and her thoughts were more ordered.

As a woman, a young woman, sitting alone alongside that lake, Lido Jones had no feminine fear such as might have possessed many of her sex under the circumstances. She felt quite able to take care of herself; indeed, had done so all her life, and she would stay out there on that bench beside her lake all night if need be. No, it was not that kind of fear that possessed her. It was simply an uncanny feeling of strangeness, of being out of place—of being alone

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in an alien world. That restaurant back there which she had just left, it contained all white people save the few musicians of her own race, and they didn't count. Out there before her on the lake, all those boats and the voices coming from them were white voices without doubt. No colored person could possibly be there. She was alone, in this strange place, surrounded with Owen Murphy's kind, without kith or kin of her own.

The streets of Harlem? No. that feeling of aloneness would never overtake her there, and she had traveled those streets at all hours of the day and night, oftentimes very late at night and alone too. Harlem! Harlem was *her* Harlem. She knew it. She was part of it. No harm could come to her in Harlem. Even Broadway, any street or thoroughfare in the city, with its hard pavements and its electric lights, she would be at home there also, with taxis and streetcars and elevated railroads roaring by. But out here in the woods? It was a lonesome, uncanny place!

Owen Murphy had undoubtedly gone. She had heard his car roar down the roadway as if expressing its driver's temper. She could go back to the inn and ask them to call a taxi for her. No! She was through with that restaurant and all the people there. The diners had snickered after her as she had made her way down the aisle and out the door. Should she call her mother? No! Her mother would give her the devil, anyhow, and she couldn't stand any scolding tonight. Mr. Cox? No! He would be entirely out of place coming up there for her. Somebody might see her driving around with her black High Commander at this ungodly hour of the night. Besides, he wouldn't understand either. Mr. King—Jerry? Why not? Jerry had been very strange and cold lately. She knew the reason, though. Either her mother or Mr. Cox had told him about her dining with Owen Murphy at Atlantic City. He had made several sarcastic remarks to her about it. But she! What did *she* care? It had given her a real thrill to go back to that Atlantic City restaurant next evening and be served by

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those white people. She figured she had put one over on them. Besides, she was entitled to as much fun and pleasure as she could get out of life, no matter from what direction it came. Race? Race and color meant nothing to her. It was only a talking subject.

She wondered how Jerry would receive her call. Would he snub her? She wouldn't be able to stand that either. Still, she might try.

So it was that, after much cogitation and quite a few misgivings, she decided to call Jeremiah, hoping to reach him at home. She had reached him.

His voice came again to her over the wire: "Where are you?"

"I'm up here in the Bronx, at Tallyho Inn," she explained, "and I want you to come and get me."

"All right, tell me how to get there."

"Just get a taxi and tell the driver to bring you to Tallyho Inn, in Primrose Park. He'll know how to find it—it's a well-known place," she added.

"I'll be there as fast as he can drive."

"You'll find me sitting on a bench near the lake off from the inn," she directed before ringing off; and, carefully wrapping her cloak about her, she returned to her bench beside the lake.

It was characteristic of Jeremiah, she thought, that he had not asked any more questions. She had hoped that he would simply sense her need for help and come to her. He had done just that, and she was glad. Explanations would, of course, come later.

"One has to make mistakes," she told herself, "and this hobnobbing with Owen Murphy had been one whale of a mistake."

She used to be rather proud of her foragings in the camps of Caucasia. She had been sure that none other of her girl companions in Harlem had carried it off quite so well as she had. At times she had felt convinced that she more properly belonged to those camps than to Har-

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lem; and, although she had never stopped to determine how, when, or where, little imaginings of an ultimate lot for herself different from that which overtook most colored girls had arisen in her ambitious heart. She had been a little reckless, a little thoughtless, she now realized; but she would forget it—would put this fiasco out of her mind.

A minute or two later, however, Lido Jones discovered that she could not get rid of the subject so easily. It kept recurring to her.

"He called me a . . . Nigger!" she repeated to herself. She hated, even in thought, to formulate the last word, so humiliating it was to her. A wave of resentment passed through her, and she muttered: "I should have thrown one of those tea cups in his face. . . . I'm sorry I didn't—the dirty cad! It's just what Mother has been telling me all along. A colored girl to a white man is eventually nothing but a . . . Nigger. The damned skunks!"

She realized that it was not the fact that Owen Murphy had approached her with the suggestion that the day, or rather, the night of reckoning had come when he thought he should collect for all the good times he had afforded her. After all, she, Lido Jones, knew enough of life around her to understand that this expectation of a return on the part of men from women to whom they had been attentive was a customary thing, a part of the game. She knew, with equal sureness, that some women—nay, many women—automatically, and as if by a common understanding, silently acquiesced in this regular system of rewards and punishments—for it must be punishment to many of them who merely swapped one pleasure in casual fashion for another. No, it was not this which had outraged her spirit. It was that word . . . "Nigger" sneered at her from Murphy's lips in his moment of frustration.

And yet the word "Nigger," in and of itself, was a most common one to Lido Jones. She had been hearing it around her ever since she could remember. In company with her

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girl friends, in their happy and bantering talk fests, it was a common thing for one of them to say: "Look here, Nigger girl, you need to be told something, and it's me who is going to told you." This and other slangy expressions were frequent in their conversations. How many times had not her friend Ruth Dennis, equally light in complexion as she, but who just seemed to take to this rough language as a duck to water—how many times had this chum of hers not addressed her in identical language! Yes, how many times had she, Lido Jones, herself not replied to Ruth and others in like manner! But this had all been girlish horseplay; the typical horseplay of one colored friend to another in Harlem. Always there was the accompanying smile in the teeth of it. Tonight, for the first time, that word—that venomous word—had been hurled at her cruelly, with contemptuous manner and intent, to humiliate, to defile her and . . . by a white man—a white man whom she had permitted to get that close to her, so close within her breastworks that she had perhaps . . . yes . . . perhaps all but . . .

Many a time had Owen Murphy kissed her; many a time had he caressed her fiercely, passionately; and she had responded, too—yes, she had responded; and at times, under the mood of the moment, with all that was purely male in him calling to all that was purely female in her, it . . . might . . . have been . . . possible. And now—God! She felt contaminated by every one of those caresses. In the vividness of her hot contempt for herself, for such permission as she had given, each of these past and gone kisses seared her mind. Each caress was to her a quick, short, stabbing jab. The memory of them surged through her with the force of a thousand hot irons tearing at her insides. Tears sprang to her eyes and went coursing down her cheeks. She did not even know they were there. . . .

There was a quick tread on the grass, and Jeremiah King stood alongside her bench.

"Hello, little girl," he greeted, taking her hand in his.

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"What's the matter? How did you get stranded up here?"

He noticed that she had been crying, and he sat down close beside her.

"It's a long story," she said after a pause, dabbing at her cheeks and eyes.

"Come on, I have a taxi waiting out yonder on the road," and he pointed with his cane to where a little red light showed near the roadway. "You can tell me all about it on the way down."

"Can't we sit here for a little while? I'd like to just a few more minutes. Can't the taxi wait for us?"

"Surely," he said kindly. He turned and called towards the driver.

"Maybe a little row on the lake would help some. It's a close night, anyhow," he suggested.

She was glad of the offer.

They found their way over to the landing place and secured a boat. Soon, with its little red light gleaming from the prow, they rowed out towards the center of the lake.

Strains of music from the orchestra playing at Tallyho Inn came to them as to the other lake adventurers, faintly wistful, it seemed, from the distance. Or was it merely that particular melody being played which was plaintive and wistful—"Somewhere in the World There's One Who Cares for Me"—that old tune Jeremiah and she had waltzed to in the dancing pavilion of Young's Million Dollar Pier?

In that dance she had laid her head restfully against Jeremiah's shoulders, and it had been very soothing. She felt so much like an unprotected child tonight. She needed more than anything else someone who was kind and gentle, whom she trusted, to indulge her a little in this weary mood of hers.

She looked over at him pulling at the oars as he rested for a moment. She had the tiller and she . . . she had to guide the boat; but, after all, in what direction they went didn't matter. That little lake was just . . . a little lake; and only to sit there and drift . . . and drift, peaceful and

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quiet . . . without saying . . . without having to say a word, was sufficient. This dankness of the air about her, this mist rising from the water and enveloping them and their boat, it seemed to be sweeping into, to be saturating something inside of her which had been hurting terribly, but the pain of which was now easing. Many and many a time before, when distraction had come to her, she had wandered over to Riverside Drive and had sat down to gaze out on the dear old Hudson River, and always strength and rejuvenation had come to her. There must be a God. . . . and also that thing called Nature—ah, Nature was wonderful! All one had to do was to bathe oneself in it! How odd it was that one could be so tremendously soothed by a physical environment, by the spirit and mood breathed from it! This must be a beautiful place in the daytime. It no longer seemed strange and uncanny to her. She was no longer alone. Her kith and kin were near—one of her tribe. Yes, Jerry was there! They two must come out there again some time.

She wondered what he was thinking about—he was so quiet. She could not see his face well enough to form any idea; but his voice had sounded glad . . . as if he had been glad to come to her; and he had taken her by the hand . . . called her little girl . . . and been . . . very kind and gentle. Wasn't she called upon to say something? She hated to disturb the happy silence. How should she begin telling about . . . about her . . . catastrophe? It would be easy enough, perhaps, to tell of that; but she would have to go into other details. She wished he'd come over close to her . . . if he'd only come over and . . . well . . . not be so far from her.

"Jerry!" she called softly and, without thinking, released the tiller.

"Look out, Lido," shouted Jeremiah, as the boat spun sharply around. "We'll get a ducking if you're not careful."

"It doesn't matter if we do," pouted Lido. "Stop rowing, please, Jerry, I want to talk to you," and she sidled along the bench to the center of the boat where he sat.

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She began. She told him the story of that afternoon at the inn. She also related how it had been a customary thing for her to go around with Owen Murphy. As she talked, it seemed natural that a note of excuse, of justification, should creep into her voice. Unconsciously, with Jeremiah, too, it seemed natural that he had the right to delve into other happenings. When his voice sounded, it was soft and purring, but Lido sensed a cutting quality to it:

"And he was . . . in the habit of . . . kissing you?"

"Yes," she answered simply.

"And you him?"

"Yes," like one repeating a ritual.

"And you . . . he . . . caressed you and you caressed him . . . all the time?"

"Not . . . all the time," she corrected, "but . . . very often," she reluctantly admitted.

"And he came down to see you at Atlantic City?"

"Yes . . . leastways, he was there."

"And you went with him to Jack's boardwalk restaurant and had a lobster dinner?"

"Yes."

"And that was the very next evening after we had been chased out of that restaurant like whipped curs?"

"Yes."

"And then, after having your shore dinner, you and this man went out on the pier . . . just in the same way you and I did after we were turned down and insulted by these white people—*his* people; and you permitted this . . . this white man to hold you in his arms and to kiss and caress you; and you, in turn, kissed and caressed him on the very bench, I suppose, where we sat; and this was the night after you and I had been mistreated by his friends, his group just because we were . . . are . . . *Niggers!*" he shouted. "You had no pride, no sense of dignity for yourself, no feeling of resentment on behalf of your race, no consideration for me, your friend, who had been equally insulted."

There was deep scorn in Jeremiah's tones. Lido felt it,

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but she sensed also that it was not mere anger. Jeremiah was hurt. She paused before replying.

"I didn't think of it in that light."

"You were just anxious for a good time. You'd have sold your soul for that. All of you girls are alike. I suppose, no doubt . . . you've been . . . very . . . close . . . very int—very intimate with that man," he finally hurled at her.

He had turned his face on her and was lashing her with his staring eyes.

Instantly, Lido Jones was erect. She snatched her hand away from Jeremiah's knee where it had wandered, and she glared back at him. The blood left her face, as it usually did in moments of passion and stress. In the half-dim light which lay like an enveloping shadow over them, had there been a watcher on the shore, they would have appeared, for the moment, like two carved figures in a posture of threatened combat.

"Jeremiah, you are—" For a moment, it seemed as if short, ugly, unrecallable words would spring from her lips. As quickly as the impulse came, it died. Her mood changed, and she said in a low, pleading voice: "Is that nice, Jerry? Is that a nice thing for you to say to me—after I've been so honest and frank with you? I've told you everything. Is that the thanks I get for my frankness?"

"You've been frank and candid only because he turned you down, insulted you, made it impossible for you with any spark of decency to continue with him. You didn't have brains enough to sense that that was what he was after all the time; that you were selling your—your soul for a filthy mess of pottage—a good time, and—my God! How much closer could you have been to him, anyhow? Do you think you are conferring a favor on anybody by refraining from running around with white men? For my part, you can run around with them all you want; go the limit—do any damned thing you like. You're not hurting me nor anybody else. You're just cheapening yourself."

She did not reply immediately. She was trying to con-

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trol herself. Some of the things this man said were true, but many were not. He was being unjust. She had not made a confidant of him in order to be chastised. She had merely sought friendly comfort and refuge.

"You know, Jerry," and there was a cutting coldness to her voice, "the trouble with you is that you're just one everlasting prig. You don't give me credit for learning my little lesson. Look at you! You were just like all the other monkeys who come from the Islands before they insulted you in that Atlantic City restaurant. You thought you were some indeterminate white person. It took that cut to put some punch, some backbone into you."

"Let us hope you respond in the same way," he retorted with unmistakable sarcasm.

"You go to hell, Jeremiah King!" she blurted out savagely and sidled over to the far corner of the boat.

Silently, they returned to the landing place and sought their waiting taxi.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE GREEN HILLS that nestle around and beyond the Highlands on the New Jersey shore brooded in the distance. Marcus Cox sat out on the open verandah of his bungalow which commanded a full view of those spreading, green-wooded slopes.

The sun was going down, off there to his right where lay the waters of Sandy Hook leading out into the open Atlantic. From afar he caught the ghostlike reflection of a steamer, of many steamers, proceeding, it seemed, into the very skyline where white fleecy clouds banked themselves above the edge of the horizon.

His black pipe in his mouth, his legs lazily spanning the balustrade, Marcus smoked and awaited Jeremiah's arrival.

It was Friday afternoon, and Jeremiah and he were to have their conference with Owen Murphy and his Man Friday, George Webb, the following afternoon.

Marcus looked at his watch. Half-past five! He wondered whether Jeremiah had missed the three-thirty boat.

Jeremiah, however, had not missed the boat. At that moment he was taking his time and strolling along the mile-and-a-half stretch of road leading from the depot to Marcus' bungalow. It was such a pleasant day—ideal for walking—and the hillside and garden patches around him were so green and attractive that Jeremiah had decided to walk instead of taking a taxi.

He reached the intersection where the pathway turned

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off and led up the hill to Marcus' bungalow. He recalled the night a few weeks back when they had arrived at that very point and had been met by a burning cross. Its charred remains were still there, a doubtful monument to the fighting instincts of poor old Nig, Marcus's police dog. Jeremiah took off his hat and mopped his face. These early September days were very pleasantly warm.

Turning into the pathway, he stopped before a large overhanging chestnut tree. A decrepit wreck of a man was sitting there. Of a dull-red mahogany color, his seamed and wrinkled face reminded one of the crinkled underside of a rasher of bacon. What was once a derby hat. hopelessly faded and battered, sat athwart the top of this man's head like some old lady's bonnet gone askew.

"Howdye!" the man greeted; and as Jeremiah approached closer, he noticed that, perched on the man's shoulders and almost as bleached and faded as the old derby hat, a weazened-faced little monkey was peering out and grinning at him. An involuntary smile came to Jeremiah. He recalled his first glimpse of Marcus Cox leading the parade on his prancing white horse. As if in answer to Jeremiah's smile, the monkey bared its lips and began to squeak like a tiny doll.

Jeremiah crossed over to the pair and, after gazing at them speculatively for a moment, answered the old man's greeting: "Where yo' live?" breaking his English to meet what he told himself was this foreigner's comprehension.

For answer, the old Italian spread his hands in a wide circle and replied: "Ev'rywhey! Sometimes me hey; sometimes me dey; no place patic'ly—ev'rywhey," he repeated.

Jeremiah followed his gesture. What a pleasant abode! Everywhere! No place in particular—just to roam aimlessly around up into those wooded slopes, down into the green valleys; nothing to do; nothing to think about—just to wander through the days with a little pet monkey.

The man was alternately munching a roll of bread and a fast-dwindling chunk of bologna; and the monkey was

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intermittently trying to secure portions of his food.

"'Have, Jocko!" reproved his master.

But Jocko did not behave—had no intention of behaving, at least so far as retrieving bits of bread and boglogna from his master's grasp was concerned. Or was it his master? Was it not his friend, his pal? Evidently, he was the latter to the monkey, for even at that moment he was snuggling his little blunt nose up against the old man's ear, intent on snooting the battered derby off his head.

"'*Have*, me say, Jock. Me tie you up if you no 'have," he threatened, jangling a small chain which hung across his knees.

Jocko looked down at the chain cautiously, curiously, as if it were the strangest thing in all the world to him. A limpid expression crept into his shiny eyes—age-old, pleading, as if all the millions of other monkeys in the world were peering out and pondering on the customs and usages of chains. Yes, this man, threatening him with a chain, was indeed his master! And this master was irritable and unkind. He, Jocko, would have to wait until this other appetite was appeased before he could play at his game of snatching. This man was not now his friend and—there was the chain! Rovingly, his eyes lifted themselves to the tree tops. Two nesting birds were twittering and frisking from twig to twig aloft. Little Jocko's lips bared back and his white teeth gleamed as his eyes followed the chirping birds

Beneath the tree where the pair sat, low-hanging branches bent almost to the ground. Jocko bared his teeth, glanced down at the chain, and then, quickly, suddenly, with a single bound, he leaped off the old man's shoulder and, at almost the same moment, was peering down on them from the branches above.

The old Italian scrambled to his feet with surprising alertness.

"Cumma here, Jock! Cumma here!" he ordered. "Cum, cumma little jock—cumma to ole Pedro," he pleaded.

But Jocko seemed in no hurry to obey. Instead, his gaze

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was directed upwards farther afield, towards those other branches which spread themselves above and connected with other trees, other spreading branches in the woods where they lingered.

The old man clutched a low-hanging branch as if to swing himself up to his monkey.

"That's useless!" shouted Jeremiah. "Look—he's away off there!" And as the old man lifted his uncertain, watery gaze into the tree tops, he saw his Jocko going farther and farther away .

He crooned: "Jock, cumma here, cumma to ole Pedro," at the same time plunging into the trees. Jocko was now chattering gayly high up in the branches of another tree.

Dusk was gathering. Jocko's disobedience had driven the old man into a panic.

"Me breaka yo' neck when me getta you!" he jabbered.

But Jocko did not propose to have his neck or any other portion of his body broken; and as the birds began to voice their evening melodies, and the crickets and the frogs, the locusts and katydids, sent up their chorus of evening song to the gods of the woods, it seemed to Jeremiah that, above them all, he could detect the chatter of Jocko blending itself with those other woodland sounds. It seemed as if in the wilds of his African or other forest home—from whatever nursery life had come to him—he had found his destiny from the beginning of things.

Marcus Cox, hearing the uproar, came down the pathway.

"What's de matter?" he inquired.

For answer, a loud, weeping wail came from old Pedro among the trees. "Gone—gonna—Jocko gonna!"

Jeremiah explained, and added: "Just one more little monkey gone back to Africa or to hell," and smiled at Marcus.

Marcus raised his eyes questioningly to Jeremiah. He did not relish his Grand Counselor's humor.

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CHAPTER XX

MARCUS AND JEREMIAH sat out on the verandah next afternoon after an early dinner. The one was sucking at his old black pipe and the other was puffing at a long cigar. They were both at their ease—Marcus in a pair of khaki pants, white shirt open at the neck showing his broad, hairy chest beneath; and Jeremiah in a pair of knickerbockers, his collar, too, opened at the neck. His bare arms, much whiter than his face smitten by the sun, had taken on a glow of red. Marcus' hands and arms, bare, too, were long and hairy as an ape's.

"White man—black man," thought Jeremiah, as he looked over at Marcus. "In appearance only . . . both black by all the codes of all the worlds. One speck of black blood, a black man. One speck of yellow blood . . . a Chinaman—perhaps; Perhaps not. Certainly one speck of Indian blood, not an Indian; for had not Richard Croker taken to his heart and home in sunny Ireland his Indian princess without astonishing the world? And was not the love affair of John Smith and Pocahontas a classic of white America? Both of these damsels were fit mates for white lords of creation. A speck of black blood—never. . . ."

Marcus had been busy all day. Jeremiah had been busy also following Marcus around while he worked, pruning trees, cutting grass, and doing other chores in and about his acre of land. Jeremiah enjoyed looking on. He had no interest in the actual work, however. With Marcus, it was his delight, his hobby. It came natural to him to be cutting

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grass and raking leaves. His forebears, for generations in the West Indies, had laboured thus. Many another in his position, graduated from the necessity for such labor, might have despised it and escaped from it; but Marcus' soul was big enough to divine that this physical labor was a dignified thing so long as his spirit was free, so long as he was not urged to the doing of it by whips and jibes and by . . . necessity. He took immense pride in doing things around his bungalow with his own hands and in telling about the rustic chairs and tables which he had made from logs out of his own woods, the woods surrounding his bungalow.

As they sat on the verandah, Marcus recounted to Jeremiah how he had himself made that addition to the porch on which they sat. The railing on which Jeremiah's legs were comfortably stretched, he also had built, cleverly interlacing the supports and crosspieces with pronged branches so as to carry out its rustic design.

"Yo' see that big white birch-bark swan? I makes dat. And dat hanging lamp?"—a lamp made out of a thousand twigs just like a bird's nest—he, Marcus, had also conceived and fashioned that.

"I guess when you get back to Africa, that's what you and the rest will be doing," smiled Jeremiah, a note of banter in his voice.

"Yes, why not? Isn't dat as good as anyt'ing else? After all, dat'd be native genius," he grinned back, not a whit disturbed by Jeremiah's sarcasm.

"Look at de Chinese and de Japs. Dey makes dere little carved iv'ry gods and dere elephants, and de whole worlds jes' goes crazy 'bout 'em. Go into de stores and try to buy one o' dem t'ings, and see what dey costs. Shucks, man, look at de fuss de white people is makin' over de t'ings that come out of King Tut's tomb. When we goes to Africa, and their ships put in at our ports, dey'll be just as crazy to buy de goods we makes wid our hands and brains. It all 'mounts to de same t'ing. Supposin' I builds my little birch boats and swans and little carved t'ings, builds 'em all my bawn

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days; suposin' a white man comes 'long and say, 'Shucks, you jes' a foolish Nigger. Why in hell doan yo' build big t'ings—big houses, big railroads and trains, and all de oder truck de white man builds?' Supposin' me and dat white man meets one end. God strikes us both down in his wrath. What den? Is de white man any better off than me? Is I any worse'n off dan he? Not a bit. He's dead, I'se dead, and we'se goin' to de same heaven—hell, whichever way we all is headin' for. Ebery man's goin' to be dead so long he's neber goin' fo member whedder he lef' behind him a palace or a pigpen."

"That's all very well," answered Jeremiah tolerantly, as if explaining away a child's difficulties, "that's all very well," he repeated, "as far as it goes. But the trouble with you, Marcus, is that you don't think far enough ahead. What about the things we create for our children, for them to carry on in turn to posterity? Your logic doesn't extend itself far enough."

"Dere agin you goes, King. I tells yo' all de time you gots brains, but yo'se just plain shortsighted. You talk jes' like a white man, yo' and yo' logic. Dat's jes' it. If yo' knows anyt'ing yo'd know that what yo' calls your 'logic' is a t'ing dat shouldn't be carried fur all de time. No, sir! Yo' should snap her off right short in places, and den yo' gets de bestest results. After a while, yo' doan runs de logic, but de logic runs yo'. Yo' starts de ball rollin' and she roll so fas' yo' can't stop yourself. I'se different. I goes wid logic so far as I t'inks I ought to go wid her. When she takes me too far out to sea, I stops right in my tracks. Dat's de reason I doan aim to work when I doan feels like it. Who's I goin' to work for? My wife and chillums? Hell, if I even had some, why de debil shan't I leaves some t'ings for dem to do? Yo' tinks I should pile dere bricks up for dem way high, and den dey piles some mo' bricks on mine, where does dat get any of us? We all piling up bricks higher 'n higher fo' what? For de Lord to blow 'em all down? I tell yo', King, de white mans calls us lazy, triflin', good-for-

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nothin's, and all dat—leh' 'em call me what they wants. I doan care, and ef I want to tarry a little and lay down under a shade tree and live like dat sometimes, yo' t'inks I'se goin' to worry what becomes of de damn old world? De world? She has been takin' care of herself dese—how many years, King, tell me dat? How long's de worl' been takin' care of herself?"

"Let me see," said Jeremiah, scratching his head. Then after a pause, "I swear I don't know, Marcus."

"Neder does I, and neder does I care. But what's de diff? What's de diff, King?" laughed Marcus.

"What time do you expect Murphy?" Jeremiah questioned after a brief silence. "Are they coming down on the boat?"

"No," replied Marcus, "I think he and Webb is goin' to drive down in Murphy's Packard car, and then dey goes to Long Branch. I thinks Murphy got a cottage down dere somewheres, and dey plays poker and drinks rum and fools wid de gals till Monday mawning, when dey goes back to de city."

"Delightful life!" smiled Jeremiah.

They smoked in silence for some minutes.

"Did you read de copy of de indictment I sends you?" Marcus inquired abruptly. "Dose fellows will be here any minute now, I guess."

"Yes, I read it," replied Jeremiah.

"What yo 'thinks 'bout it?" queried Marcus after a pause in which Jeremiah had leaned over the balustrade and flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"As I understand it, the indictment charges you with grand larceny in two counts. First, appropriating $25,000 of the monies and funds of the Association to your own use by false entries and omission of entries in the Association's books; and, second, it charges you with grand larceny in the same way of the sum of $20,000 at another time."

"De first $25,000 is de money I buys my house wid;

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and de nex' $20,000 is de money I has in Jamaica for ole Sally to live on."

"Who's old Sally?"

"Doan yo' remembah ole Sally who used to cook for your fahder, de woman who takes care of me when I was a li'l boy runnin' 'roun' yo' yard down home?"

"Mm . . . Mm . . ." murmured Jeremiah with widening eyes. For a moment he saw a halo around Marcus Cox's head.

"Do you mean that you used the Association's money in both instances for those personal matters?"

"Sure! Why not? Don't I belongs to de 'Sociation and everyt'ing I gots belong to it? I works for it day and night. It's got to suppo't me and my belongings. Yo' means I shouldn't a bought de house in my name?"

"No, of course not," retorted Jeremiah. "If it were within the purposes of the Association's activities to buy the house in which you live," he continued, "if we could stretch our imagination and concede that you were like a parson and entitled to a parsonage, buying the house is all very well; but certainly title should have been taken in the name of the Association."

"I done tole that little Nigger fool Webb de precise t'ing. I done tole him dat when he brought de deed to me. Yo' certainly doan get nowhere foolin' wid dese Nigger lawyers, and I doan trus' no white man eder. And what 'bout de other 'dictment, de $20,000 dat I have in Jamaica?" pursued Marcus.

"That you *had,* you mean. I guess it's all used up by now."

"No . . . she . . . Sally only gets de interes'; de whole t'ing is still dere."

Jeremiah pondered a moment. After all, very little harm had been done. The house was still there, the $20,000 was still intact. It might be that the prosecuting authorities of the state would be content with restoration, a deeding

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over of Marcus' house to the Association and the transmission of the funds in Jamaica to the Association's bank account in New York.

"Marcus," he advised, "both acts in the eyes of the law are unlawful, perhaps criminal acts, all depending on the intent—your intent to steal, to defraud the Association; but how does it happen that the thing has run along all these years? I thought you said you had spent money to settle it."

"I did t'ink it was all fixed up. Yo' see," he explained, "dese indictments come up during de war. I'd been speechifying 'round pretty plain. I done tell de members what I t'inks of de English and what I t'inks of de whole damn war; and befo' I knows it, de 'thorities gets after me—de British consul in New York sicks 'em on me. I'se sure of dat; he and dat little rat-face George Coates dat I trowed out de 'Sociation for stealing. He goes down to de British consul and complain dat I living off de members' dues and dat kind o' t'ing. At dat time George Webb was our lawyer, and jes' befo' he goes to camp to learn to be a so'jer, he tells me quick one day: 'Mr. Cox, if yo' gets me $5,000 I fixes dat indictment up fo' you.' I gits him de $5,000 and I doan hear no mo' 'bout it until jes' recently, when Owen Murphy ring me up 'bout it again. He was de same man in charge of de t'ing when George Webb fix it up befo', and dey's very t'ick all de time. Yo' never sees Murphy gaddin' 'round Ha'lem widout Webb. He's 'Me and My Shadow,' as de song says," ended Marcus.

A moment he pondered, then continued: "Dere's somethin' funny about de whole business. Yo' 'member I tell yo' about de time I had to chase George Webb from de house because I didn't like his gallivantin roun' wid Lido all de time? Well, it doan take long after dat for me to have dis whole t'ing reap up again."

This explanation of Marcus was enlightening to Jeremiah. He wondered if it were possible that the strings of

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justice of the great State of New York could be pulled by such remote and personal considerations. That was highly improbable, he thought. It must be just a coincidence. It must be that, sooner or later, the thing had to be formally cleaned up, and the time had now come.

"I don't think we need to worry, Marcus. I think everything will be all right."

"I ehn't worryin' any, but . . . I doan know," he added reflectively.

"I guess we'll be able to settle these things with—Murphy," Jeremiah was loathe to call the man's name. He thought very bitterly of him in connection with Lido Jones.

"I doan know about dat," he rejoined. "I'se got some-t'ing to say to dat man Murphy dat I doan t'inks he's goin' to like."

"Then I wouldn't say it," counseled Jeremiah, "at least. not now," he ended.

"I doan know 'bout dat eder," quietly rejoined Marcus, sucking vigorously at his black pipe.

A short silence, and Marcus knocked the ashes from his pipe. There was a noise as of a slammed car door from down below the slope. Marcus rose abruptly and peered through the shrubbery.

"Here dey is now, Webb and Murphy comin' up de hill."

"Hello, Marcus," greeted Murphy, apparently in high good humor. "Nice place you have here," his eyes roaming around.

Marcus Cox held out his hand and drawled slowly, "Howdye do, Murphy?"

Jeremiah rose as Murphy came up the steps.

"Howdye do, Mr. . . .".

"King," added Jeremiah.

"Sure—King! Forgot the name."

Jeremiah nodded to George Webb as he followed Murphy up the steps and on to the verandah.

"Take your coats off and make yo'selves at home," in-

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vited Marcus; and, turning towards the rear of the bungalow, he called: "Ebeneezer, bring us a drink. These gentlemens is thirsty, I doan doubt."

Owen Murphy winked over at George Webb.

"A little drink wouldn't go bad, eh, George? It's a tiresome ride through Staten Island, and it's as close as hell."

He tugged at the collar which encircled his thick neck. He was breathing hard for so young a man.

Ebeneezer arrived and laid a tray with glasses, ginger ale and soda, and a bottle of whiskey on a nearby table.

They went over, one after the other, and helped themselves. Marcus, too, poured out a drink of whiskey into a glass with ice. He sipped at it slowly.

"Well," he abruptly opened, looking towards Murphy, "what's de verdict? How about dat indictment? I thought dat was fixed and through with long time ago."

"No, it was just pigeonholed. The chief was going over a lot of old matters the day I called you up, and he asked me why I didn't get rid of it, get it off the calendar."

"Well, how is we goin' to get rid of it?"

"That's up to you, Marcus," replied Murphy.

"I thought when I pays you dat $5,000 jes' befo' you went to camp," Marcus remarked, turning to George Webb, "dat dat was to end de whole matter."

"I thought so too," lied Webb, "but you see, Mr. Murphy's chief came across it, and now we have to get it out of the way for good."

"Jes' what does yo' mean?" Marcus queried, still addressing himself to Webb.

Webb did not answer. Instead he looked expectantly at Murphy.

"I'll tell you," Murphy interpolated. "I have a little plan in my head. It's this. You let Webb enter an appearance for you—or rather, I think he already appears as your attorney of record. You authorize him to handle the matter now, and I might be able to take him into the chief, explain

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the whole thing, and perhaps recommend a *nolle prosse,* that the indictment be quashed," he explained. "But," he added, "you and Webb had better go into the next room and arrange matters; arrange your retainer and everything." He glanced significantly over at Webb.

"No need to go in de next room," replied Marcus promptly, "we'se all men here; we ain't no chilluns; and we kin speak our min's right out in meetin'."

"Well, you see, Mr. Cox, I have to have . . . to have a retainer—a substantial retainer—so much down cash and so much balance to come when the indictment is quashed," Webb suggested haltingly.

Marcus Cox stroked his chin thoughtfully for a moment. "Oh, I see," he remarked and turned his glance towards Jeremiah.

Jeremiah stared back at Marcus Cox without any apparent indication of what he thought or was thinking.

"How much dat's goin' to cost?" queried Marcus, his eyes roving from Murphy to Webb and back again.

"Five thousand down and five to come—after it's all over," promptly replied Webb.

"Ten thousand dollars in all," mused Marcus. "Dat's a lot of money—a whole lot o' money."

"Well, there's more work to this than you think. I'll probably have to get up a little brief; and there's conferences and . . . other things to be taken care of," he explained in his halting, stammering manner.

Jeremiah sat by watchfully. Occasionally, his gaze sought the distant hills and just as often returned to Murphy and to Webb. He now broke in, addressing himself to Webb.

"Isn't the question of a crime in this case altogether a question of intent?" he inquired.

"Exactly," responded Webb. "That would be almost the only question of fact for a jury if the case were tried. I think I can persuade Murphy's chief and Mr. Murphy himself that Mr. Cox did not commit a crime—in intent."

"Suppose Mr. Cox were to make a deed of the house

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to the Association and turn back the $20,000 to the corporation, wouldn't that end the matter? Wouldn't that satisfy the public prosecutor? After all, no harm has been done."

"It's not quite so easy as that," interjected Murphy, sizing up Jeremiah. He didn't like this man's smooth voice; there was something challenging in its quality. "If it were as easy as that there wouldn't be any thieves in Sing Sing today. All they'd have to do would be to disgorge when they were caught with the goods."

"Mind what yo' say 'bout t'iefs," warned Marcus, his voice acquiring a belligerent note.

"I was only drawing an illustration, Cox—I wasn't, of course, referring to you! Ha! ha! No—not by a damn sight," and Murphy laughed boisterously.

Marcus' eyes sought Jeremiah's and lingered there for a moment.

Outside a gentle breeze was rustling the trees. The night voices of the woods began to make themselves heard. It was getting dark.

Marcus Cox rose and switched on a light in the birch-bark porch lamp set in the rafters of the verandah overhead.

It was Jeremiah who took up the conversation.

"Suppose you give Mr. Cox a few days to think this matter over, Mr. Webb. That'll be time enough, won't it?" he questioned.

"Yes, but no longer," replied Webb.

"Yes. delay is dangerous," chimed in Murphy with significance.

Marcus' neglected glass of whiskey and melted ice lay by his side. He half-leaned, half-rested himself against a small round table by his chair. He gathered up the glass and sipped absentmindedly at his whiskey. Finally, with a last draught, he drained the glass and set it down on the table beside him. Taking a kerchief from his pocket, he slowly dried his lips; then, replacing it, he turned his gaze towards Owen Murphy.

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"Dere is one thing, Murphy," and his voice was cool, his tones slow and deliberate, "dere is one thing that I wants to mention to you about while we'se all here frien'ly like. It's about dat little secretary girl o' mine, Miss Jones."

The air was charged with stillness. It may have been the quality of Marcus Cox's voice.

"I want yo' to keep yo'self to yo'self and stop chasin' dat girl. I had to tell George Webb de same t'ing, and now I tells you to keep yo' distance. Yo' stands me?" and he looked deliberately into Murphy's cold eyes, which glared back surprisedly but disdainfully at him.

Owen Murphy made as if to rise from his chair, but Marcus Cox waved him back. A hot flame of contempt was surging over Murphy's flushed face, of contempt for these people, and . . .

"I knows what yo' is thinking," continued Marcus, "and I ain't through yet. I understan' that you took dat little girl out de other night in yo' car and yo' insults her."

"She told you that?" demanded Murphy.

"Yes, she tole me dat," replied Marcus, and paused.

It came—came abruptly, swiftly, crudely, as if irresistably springing from Owen Murphy's insides.

"The cheap little Nigger!" he rasped.

Poor Owen Murphy! He could not help it. Generations of white blood, the blood of white men, were speaking through his lips. At the same time, generations of black blood moved in the veins of two Negro men—one thoroughly black, the other light as Owen Murphy, but a Negro man just the same; and, simultaneously, two figures hurled themselves at one figure.

Marcus Cox reached his objective first. Owen Murphy, sensing the result of his hasty explosion, half-rose from his seat. Instinctively, his hands raised themselves as a defensive barrier. He was too late. The knuckles of Marcus Cox's fist found the point of Murphy's jaw with a resounding smack, and Murphy sank to the floor and rolled over like a stuck pig.

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George Webb sprang from his chair, but Marcus' voice stopped him.

"Stan' back dere, you little black Nigger, or I'll nail yo' de same way." George Webb sank back into his chair.

Jeremiah and Marcus had met in their rush at the point where stricken Owen Murphy was now lying.

Jeremiah gazed at Marcus, and Marcus gazed at Jeremiah.

"Well, I guess you've done it now."

"Yes, I guess I has," replied Marcus wearily, "but I'se glad. I feels relieved now. I'se been itchin' all night to splash my fis' in dat white man's face jes' as I'se done. He can do his worstes' now. I doan care."

Owen Murphy's eyes opened slowly. He gazed about him as a sleeping man awakes from a dream. Now he remembered. It all came back to him: he had been socked on the jaw! He roused himself into a sitting position and passed his hand over the point of his chin where Marcus Cox's fist had connected.

Seeing his friend attempting to rise, George Webb stooped over and helped him.

"I guess you fellows better get out o' here befo' I kills yo'," growled Marcus.

George Webb took their hats from a nearby table and holding his friend by the arm, helped him down the steps and out to the pathway.

At the foot of the hill, Owen Murphy turned, halted for a moment, and then, with all the hurt and hate of an outraged soul, shouted up at the bungalow: "You black son of a bitch, I'll fix you! I'll make you sleep in Sing Sing yet."

The night repeated it; the air repeated it; the trees sighed it: *"You black son of a bitch!"*

Marcus Cox and Jeremiah turned towards each other. They silently grasped hands and both were . . . unafraid.

A whinnying noise came to them from the far end of the verandah. They listened. Jeremiah went over, peered

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for a moment into the shadows, and then stopped dead in his tracks.

"My God!" he blurted out incredulously. "The damn little monkey has returned."

It was even so. Pedro's little black monkey had tired of freedom.

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CHAPTER XXI

DRUMS BEATING, brass instruments blaring, banners lifted on high, purple-uniformed and gold-braided, the parade of the Universal Negro Movement of the World started early that Saturday morning from Lenox Avenue and wound its way westward up the hill through 145th Street and on to Riverside Drive.

As before, Marcus Cox led the procession on his prancing white horse. As before, when Jeremiah had first gazed on that spectacle, a lofty banner shouted its crimson message: "BACK TO AFRICA."

Truly a curious sight for the dignified dwellers along Riverside Drive! As one elderly gentleman, taking his morning constitutional, testily remarked: "Must be all the Niggers in the world."

For once the Drive forgot its nice manners. For once windows were lifted, heads protruded, and, occasionally, a dishevelled figure showed itself from behind curtains indiscreetly opened.

Jeremiah himself was part of the parade today, he and the Joneses, mother and daughter, bringing up the rear in the High Commander's car driven by the purple-uniformed Ebeneezer.

Their goal was Fourteenth Street, where, alongside a pier, lay the rejuvenated good ship, *Goddess of Liberty*. They were to make a trial trip down the bay that day. No doubt, even at that moment, smoke was belching from her funnels in readiness.

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The affairs of the Association had been moving smartly. The cornerstone of a new building on the site of their old ramshackle hall had been laid the week previously—a seven-story apartment building with commodious auditorium, restaurant, and reading-rooms occupying the ground floor, and, somewhere below, a swimming pool, handball courts and other amusements for children. The living apartments were to be chosen by lots when completed, thus eliminating any possibility of favoritism among the members.

This much Jeremiah had accomplished, and he had laid the groundwork for other improvements. They were working on plans for a large, modern hospital where black doctors and nurses could hold forth and secure all the experience they wanted on black bodies. He wished he could do as much for the lawyers. He thought they needed practice more than doctors; but their situation was different.

Marcus, too, in spite of an occasional vacation at the Highlands, had been unusually active. At Jeremiah's suggestion, he had hied himself to Atlantic City, and presto! a branch movement had sprung into being. Not long afterwards, as a result, behold! a strike along the boardwalk in the ranks of the black chair-pushers. All these black strivers needed was a rallying cry, and "Back to Africa" was as good as any other. "Organize! Organize!" They had caught the shibboleth.

It was not so much "Back to Africa" in body as "Back to Africa" in the quality of their independence and spirit, that independence and spirit of which the slave marts of the world had robbed them through many generations.

Marcus himself typified his Movement. Back in his home, he was a morose, silent, brooding figure; but Marcus bestriding a white horse, Marcus haranguing his tribe or leading them forward—that was a different Marcus!

There he rode now, broad, chesty, expansive and expanding, bowing and grinning to the throngs as they gathered along the sidewalks of the Drive. Self-conscious? Mind-

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ful of the gibes and sneers and wisecracks which occasionally shot through the stark, surprised silence of the watchers? Not a bit. With shining eyes and white gleaming teeth, he was a supreme person, impervious, untouchable.

Week after week, ever since its initial number, the *Trumpet* had sent out its challenge—a new challenging note to black and brown and light-skinned America. There was dignity in being a black man, a brown man, or a yellow man—dignity to the first because of his blackness, and dignity to the others because of the strain of black strength pressed into them.

Of necessity, there were disputes. Harlem itself was divided into distinct camps. There were the Marcusites, the anti-Marcusites, and those in between, wanting to be shown.

There was only one cloud on the horizon, and it was more on Jeremiah's horizon than on Marcus'. It was easy for Marcus to forget things or to ignore them. When he had crashed his fist against the point of Owen Murphy's chin at his bungalow, fear of any consequence growing out of his indictment by the great State of New York had immediately departed. Not so for Jeremiah. He was fearful of the vice-talons of the law. To him, a crime was a . . . crime, a disagreeable concept.

The same thing was true of Amanda Jones. A day in prison would have been a lifelong disgrace to her. Even having to defend oneself against a charge was a calamity.

She and Jeremiah were, at that moment, discussing the situation. Lido was out on the front seat of the car with Ebeneezer. Nattily dressed—as nattily as the nattiest of the women along the Drive—with her bright coloring and black eyes, she attracted as much attention as the parade itself. Innumerable guesses followed her: "That must be the big Nigger's wife. . . . What a shame! . . . What a pity! . . . Nice little thing like that married to a big black man. . . . She looks like a white woman. . ."

Lido was enjoying it immensely. It was quite a lark. Jeremiah's and her mother's undertones from the rear

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seat of the car sounded like bees droning in the distance. She and Jeremiah had been quite distant after that night in Primrose Park. It was wearing off, however, and they were getting to be better friends.

"When's the trial coming up?" Amanda Jones was asking of Jeremiah.

"Next week, when the fall term of court starts, I believe."

"Are you going to be his lawyer?"

"I can't—have never been admitted to the bar in this country, you know," he explained.

"That's a pity."

"No, I don't think so," Jeremiah replied. "It would be better to have a good American lawyer."

"White or black?"

"Well, to be frank, I don't think much of the breed around Harlem; but that's equally true of the rank and file of white lawyers. You know it takes experience to make a good lawyer; and the colored brother suffers from lack of that. His brains and training may be all right, but he needs more experience than falls to his lot around the small district courts. If I were Marcus, I would hire the best trial lawyer that money can buy."

"Why don't *you* talk to him? He doesn't think I know enough of these things to listen to me."

"I've told him that a half-dozen times," Jeremiah replied, "but he has a crazy idea in his head. He says he'll be his own lawyer; if I can't try his case he'll do it himself. Claims he can do it just as well as most of the lawyers he's seen in court."

"That's ridiculous!" exploded Amanda.

"Not only ridiculous, but very dangerous," dryly rejoined Jeremiah.

"It would be awful if anything were to happen to Marcus. He's the only one who can hold these people together," and Amanda Jones looked questioningly at Jeremiah.

"Well, he hasn't committed murder; they can't hang him. The worst that can happen to him is a prison term."

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"A prison term? You talk about that as coldly as if it were a plate of ice cream," she observed huffily.

"Yes, why not? One, if he be disillusioned, has to face ultimate possibilities; and this is nearer than that, it is a . . . probability."

"That would be awful," she repeated. "I can't think of that as being possible."

Jeremiah glanced over at Amanda Jones with half-veiled eyes. Finally, he ventured: "You see, Marcus is a reckless skate, after all. He can still rough it with the roughest. He doesn't care a darn little bit for himself. He could be made to care if somebody else were involved, somebody who was . . . whom he knew to be finer," he explained, "and who would also be hurt."

"Like who?" she questioned.

"Like yourself, Amanda."

He had addressed her by her first name on occasion, when they had come to talk very seriously together; and she, too, on similar occasions, had called him by his first name—Jerry, the name that Lido often used.

"You are Marcus' great little god," he continued. "You could make a real big man of him, I believe, by marrying him. Why don't you?"

Amanda Jones stared over silently at Jeremiah. He was still somewhat of an enigma to her. Was he serious? Was he being sardonic, or what? She wasn't sure. She looked at him and held her peace.

Lido's voice broke the silence: "There's the ship! Look, Mother, our *Goddess of Liberty!*" Her cheeks flaming and her eyes sparkling with excitement, she turned her face to them in the rear of the car.

Jeremiah thought that he had never seen her so beautiful. He gazed from mother to daughter. "Undoubtedly two fine spirits, two thoroughbreds, but cast upon such strange soil," he pondered.

Marcus, dismounting from his white horse, was met at the head of the gangplank by Captain Joshua Hippolyte,

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commander in chief of the good ship *Goddess of Liberty,* the only black naval captain in the world, perhaps—certainly the only one of his kind in the great United States of America. He was a captain from the top of his woolly head to the toes of his black, shiny boots—a whale of a man, tall and large and broad, towering above Marcus like some mountain peak, with smiling, parted lips showing as fine a set of teeth as ever was set in a human head.

The entire phalanx of Negro paraders was drawn up in columns along the length of the pier facing the ship; and, as the High Commander and Captain Hippolyte met at the head of the gangway and clicked heels and exchanged salutes, there was an outburst of cheering. The moment seemed opportune for a speech. Apparently, one was expected, for the cheer died down and there ensued a quiet hush. With a wave of his hand, however, Marcus removed that expectation.

"No speechifying today," he remarked, "Leh's all forget our troubles and have a good time," and the columns broke ranks and rushed for the deck of the *Goddess of Liberty.*

Gently, the ship was urged from the dock by a tug and began to move down the bay. Marcus was a gay person as he moved from group to group among his followers. Occasionally, he halted and, from some vantage point, surveyed the whole scene. Was he satisfied, or was there something lacking? Jeremiah was slightly curious about what was going on in his High Commander's mind. They were slowly moving abreast of the Statue of Liberty. Suddenly, Marcus jumped down from a stanchion on which he had been standing and rushed towards the bridge where Captain Hippolyte stood in command.

"Hove to, Cap'en! Hove to! We's got to stop," he shouted excitedly.

Captain Hippolyte looked inquiringly at his chief.

"We got's to go back. I fergits somethin'," panted

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Marcus, a trifle winded by his hasty trip down the deck to the captain's bridge.

"Forgot something?" queried the captain.

"Yes, I fergets my white hoss. We's got to go back and git 'im—and den we all takes a ride down de bay together."

Captain Joshua Hippolyte was every inch a captain, nurtured in the best traditions of the sea. His superior in authority, his High Commander, had spoken. He signaled for the departing tug, turned the ship's head about, and went back to the pier for Marcus' prancing white horse.

They all sailed down the bay together.

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CHAPTER XXII

JEREMIAH WAS very much disturbed. The day of Marcus Cox's trial had arrived, and he felt that no adequate preparation had been made to meet the issue. Unable to sleep, he had risen early and gone out on the verandah for a quiet smoke.

He had watched the morning sun creep up from behind the wooded hills and flood the valley with light. A soft mist hung suspended as if in mid-air, and through that soft haze the slanting rays were touching the surrounding countryside with glorious color. It brought a soothing calm to Jeremiah. Maybe they would get the breaks, after all.

He heard the sound of Marcus' footsteps moving around inside and even at that moment the steps were coming towards him.

"Well, I'se ready, King!" and seeing that Jeremiah was also dressed, Marcus continued: "I didn't even hear you get up; musta been up real early."

"Yes, quite a little while," rejoined Jeremiah wearily.

"Man's what's de matter wid you? You looks as if you goin' to a funeral."

"Yes, Marcus, I *am* worried. I wish you would take my advice, ask for an adjournment of your case today, and hire a good lawyer—the best that money can buy—to try your case. It's sheer madness for you to attempt to do it yourself."

"No, King, what I tells you last night goes. If you can't rep'sent me, I'se goin' to do it myself. I ehn't afraid."

"It isn't a question of fear, Marcus; it's a question of

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wisdom. You know very well I'm not admitted to practice in New York and can't appear for you. In any event, even if I were, it would be better to retain a local lawyer who knows the ropes."

"No, I ehn't goin' to fool wid any of dose Nigger ham-fatters like George Webb; and I doan trus' no white man. No, sir, not if I has to swing for it."

"You'll probably swing then," retorted Jeremiah irritably.

"Oh, shucks, man, you'se jes' pessimental! You'se never seen me in action good yet; jes' you waits. I'se goin' to 'sprise you. I still remember lots o' things I learned when I used to sit in de coteroom and watch you tryin' cases in San Fernando. Come on, leh's us be goin'!"

They took their time and walked down to the boat.

A sharp tang was in the air; and as they arrived in New York and approached the courthouse in Longacre Square, there was an atmosphere of great hustle and bustle. It was the beginning of the fall term, and lawyers and their clerks, as well as their clients, were returning to the scenes of legal conflicts temporarily stayed in June like a host of children flocking back to school after a summer vacation.

Outside the large Indiana-limestone courthouse, with its sweeping approach of tier-upon-tier of solid stone steps, a crowned figure of Justice, blindfolded and with even-balanced scales thrust forward, was perched aloft on the facade of the building over the open doorway. That figure caught Marcus Cox's eye. He halted and gazed up at it curiously.

"Dat's supposed to be a statue of Justice, King, ehn't it?"

"Yes," replied Jeremiah, stopping beside his friend.

"Why does dey always put somethin' over she eyes?"

"That's just emblematic, you know, Marcus; it typifies her as being blindly impartial, uninfluenced by a a sight of either one claimant or the other. She is unable to see

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a suitor's position and is equally blind to his power, his wealth, or his . . . poverty," he added.

"Is dat so? Never t'aught dat was de reason. T'aught she was jes' a blin' ole lady who couldn' see. But if dey makes her blin' bec'osen dat's dere idea, dey's wrong, King, dead wrong. Justice oughta be able to see. She oughta has a dozen wide-open eyes 'stead of two blin' ones. She needs plenty of eyesight to dole out what's comin' to people."

"Yo' knows, King," he continued, looking up at Jeremiah with that expression of enlightenment he took on whenever he thought he had blundered on an original idea, "sometimes I thinks God is jes' like dat statue up dere—blin', blin' as a bat."

"What makes you think so, Marcus? I think most of us get all we deserve, don't you?"

"Mebbe so, but sometimes I thinks He is—either blin' or deaf. But that's bec'os He jes' nacherly gets tired of so many people bawlin' at 'Im all de time, I suppose," he continued as if to himself. "Den He jes' takes a nap and leaves de damn ole world to take care o' itself. Yes, dat's it, I guess," he concluded, as if now thoroughly satisfied with his reasoning.

Throngs of people were hurrying to and fro around them, here and there congregating into groups.

The largest group of all these sightseers—or business-seekers—was a crowd of Negroes, black Negroes, huddling clamorously together, now talking in anxious whispers, now gesticulating in heated argument, in a spot on the south side of the building just underneath a window which commanded a full view of the square and park.

The assembled multitude—for it was a small multitude—of blacks, were all members of Marcus Cox's flock. Information had come to them that, inside that room, the windows of which rose over their heads, the trial of their High Commander was to be held. Admission to that room had been denied them—by orders, they had been told; and they

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had gone out and selected that spot for their gathering place, the better to aid, abet, and encourage him.

What, indeed, were the white people doing to their chief, their leader, their High Commander? Grand larceny! Misappropriation of their money! Why, that was a joke! There wasn't a man, woman—nay, nor a child—in that assembly who would not pluck out his or her eyeballs and lay them at the feet of Marcus Cox. Had he not worked wonders for them? Had he not built, purchased, created, somehow, a great big ship for them? And had they not all sailed down the bay the Saturday before with flags flying and brass band tearing away on deck How come? they asked each other in the typical language of Harlem. Their money, the money that each and every mother's son and daughter of theirs gave had been contributed to "the cause"—*their* great big cause, the cause of their suffering race—and it was Marcus Cox's to use without question, without accounting. Were they not the United Negro Movement of the United States and of the World, and was not that Association they—themselves? They could not understand how any such charge, any charge at all, could be laid at Marcus Cox's door when they were perfectly willing to give him, yes, their last penny.

The fact that the Universal Negro Movement of the United States and of the World, Inc. was an entity, separate and distinct from them, from each and every one of them, and that Marcus Cox had been charged with larceny of the funds and property of that intangible and dead thing known as a corporation, was incomprehensible to them.

"How come de co'poration to make charges 'gainst de High Commander when we is all satisfied?" argued one giant bystander in the throng.

"It's not de corporation; it's de white people who is jealous ub us and our ship," expounded another.

Whatever the original reason, the battle gauge had been thrown down many weeks ago in that little bungalow

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in the woods of New Jersey; and even at that moment the case of "People of the State of New York against Marcus Cox" was being called by the fat, round-headed clerk of the court as he adjusted his tortoise-shell spectacles on his stubby red nose.

Owen Murphy was on his feet and, with a cynical leer over at Jeremiah King and Obadiah Jackson as they came towards the railing, he answered in a loud, pompous voice: "The People are ready."

To Owen Murphy this courtroom was his own special bailiwick. He, perhaps more than the judge sitting upon the bench, represented the law—the strong arm of the law. It was when he let up that the criminals had a breathing spell; it was at his bidding that they were pounded and ground into the dirt. He proposed to do some grinding right here in this case. Who was his opponent? That black, moon-faced Obadiah Jackson? What a joke! He'd make mincemeat of him. Maybe King, that stuck-up rhiney-faced Nigger was going to try the case—some kind of an English woodshed lawyer. He'd teach him a few tricks also. But where was Cox, the defendant?

A few minutes before, Marcus had risen from his seat and whispered to Jeremiah: "I'se goin' in de washroom for a moment; you hol' things down till I come back," and he had not yet returned.

"The defendant is ready," called Jeremiah in answer to Owen Murphy.

The judge—Judge Guffy was his name—glanced down at Jeremiah from beneath a pair of bushy, bristling eyebrows. One saw Judge Guffy's eyebrows before any other part of him. Black in color, with graying patches around the edges, set underneath a flat, bald dome of a head, these eyebrows jutted out like hairy embattlements. There was a small, boxlike contraption on the desk before him and a pair of earphones connected therewith which occasionally he adjusted to his ears and at other times permitted to rest loosely on his shoulders.

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In a lull of the court's business some minutes before, Marcus had whispered with a snicker into Jeremiah's ears: "De justice outside de courthouse is stone blin'; dis one in here seems to be stone deaf."

"Is one of you the defendant?" inquired Judge Guffy. "Where is the defendant?"

"He just stepped out; he'll be right here in a moment," replied Jeremiah, at the same time turning to look backwards down the entrance aisle. Judge Guffy's gaze and that of the rest of the courtroom followed Jeremiah's.

Yes, Marcus Cox was right there. He had that moment entered the door and was coming up the aisle. Purple-uniformed and gold-braided, High-Commander gold sash across his breast, his cockade hat with flowing ostrich plume trailing in his right hand and sweeping the floor, he presented a most unusual figure for a New York courtroom—a figure to make the bystanders and court attendants stare and, having stared, to direct a questioning gaze at each other, uncertain whether to smile or be . . . contemptuous of the monstrosity of this—Nigger who was importing his monkeyshines into the sacred portals of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

"My Lord!" gasped Jeremiah. "He's done it."

So that was why Marcus had gone to the washroom—to change into his regalia. Jeremiah turned towards the bench to see what effect it was having on Judge Guffy. Owen Murphy was openly snickering.

For a moment Judge Guffy's eyebrows seemed to bristle more bristlingly. Then, as one peered into his steely blue eyes, one discerned a merry twinkle lurking in their depths.

"Who are you?" he was saying as Marcus came inside the railing and stood beside Jeremiah.

"I is de defendant, Marcus Cox, High Commander of de Universal Negro Movement, your worship, and I wants to handle my own case. My fren' here, Mr. King, is a lawyer; but he ehn't admitted to de bars of dis state. He's a English lawyer; but I would like yo' worship to do me

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the favor of 'lowin' him to sit 'longside me and help a little."

Marcus Cox' manner was calm, collected, dignified. Aside from his bizarre dress and Jamaican English, he appeared to be at perfect ease.

"Do you mean that you have no money to hire a lawyer?" inquired Judge Guffy kindly. "I can assign counsel to you if that is so."

"No, Jedge, that ehn't it. I thinks I knows more 'bout my case than anybody else, and I jes' wants to defend myself."

Judge Guffy turned and whispered to his attendant standing beside the bench. It must have been funny, because they both smiled broadly. Many a lawyer and other persons about to depart resumed their seats. Word sifting through to the corridors outside that something interesting was going on in Judge Guffy's court brought more spectators. Marcus was fortunate. He was going to play to a full house.

"All right, gentlemen, proceed," declared the judge briskly.

From a lottery box beside him the clerk was drawing small squares of cardboard one by one; and, as he drew, names were called. At each name, a man from a group seated apart from the other bench-warmers in the courtroom separated himself from his fellows and took his seat in the jury box. This continued until twelve men, good and true, constituted Marcus' jury.

Owen Murphy rose, received the twelve pasteboard slips from the hands of the clerk, and meditatively shuffled them as he would a poker deck, alternately lifting his gaze to the selected jurymen. The faces that he saw there seemed to him all good, honest, sheepish faces—most all Celtic like himself—and their names, too, he noted, were also good, honest Celtic names.

As Owen Murphy handed the slips to Marcus, and they were spread before them on the table, it occurred, too, to

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Jeremiah that either New York was very good to the Irish or the Irish were, compassionately, very good to New York; for, as represented on that jury, they were there in considerable force.

But Obadiah Jackson was leaning over and whispering: "Try and get some Jews on. They ain't so prejudiced."

"Shucks," whispered back Marcus, "dey's all de same when it comes to judgin' a black man. 'Sides, I loves de Irish. Dey's good lovers and good haters," and he lifted his eyes and once more surveyed his jury. A large, raw-boned member of the panel met his gaze and smiled frankly at him. Marcus grinned back at him.

Owen Murphy was now on his feet. He was making his opening address. He did not intend to be lengthy, he explained. It was not necessary. The case of the People against this defendant was simple, clean-cut, clear-cut. The evidence consisted mostly of documents—the books, the check stubs, the cancelled checks, and the books of the Negro corporation, the corporation of which the defendant Cox was the moving spirit, the dominating head. The oral evidence, such as it was, would come from the lips of the defendant's employees, his associates, his friends. There could be no gainsaying this testimony. He would ask them to lay aside any sympathy they might have for this erring and misguided colored man; he would ask them to treat the defendant as though he were one of themselves—and in the saying this, there was that oily smirk in his voice, in his manner, in the characteristic rubbing together of his fat hands, which sent a hot flush through Jeremiah. Murphy's voice rose ringingly, as he asked the jury to protect honest men and women from . . . thieves.

Marcus Cox leaped to his feet. "Objection!" he thundered. "I 'jects to dis man callin' me names—at dis stage of de game, anyhow," he added.

Judge Gaffy adjusted his earphones and leaned forward.

Marcus repeated, now more collectedly: "I 'jects to my

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le'ned enemy over dere callin' me names." Marcus, as his own lawyer, was beginning well.

"That's right, Murphy, don't sum up, just state what the evidence will be," admonished the judge.

"The galled horse winces!" apostrophized Murphy under his breath, with his lips bared backwards, but loud enough for the jury to hear.

He, the representative of the People of the State, felt so confident of the facts that he took it upon himself to elect to try this defendant only on the first count of the indictment, that of appropriating and converting to his own use $25,000 of the corporate funds of the Universal Negro Movement. He would show them, though, as evidence of the defendant's larcenous intent, that the defendant embezzled other funds of the corporation. He had transmitted $20,000 to a bank in his home in the West Indies.

George Washington Coates was the first witness called on behalf of the People—a skinny, elongated black Negro who leaped to the witness stand with the air of a hungry dog yapping at an inviting bone.

"Dat's de one I trowed out de 'Sociation; de cat-face Nigger! I wishes I strangled 'im," growled Marcus to Jeremiah.

"Bang!" went the gavel on the judge's desk; and looking severely over at Jeremiah and Marcus, Judge Guffy remarked: "If you two want to confer together, you'd better go outside. This is no place to hold a conference."

"Mr. Coates," smoothly began Owen Murphy, "I show you a piece of paper and ask you what that is—if you know?"

"Sure I knows," responded Coates, "dat's a check. I writes it; de Grand Commander ober dere," pointing at Marcus, "he signs it. He tells me to draw it; I draws it. He signs it. He sends me ober to de bank and says to me, 'Hab dat ce'tified.' I does it; I brings de check down to Broadway where he goes in some white man's office and dey's all sittin' 'roun' a table. He says to me—de Gran' Commander says to me—'George, I'se takin' title today.' He hands ober de check to a white man, and de white man gi'es he a paper, a

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deed—de deed to de house up on a Hundred and T'irty-eight Street."

"What was your position in the Negro Movement of the World—in the corporation at that time—the date of that check?" pursued Owen Murphy.

"Me? I was Gran' 'Sistant Treasurer."

"Are you still that in the corporation?"

"No," snapped George Washington Coates. "He," pointing to Marcus, "trowed me out 'cause I tinks—"

Jeremiah prodded Marcus, and Marcus jumped up.

"I 'jects," he shouted. "I 'jects to all dat Nigger has to say—he's jes' a goddamned liar anyhow."

There was a gasp from the back of the courtroom. Most of the jury smiled broadly. The big, rawboned Irishman, the one who had smiled at Marcus, let out a loud guffaw. Judge Guffy adjusted the earphones which he had a few moments before cast aside and leaned forwards. Jeremiah was whispering furiously in Marcus' ears.

"May it please de cote," Marcus now blandly, suavely, urged, "dis man is tryin' to say what's in his min'. I 'jects to dat. His min's a dark secret anyhow; and I 'jects to dat as irreverent, infinites'mal, and . . ." he groped for his words, and finally blurted out: *"non compos mentis."*

Judge Guffy's mechanical ears were now aiding him.

"You mean irrelevant, immaterial, and incompetent, don't you?"

"Dat's jes' it, Jedge; dat's jes' what I means, jes' what you done says."

"Objection sustained!" pronounced Judge Guffy, gazing up at the ceiling after a moment's pause as if for inspiration.

"Never mind the reason," cautioned Owen Murphy to the witness, "but tell us—"

Again Jeremiah was whispering in Marcus' ears.

"Please yo' honor and gen'mans of de juries, we's willin' to 'cede all dis man is talkin' 'bout. We's willin' to permit dat I buys dis house for $25,000, and I takes it in my name.

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I'se willin' for you gen'mans to know," turning to the jury and especially to the lanky, brawny Irish member with a smile, "dat I send $20,000 to—." Jeremiah was up and whispering in his ear. "We's got a branch of our organ'zation dere. I doan denies dat."

"All right," snapped Owen Murphy, "your witness!"

Owen Murphy was becoming somewhat rattled. He was accustomed to trying cases against lawyers who observed the rules of the game. This short, black, theatrical Marcus Cox was saying and doing things never heard of in a courtroom. He was converting the whole trial into a buffoonery. He was likely to laugh the whole thing out of court if he, Murphy, were not careful.

It was Marcus' turn to cross-examine George Washington Coates.

He rose, looked frowningly down at a sheaf of papers on the table before him, paused a moment, and then turned to a court attendant at his right: "Officah, ken you gets me a glass of water?" at the same time slipping his hand into his side pocket, from which a noise as of jangling coins instantly proceeded. Jeremiah kicked Marcus' foot under the table, and Marcus withdrew his hand from his pocket. The court was evidently no place to tip a man who brought him a glass of water.

The attendant looked at Judge Guffy, and Judge Guffy nodded back to the attendant. Water was brought, and Marcus emptied the glass. Moving from behind the counsel table, he went forward directly in front of George Washington Coates as he sat on the witness stand.

Legs spread firmly apart, he began: "Does yo' knows me?"

George Washington Coates glared at Marcus. "Sure I knows yo'."

"Who is I?"

"You is Marcus Cox."

"Anyt'ing else?"

"Marcus Cox is all I knows yo'."

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"Ehn't I de President General High Commander?"

"Dat's what's you call yo'self, but you doan means a damn thing to me," George hurled at Marcus.

"I t'rows you out de 'Sociation, though, doesn't I?" shouted Marcus.

Judge Guffy banged his gavel. His earphones were working perfectly.

"You gentlemen mustn't argue with each other," he admonished; but, at the same time, he bent towards the attendant by his side and again whispered to him. They both grinned. Judge Guffy was finding some surcease from his judicial labors.

Marcus shuffled his typewritten sheets and again glared at George Washington Coates.

"Does you 'member de time when we has a meeting in de hall when de 'Sociation votes on buying me a house?"

"Sure I 'members," returned Coates. "Me and Cow Gittens was de only ones who 'jected."

"And dey carries you both out when I gets through wid you, ehn't dat so?" shouted Marcus.

"Sure, but I'se goin' to get even wid yo'," threatened Coates as he leaned forward and pointed his finger at Marcus.

"So! You'se goin' to get even wid me, eh? Is dat de reason why you'se here testimonyin' today? Tell de judge and de gen'mans of de jury why you is here today, George Coates," and he waved his hands in a broad gesture.

Marcus felt that he was scoring heavily. He turned backwards towards Jeremiah and grinned broadly at him.

Coates did not answer. Marcus prodded him:

"You'se jealous of your High Commander, ehn't you?"

"I ehn't jealous of nobody," returned George Coates doggedly. "You'se nobody to be jealous of, anyhow. You ehn't even an American citizen. I is—I done natur'lized myself, and you ehn't," he shouted back with renewed force, feeling that at last he was turning on his inquisitor.

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Marcus felt that he had not done so well in that question. He again shuffled his typewritten pages and returned to the fray: "Leh me ax you one t'ing, George Coates: Is yo' livin' wid yo' wife? Ehn't you livin' wid anodder woman?"

Owen Murphy got on his feet.

"Your honor," he interjected, with an air of patronizing weariness, "I have sat by here and listened to all this buffoonery because I want to give this defendant a chance; I want him—"

Judge Guffy leaned over his desk and interrupted: "If you have an objection to make, make it, Mr. Murphy. I don't want any speeches."

Murphy flushed and retorted: "Then I object on the ground that this is not proper cross-examination."

Jeremiah was now again by Marcus Cox's side, whispering things in his ear.

Marcus lifted his hand to the court:

"Yo' honah, will you hears me a minute befoh yo' rules on de question? What I aims to do is to 'peach dis man's debility. Dis man stultifies himself. I aims to show to de gen'mans of de jury," and he turned towards the jury box with sweeping hands, "as I tole 'em befoh, dat dis man is jes' one god-damned liar!" and he glared at George Washington Coates.

Judge Guffy seized his gavel and brought it down with the bang of an explosion on his desk.

"Mr. Cox," he said, beetling his bushy eyebrows down at Marcus, "this court does not permit such language. Under the circumstances of this peculiar case, I've been very lenient with you; now I want you to understand that you've got to behave yourself."

Marcus bowed affably to Judge Guffy and towards the jury box.

"I 'pologizes to yo' worship if in my 'thusiasm I'se ascended de cherish' traditions of de law. I humbly 'polo-

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gizes," and he again touched his bending head with his right hand in a gesture towards the bench and towards the jury box.

A gentle snicker ran throughout the courtroom. The big, rawboned Irishman on the jury again guffawed loudly, then hastily placed his paw of a hand across his lips. Marcus once more looked down frowningly at his typewritten notes.

"Dat's all," he finally declared. "I has no more questions to ask de witness," and he strode towards his seat. Turning towards Jeremiah, he whispered: "How'se I doin', boy?"

Jeremiah smiled at him and whispered back: "You're just one goddamned fool, but you're getting away with murder."

"De same you did when you tried dat murder case of Tahiti's husband in Jamaica," he smiled back at Jeremiah.

Owen Murphy, however, was not to be denied. Marcus had admitted that he had purchased his house with $25,000 of the funds of the corporation; and, from the minute books of the corporation, Murphy submitted proof that there had been no authorizing vote either at a meeting of the members of the corporation or by the board of trustees. He proved further that Marcus had cashed a check for $20,000 and transmitted it to a bank. Beyond that he was not able to go. He fell down in his efforts to prove to what use the $20,000 was being put.

At that point, the People of the State of New York rested their case against Marcus Cox.

Jeremiah was in high glee. He did not believe that a conviction could be secured on the evidence as it existed. He felt that, with a clever plea to the jury, there was grand possibility of an acquittal. He wished now that he had been able to handle the case throughout. He whispered in low undertones now to Marcus: "Quit where you are and go to the jury."

But Marcus was stubbornly shaking his head: "No, I wants to go on de stand and tells my story."

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Jeremiah rose and approached the bench: "Your honor, will you declare a recess for a few minutes? I would like to advise with the defendant."

"All right," agreed Judge Guffy as he gathered his robe around him and retired to his chambers in an adjoining room.

Outside, in the lobby of the courtroom, Jeremiah argued and battled with Marcus. There was nothing to be gained by his taking the witness stand and everything to be lost. Under cross-examination by Murphy, he would have to answer questions; he'd have to tell the use being put to the $20,000 in Jamaica, and supporting old Sally out of the funds of the organization was an unlawful act. Obadiah Jackson added his pleas to those of Jeremiah; but Marcus was all enamored of his performances in the courtroom, particularly of his tilt with George Washington Coates.

"You waits," he boasted, "I does de same thing to that fat Irishman Murphy as I does to dog-face Coates when he axes me questions."

"And you'll hang yourself as sure as God made little apples," retorted Jeremiah.

"Den I hangs myself, but I'se goin' on de stand jes de same."

He went on the stand. The fifteen-minute recess over, court had reconvened, and Marcus Cox was telling his story to Judge Guffy and his Jury.

He told how he had first organized the Universal Negro Movement Association with a handful of members; how that handful had grown to thousands in Harlem; how branches had grown up in other states and all over the world wherever Negroes lived, especially in Africa. He told of the work the Association was doing in Harlem; that they owned a substantial amount of real property; that they had just layed the cornerstone of a new seven-story apartment building with a large auditorium on the ground floor to take the place of the old hall they had occupied in the past; that they aimed to provide a swimming pool,

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handball court, and other amusement areas in that building for the children of their members; that, in time, they aimed to provide special educational centers for the children of their groups; that they were at that moment organizing a bank, and plans had been drawn for a community hospital at which colored doctors could operate, since they had found difficulty in securing such experience in the white hospitals of New York; that, in brief, it was his, Marcus' aim and that of the men and women with whom he was associated, to organize the Negroes in all parts of the world, wherever they lived, into an intelligent movement which he felt sure would make for improved living, improved outlook, and improved usefulness.

His story was simple; it was effective; it was impressive. Judge Guffy had leaned forward and was listening intently. The jury, too, had their attention focused on Marcus.

Judge Guffy's voice broke in on Marcus' recital.

"And what's all this Back-to-Africa stuff that I've read in the papers about you and your Movement, Mr. Cox? You need not answer the question if you don't want to, but it may have some bearing here. I'll have it stricken out if it's not material," he promised.

Marcus was both surprised and flattered. After all, these white people, this white judge, anyhow, whom he supposed very much aloof and apart from Harlem and its affairs, had read, had heard about him.

He turned towards Judge Guffy: "Well, it's like this, Judge," and Jeremiah, as he leaned forward and listened, sensed that he was going to hear the inside story of "Back to Africa" for the first time, "when we first forms our li'l organ'zation, dere was just a few of us, and we talks 'mong usselves that dis man's country was no place to live in, dat is, for a Nigger man or a Nigger woman; even if we wo'ks for lot of money it ehn't no use—we can' even spen' it. We can't go 'roun' like white peoples and enjoy ourselves."

"And what about Harlem? Aren't there plenty of places up there?" questioned Judge Guffy.

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"Well, doan yo 'thinks we want to go out of Ha'lem sometimes?" plaintively questioned Marcus.

"I see," nodded Judge Guffy. "Go on!"

"And, as I was sayin', we 'cided de bes' thing to do was to buy us some lan' in Africa and builds ourselves some kin' of a place where us could do as we damn pleases—'cuse me, Judge, I means, where we kin lives as we likes; and we talks dis thing over with some moh people and some moh people; and de projeck grewed and grewed and it's still growin'. But dat's de idea—to fin' us a place whey we can spread ou'selves, and whey we doan need to go in at de back door to get what we wants."

Judge Guffy took off his earphones and turned to Owen Murphy.

"Are there any questions you want to ask, Mr. Murphy?" and his blue eyes wandered out speculatively as if at some distant object in the back of the courtroom.

"I sure have, Judge—your honor," he corrected, leaping to his feet. This was the moment he had waited for.

"Marcus—," he began.

"My name is Cox, *Mr.* Cox, if you pleases, Mr. Murphy," returned Marcus with a belligerent note in his voice.

"All right, Mr. Cox, then," emphasized Murphy, "do you draw a salary from the corporation?"

"No, I doan draw no salary."

"How do you live?"

"What's dat?" returned Marcus, turning his head to one side.

"I said," repeated Murphy slowly, "how . . . do . . . you . . . live?"

"De organ'zation suppo'ts me."

"Oh, I see, the corporation supports you."

"Yes," responded Marcus tartly.

"You own an automobile, don't you?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a car?"

Marcus turned towards the bench: "Does I have to

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answer dese questions, Judge? I objects. What he's axing me has nuthin' to do wid dis case."

Jeremiah, over on his seat, was fidgeting uneasily.

"Yes," ruled Judge Guffy, "I think he may examine you along those lines."

"It's a Lincoln," replied Marcus.

"A Lincoln!" crooned Murphy, spreading his eyes and lips up towards the jury as if making an interesting discovery.

"Yes, a Lincoln," repeated Marcus.

"Did you buy that with the corporate funds also?"

"Sure I did. Why not? I uses it in my business, in de business of de co'poration."

"And for your pleasure, also—is that not true?"

"Yes, sech pleasure as I has."

"And for your family?"

"I has no family."

"Well, how about your secretary—Miss Jones?"

Marcus glared out frowningly at Murphy; but Murphy, toying with a piece of string in his hands, was quizzically looking into the jury box.

"Look here, Murphy, you keep that li'l gal out o' dis case," he finally blurted out.

"All right, Mr. Cox," rejoined Murphy with a deprecating gesture towards the jury, "I suppose that's a little affair that you'd rather not talk about."

"It ain't no affair, but Miss Jones simply has nothing to do wid dis case."

Some of the jurymen were bending forward. They were following this questioning closely. So was Judge Guffy.

Jeremiah half-rose from his seat. An attendant nearby frowned down at him. He sat back. Owen Murphy was continuing: "You have a pretty nice house, haven't you, Mr. Cox?"

"What does you means by a 'nice' house?"

"A nicely furnished house, fine furniture, rugs, bric-a-brac, and that kind of thing?"

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"You oughta knows; you'se been dere often enough—and sampled plenty of my liquor, too," Marcus exploded.

Murphy was taken aback for a moment but quickly recovered himself.

"Sure I've been there often. Do you know what I came for? It was to discover how much you were stealing. I wanted to nail you to the cross for stealing these poor Niggers' money."

His eyes bulging angrily, Marcus Cox raised himself and made a step forward in Murphy's direction, but a court attendant standing by his side pushed him backwards into the witness chair. "Leh' me go—leh'me get at 'im!" he cried.

Again Jeremiah attempted to rise from his chair. It was just this situation he had warned Marcus against. Judge Guffy's gavel, however, brought a quick silence into the room. He turned towards Murphy.

"In the first place, Mr. Murphy, your remarks are highly improper. I warn you gentlemen of the jury," looking in their direction, "to disregard those last remarks of the public prosecutor. In the second place, Mr. Cox," turning towards Marcus, "you must control your temper. This is a courtroom, not a barroom."

"He gets my goat," complained Marcus.

"Yes, that's just what Mr. Murphy is aiming to do, and evidently he is succeeding. You are a witness now, you know. Proceed, gentlemen, proceed!"

Murphy continued: "And this Lincoln car and all this furniture and stuff were paid for out of the corporate funds, is that so?"

"Yes," sullenly replied Marcus.

"Now, during the period of your leadership of the organization, you have collected considerable money, haven't you?"

"Yes, consid'ble."

"About a million dollars?"

One of the members of the jury dropped his head on his arm and gazed towards Marcus Cox intently.

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"I doan know 'bout a million dollars, but consid'ble money."

"Would you say a half-million?"

"All of dat, if not more," replied Marcus proudly.

"And you've had your share?"

"Yes, whatever I needs."

"Now this $20,000 that you sent to the West Indies, what's it doing there?"

"It's dere for a purpose."

"What purpose?"

"De interes' is used to supp'ot a fren' of mine."

"A friend of yours—man or woman?" pressed Murphy.

"A woman, a ole woman."

"Oh, a ole woman, eh?" mocked Murphy, and continued: "So this organization which, as you say, 'grewed and grewed' from a mere handful, this organization which 'grewed' so big that you are able to collect over a half-million dollars from its members—this is the organization whose funds you use to purchase your house, to buy your Lincoln car, to get your furniture, and to support a ole woman down in the West Indies, eh? Is that true, Mr. Cox?"

Murphy had goaded and jeered Marcus to the limit of exasperation. He now leaned forward in his chair and, shaking his finger at Murphy, answered: "Leh'me tell you somethin' for good and all. I'se de organ'zation and de organ'zation is *me*, dat's what. I does all de work; I makes de organ'zation what it is. I collected de money. De mens and womens members gives it to me to do what I likes; and if I chooses to throw every cent of it into de ribber, dere ehn't nobody who's goin' to stop me, you hear what I says? I ehn't afeard of what you kin do, neder," and so saying he crossed his arms across his chest and looked defiantly at Owen Murphy.

About an hour afterwards, the jury went out and brought back a verdict of "Guilty." Marcus was remanded to the Tombs to await sentence.

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CHAPTER XXIII

IT WAS LATE OCTOBER. Gold was on the hills; purple and orange and brown sereness on the valley—strident colors blending magnificently with soft, bashful, unobtrusive tones; and the beauty of it all smote Jeremiah's consciousness with the poignancy of the . . . unattainable.

There were times when Jeremiah, deeply moved, became deeply religious. There were times when, supremely touched in the fibres of his being, the impulse came on him to bend his knees to the earth in holy adoration, not as one who worships in stone and wooden temples erected to a conventional and impossible God, but as one prostrates himself in the anguish of a moment too annihilating for tears. His failure to fall on his knees now stemmed from the fear that some little soul, seeing him thus in obeisance, might misunderstand the source and the impulse of such obeisance.

Jeremiah had no use for conventional prayer and disdained to be caught in such an act of weakness. Gods of the world! gods of heaven and earth and sea, if such there were, could certainly have no interest in a frail human cry. Gods of the world—strong, mighty gods, strong in purpose and essence and being, could not be in accord with a creature less strong, less insistent, and imperious than themselves. Strength of such strength, portion of such godhead, Jeremiah's soul, though in stress and torment, would never emit a squeal; but, rather, imperious in its demands, it would assume no other cry than that of an equal demanding of its equal—a cry similar in tone, quality, and content

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to that which a great leader of a great people once made to his Jehovah when, smiting a rock in Horeb, he tossed the tablet of stone to the earth—a broken mass. . . .

Virulent summer had gone; majestic autumn, symbol of decline and retreat, had arrived. Jeremiah felt today the weight of his years the way a tired man, striving toilsomely uphill, suddenly becomes aware that the load on his back is heavy and the journey long. And yet, there was that in him which lifted his spirit to the hills, to the hills because they were high.

"Yes," Amanda Jones was saying as she gently rocked herself on the porch of the bungalow the evening after Marcus had elected to be deported from the United States rather than be imprisoned, "it's such a pity! When everything was going so fine!" And, after a pause: "I suppose we'll have to carry on, though."

"I suppose so," replied Jeremiah wearily.

"And is Marcus still in—"? Amanda hesitated. The word "jail" had an ominous sound for her.

"The Tombs?" completed Jeremiah. "No, the judge allowed him out on bail during the two days that the ship will be getting ready. He went uptown to finish some business. I expect he'll be here any moment now."

In a far corner of the verandah, Lido Jones was powdering the tip of her nose. Perched on the back of her chair, little Jocko, now their pet monkey, catching his reflection in Lido's pocket mirror poised before her, was making frantic efforts to possess himself of that wonderful reflector.

"Behave, Jocko!" Lido reproved. "Do you know what happens to naughty little monkeys who try to be smart? They are spanked!" She playfully made as if to tweak his small blunt nose, at the same time going towards Jeremiah and her mother.

"Here, Jerry! Take your old monkey."

Jeremiah withdrew his eyes from the distant hills and met Lido's bantering smile.

"And its mistress?" he tossed up at her.

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"Maybe—and maybe not," she flung back at him over her shoulder as she sidled through the porch door and went inside the bungalow.

"And there is nothing to be done?" Amanda Jones was continuing.

"No, nothing—absolutely nothing," replied Jeremiah.

Amanda Jones rose.

"Then I will go with him—on our own ship. We'll take the *Goddess of Liberty* and go anywhere we damn please," she cried passionately.

"The hell you say!" and Jeremiah stared at her with unbelieving eyes.

Around the bend, rolling and side-slipping like some drunken thing, a taxi was whining its way upward through the deep sand of the roadway.

"That's Marcus now, I think," remarked Jeremiah as they both went towards the gate and waited in silence.

"I'm going with you, Marcus," Amanda cried in greeting. "We'll take the *Goddess of Liberty* and we'll go to West Africa, to Ethiopia, or anywhere you please."

Marcus came forward—for the moment a somewhat careworn, crestfallen, wilted figure. He lifted his sombre eyes to Amanda. They opened—wide, wider, a little wider still—until they stared. A light came into them, darkened at first, then brighter and, finally, like a sunrise. It was stark surprise, then unbelieving hope, and then—joy of joys!—realization.

"Yo' means dat, Mandy?" and his voice was half-question, half demanding cry.

"Sure I mean it, Marcus. I'm *going*," she repeated.

A momentous pause; a momentous silence; and then, as if crashing from empty space upon their ears, the roar of an airplane overhead. Instinctively, Marcus turned his gaze aloft. In the moment sudden inspiration came to him.

"Look, Mandy, look! De next time we comes back we's coming from de clouds jes' like dat. We's only begun to fight. God-damn them!" he shouted.

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Another moment, and they all reached the porch together.

"King," Marcus suddenly erupted, "I'se been thinkin'. Yoh knows what, I'se goin' to 'point you my successor. Yes, I'se goin' to 'noint you as the leader of my people just like the prophet Elijah threw his cloak over Elisha before he went to heaven and 'pointed him as the leader of the Israelites. But, King, dere's one thing I wants you to understand—I wants you to look out for our little gal Lido. If you don't yoh knows what, I comes back in my plane"—Marcus hesitated, then blurted out: "or I chops yoh head off!"

"And have I no choice in the matter?" interjected Lido's voice.

"No, none at all," chimed in Jeremiah as he went over to the rail where Lido was balancing herself and gently put his arm around her slim waist.

Lido's black eyes went up to meet the eyes of Jeremiah, her friend: and it seemed to Jeremiah that they were filled with unutterable fountains of loyalty and trust.

Soon Ebeneezer, their Jack-of-all-trades, appeared on the scene and announced dinner. They went inside and sat down as usual. Another moment, and through the dining-room windows came the buzz of conversation, and, a little later, a rumble of low, happy laughter floated out through the verandah and over the hilltops.

In the midst of their deep distraction, they had found their African kingdom of a smile within their Negro souls.

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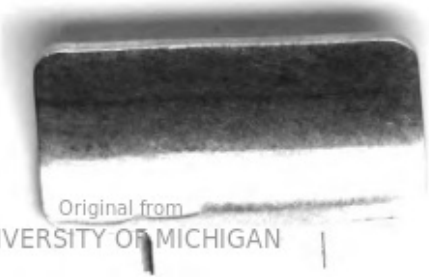

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The BLACK CHALLENGE

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