B 961,414

false measure

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

FALSE MEASURE

A NOVEL

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

f a l s e

m e a s u r e

A SATIRICAL NOVEL OF THE LIVES

AND OBJECTIVES OF UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS NEGROES

by

charles a. smythwick, jr.

THE WILLIAM-FREDERICK PRESS

NEW YORK 1954

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

GRAD
8 28
S: 25a

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
COPYRIGHT 1954 BY CHARLES A. SMYTHWICK, JR.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number : 53-10280

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form, except by reviewers for the public press, without written permission from the copyright owners.

THE WILLIAM-FREDERICK PRESS

313 WEST 35TH STREET NEW YORK 1, N. Y.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

GL
254618
DUE
10-30-92

TO

ROSE HARRIS

MICHAEL AND DARYL

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE CHARACTERS AND THE INCIDENTS IN THIS BOOK ARE ENTIRELY THE PRODUCT OF THE AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION AND HAVE NO RELATION TO ANY PERSON OR EVENT IN REAL LIFE.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

preface

FOR FAR too long no novel has been written about the lives of upper middle-class Negroes. That they even exist is unknown to most whites. This is partially the fault of upper middle-class Negroes themselves. They have set themselves apart and are unwilling to socialize with some respectable whites who offer them outstretched hands, because they consider these whites below their social level.

The existence of this stratum of the Negro population is generally known to intellectual whites but not to the public at large. They have been written about in surveys and treatises but not in a novel which would have less restricted circulation.

For some years I had been formulating in my mind such a novel because I felt it was needed. All classes of other segments of the American population have been fictionalized scores of times. But alas, the preponderance of stories about the Negro covers the lowest classes, thereby compounding a myth that all are such. These depictions have wearied me. Most publishers seem to think that such stories about Negroes are the only ones that will sell. I disagree.

The people about whom this story is written make up the group from which Negro leadership is drawn — whether imposed, elected, or selected. I have felt that this novel would be more realistic if the names of actual towns and schools were used instead of fictitious names, as is sometimes done. Springfield was chosen as the setting for Joan's early life, and Smith as her college, because the former is a typical, medium-sized New England city and the latter is a typical, first-class New England girls' school. None of the characters mentioned has a counterpart known to me. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

I wish to thank Marion Morrell, E. Mae McCarroll, Emma Croxen, and Robert E. Hunter for their indispensable encouragement, constructive criticism, and aid during the trying period this story was composed.

C.A.S., JR.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

1

IT WAS eight o'clock in the evening in the middle of the week, early in September. Before a large mirror in a well-appointed apartment bedroom at 155th Street and Edgecombe Avenue, a woman in her early thirties was putting the finishing touches to her make-up. She was due to leave for her club meeting in a few minutes. She walked gracefully and casually away from the mirror; then back to it, slowly turning and contemplating herself; she was satisfied with what she observed.

Joan was about five-six, with an aesthetic distribution of firmly fleshed curves. Hers was an extraordinarily fine *poitrine* counterpoised by an harmoniously sculptured *derrière*. Her waist was slim and her shapely body was supported by exquisitely fashioned thighs and legs. This was a work of art, a body beautiful. Joan's face was oval, its skin very fair, without a blemish. The cheeks were round and firm; the mouth was small, full, and provocative. The nose was sharp and well chiseled. Her eyes were green, shaded by long lashes. The high forehead was topped by naturally wavy, auburn-colored hair, parted in the middle and hanging to her shoulders.

She was wearing a melon-colored, slender skirt of soft wool with a five-inch split up the front. It struck her just below the calves. Her blouse was beige lace with ruffles at the neck, her stockings sheer beige, and the shoes high-heeled brown suede with open toes and ankle straps, which accentuated her comely legs. She put on her melon-colored, well-tailored, form-fitting suit coat, then a brown felt, close-fitting hat with a brown veil; now the brown gloves, then the brown fur scarf made up of six large, luxurious baum marten skins. Finally, she picked up the brown suede bag.

Joan studied herself in the mirror. She noted the glint in her hair and her fair skin. As she ran the palm of her hand

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

over her trim waist and hip, well pictured by her excellent tailor, she inadvertently smiled at herself and knew that she would be taken for a white person any place she went.

After standing before the mirror for a few minutes, she turned slowly and removed the hat, scarf, gloves, and coat, dropping them on one of the twin beds. Then she stretched out on the chaise longue. Her husband was due any minute. No rush. She didn't want to get to her club meeting too early anyway. A little late, if anything: her entrance would be more spectacular.

Joan's musing was interrupted by the click of the front door. It was her husband, she knew. When the door opened she heard two voices. Whom was her husband bringing in? She jumped up and ran to the mirror, rearranged her hair and retouched her make-up. As she completed a turn before the mirror, viewing her full figure, her husband appeared at the bedroom door.

"Hello, my darling," he called cheerily.

Viewing him in the mirror, she responded resonantly, "Hi, baby, have a nice day?"

He had and wasn't very tired, he replied. He realized she was about to leave for her meeting, but would she have time for a cocktail with him and his friend?

Someone she had never met? She turned from the mirror and faced him, putting on her most pleasing smile. "Of course I will. Who is he?"

"Oh, someone who came by the office on business an hour or so before I left. He's supposed to pick up one of your club members after the meeting tonight."

"Who, pray tell?"

"Prudence Dunlap."

A little surprise in her voice, Joan said, "Why, she's supposed to be my best friend but she hasn't told me she had a new man in town! I phoned her yesterday. She didn't say a word."

"That's something you'll have to take up with Prudence."

Clifford Farnsworth was an indulgent spouse. He gave Joan everything she asked for and some things she didn't. An insurance company executive, his income was above the middle-income group. He could be, and was, more than

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

simply a good provider. Clifford was of average height and was conservatively well dressed. His color was light yellow. He was in his late forties and his closely cropped hair was receding and graying at the temples. Early in their marriage eight years before, Joan had suggested resuming her teaching, to occupy her daytime hours, but Clifford had forbidden it. In his soft-spoken, refined voice he had told her that he wished his wife to remain at home. Because of this attitude on her husband's part, Joan devoted her excess energies to social activities, with both a small and a capital *S*. There were her strictly Social activities and her social philanthropic activities. The latter took more of her time than her money. Most of her money, provided liberally by her husband, went on her back.

"Joan," Clifford said, "let's go in and meet our guest."

She took a last look in the mirror. Then, kissing him on the cheek, she took his hand as they went to meet his friend. When they reached the door of the sitting room, the guest arose. Joan thought without manifesting it in her features, "Gee, he's handsome." He was six feet tall and slender. The ready-made suit fitted him well. His skin was fair, his hair black. He was almost white. "Why hasn't Prudence told me about this man!" Joan smiled to herself.

"Dick Robinson, my wife Joan." Then the proffered, well-manicured, soft white hand and the "Pleased to meet you" — with exaggerated effusion, at the same time the pressing of her husband's fingers.

The guest was fascinated by Joan. After they exchanged commonplace amenities and then had settled onto chairs, Joan realized he was staring at her. Not that she objected, but she was afraid her husband might notice. To break his stare, she suggested helping the maid with the drinks. "Martinis?"

The men agreed. Dick's eyes followed her as she moved toward the kitchen.

In minutes Joan returned, preceded by the maid with the tray of drinks. The maid, Emma, was skinny and unattractive, but she was efficient and had been long in their employ. After serving the drinks she said she would be available for about another forty-five minutes if another round

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

of drinks should be wanted, and then she returned to the kitchen.

"I understand you know my friend Prudence, Mr. Robinson," Joan commented as she offered him a glass.

"Oh, yes, we were schoolmates some years ago at Fiske and I've seen her off and on down through the years. I reached her by phone today through your husband and arranged to meet her after her meeting tonight. I've heard she's divorced now. Is that true?"

"Yes," Clifford smiled. "About a year ago, and the New York *Star* had a field day airing her and her husband's personal affairs while the court proceedings were going on. However, Prudence, who brought the action, won and got substantial alimony."

"What does her quondam partner do for a living?" asked the inquisitive guest, thinking of the alimony.

Joan said, "He's one of Harlem's most successful physicians. That is, financially. I don't think he knows too much medicine." Then, beaming at her husband, "I'd never call him if my Clifford got sick."

"What does Prudence do? I reached her at a government office."

"She's a supervisor at one of the district offices of the State Employment Service," Joan answered.

"Then she should do all right with her alimony and her salary."

Clifford laughed. "Does that interest you?"

"Oh, no," the guest explained. "I just wondered whether or not she had sufficient income to maintain her at her accustomed standards."

"Tell me," Joan broke in, "what brings you to New York and how long do you intend to stay?"

Robinson replied that he was with the Federal Security Administration and had been working out of the Albany office covering rural communities. At his request he had been transferred to New York City. He had been with the Social Security Administration since his release from the Army in late 1945. No, he wasn't married and had never been married. Joan thought, "I'll ask Prudence why such a handsome and eligible man has never married." He was living at the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Theresa Hotel but he was looking for an apartment because it was too expensive. But with the housing shortage, particularly for middle-income Negroes, he expected he might have to remain at the Theresa for some time.

Joan interrupted to say that she had to leave. It was half-past nine and the meeting was to start at eight. They had three more rounds of martinis and Joan was beginning to feel hers. She wanted to get out in the air. She gave Emma instructions to set out dinner for the two men.

Dick Robinson asked to be shown through the sumptuous apartment before she left. "Why, of course," Joan said. She and Clifford led their guest through the six-and-a-half rooms. The entire apartment was carpeted wall to wall. The furniture was modernistic, the living room with sectional pieces, three armchairs, and a huge, circular glass coffee table — plus the correct floor lamps and properly blended pictures on the walls. There were smaller pieces and the oversized television combination. On a table in front of the picture window there was a vase of chrysanthemums. Joan loved flowers and they were changed often. There were wall-covering drapes. A library adjoined the living room. There were full bookcases from the floor almost to the ceiling. It contained the other usual accouterments — a large library table, deep restful chairs, reading lamps, heavy framed pictures on the wall, and some hidden card tables. Joan had more use for the room for her card tables than she did for the books. When Clifford had the time, he pulled a book from the shelves.

There was a master bedroom with twin beds covered in glazed chintz. A wall-covering mirror, floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall drapes, chests of drawers, dressing table, and bulging clothes closets redolent of jasmine. And the faint aroma of Joan's perfume throughout.

The guest room had a three-quarter bed in dark mahogany with a rose satin bedspread and matching satin draperies, a chest of drawers, and two matching chairs.

The maid's room was furnished in maple. The drapes and bedspread were chenille. In the kitchen there was a built-in breakfast nook, and the dining foyer just off the kitchen was furnished in blonde mahogany.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Following the tour through the apartment, Joan insisted she must leave at once. Her husband helped her into her suit coat. He stood off and looked at her after she carefully placed her hat, fur scarf, and gloves. He remarked that the large topaz-and-gold earrings (with matching bracelet), purchased by him from Cartier's, went well with the outfit. Robinson agreed enthusiastically. He thought Joan the most beautiful woman he had ever met.

Joan asked for the car keys, planted a quick kiss on Clifford's cheek, and bade them goodbye and a pleasant dinner. Clifford was to come to the meeting to pick her up in the guest's car.

* *

The meeting was at Beatrice Lynch's, on 143rd and Convent. "Well, everyone must have arrived," Joan thought as she pulled up in her Cadillac sedan in front of Beatrice's house. She had to drive a block away to find parking space. Searching for a space, she picked out the cars of other members: Prudence's Chrysler, Harriet's Packard, Veronica's Roadmaster, Helen's Kaiser. A last check of her make-up before locking the car door.

Beatrice was Joan's chief social rival. She was the wife of a judge and their town house was as elaborate as Joan's apartment. Beatrice was of average height. Her hair was blonde, worn in a short feather-cut. Blue-eyed and sharp-featured, she was shapely and wore her clothes excellently. Hers was a cold refinement. Her smile never seemed spontaneous; it always appeared to be forced. She was a Vassar graduate, and now had a nine-year-old son, who attended an exclusive progressive private school on Fifth Avenue in the Sixties. He was the only Negro child at the school.

Joan was vivacious and outgoing with people she knew, provided they were at her social level, whereas Beatrice, try as she would, could not affect the sparkle and ebullience Joan always possessed. There was no fondness between these two women. Joan disliked Beatrice and Beatrice disliked Joan, but they respected each other. Each was jealous of the other and they tried to outdo each other in clothes, furnishing their homes, their cars, and other manifestations of af-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

fluence. However, whenever they met, one would think they were the best of long-lost friends, the way they kissed and gushed over each other — and complimented each other on how beautiful and attractive each was.

As Joan ascended the stone steps to Judge Lynch's house and rang the bell, she said to herself, "I know I've outdressed the other women here but I wonder what Beatrice is wearing."

Beatrice, positive it must be Joan by this time, answered the bell herself. Seeing it was Joan through the glass door, she flung the door open and stretched out her arms. The two embraced and exchanged their usual insincere, flattering remarks. They went from the vestibule into the thickly carpeted hallway with their arms about each other's waists, talking and laughing in high-pitched voices.

"I haven't seen you since June," Beatrice said. "I heard you spent most of the summer at Martha's Vineyard."

"Yes," Joan replied. "I sent you a card from the Vineyard when I finally settled there after my Canadian tour. I suppose by that time you and your young son were ensconced at your Maine summer retreat."

"Yes, and the judge flew up every weekend. It was lonesome alone in the house during the week. The place is so rambling and isolated. I was afraid at night. I had only one servant, and a female at that." She smiled thoughtfully. "Joan, dear, you must come up and spend some time there with me next summer."

Joan had been told of Beatrice's elegant summer place and she knew Beatrice just wanted to get her up there so she could show it off and try to make her envious. All right, she'd go. But first she'd do over her house at the Vineyard and then invite Beatrice there for a week after her visit to Maine.

"Why, Bea, darling, I'd just love that," Joan bubbled. "You're such an excellent hostess."

"Joan, you're simply ravishing in that new fall suit! Where from?"

"Tailored Woman," Joan matter-of-factly replied. "And your dress, Bea! Where *did* you find it?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Bergdorf Goodman," Beatrice replied equally casually.

Beatrice cut a regal figure in her royal blue, light wool dress with a high neckline and her navy suede shoes. The gold choker drew attention to the delicate neck, and there were matching gold earrings.

The meeting was being held on the first floor in two spacious, attractively furnished sitting rooms separated by sliding doors which had been opened to form one huge room about which the twenty-one club members were scattered and engaged in small chatter. Beatrice led Joan to the door leading off from the hall and when they stepped into the room, with her arm still round Joan's waist, she called out in her high, cultured tones, "Girls, girls, here is our beautiful Joan!"

All eyes turned toward Joan. She smiled prettily, thoroughly enjoying the attention. Some of the girls ran up to her and she hugged them and kissed their cheeks. She moved about the room, shaking hands and embracing others in turn. There were remarks such as *Joan, you simply look gorgeous . . . Joan, you are even more pretty than you were in June, if such were possible . . . You're just a beautiful hussy in your new fall outfit, my dear . . . Joan, I just love you, you're so pretty and wear your clothes so well . . . Now that you're back, everybody'll have to chain their man . . .* and cheerily, *I hate you because I can't possibly look as good as you do!*

The comments blended into Joan's favorite harmony. *I love you for that . . . You flatter me, sweetheart . . . Oh, stop . . . Thank you, darling . . . As pretty as you are, you say that to me!*

The fur piece and hat taken by Beatrice, Joan seated herself beside Prudence, her best friend. Of the twenty-odd women in the room there was only one who would not have been taken for white. That one, Helen Terrence, possessed certain qualities that endeared her to the others nevertheless. Membership in the group required leisure-class manners, plus university training, plus what they considered *success*, either one's own or one's husband's, and, of course, good looks and smartness in the most modern sense. Helen

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

them one more opportunity to flourish themselves and get publicity, usually in the national Negro weekly newspapers and monthly Negro magazines.

In this group, Joan and Beatrice each considered herself the Social leader, the arbiter, the standard-setter. Hence, their rivalry and under-the-surface reciprocal dislike and envy; yet patently, they were the best of friends. Joan had been president of the club for almost two years. At the last meeting before summer, Beatrice had been elected unanimously. The term of office was indefinite because they didn't adhere too rigidly to their by-laws, with respect to technical procedure. However, regarding acceptance of new members and admittance of guests at their parties and dances, they zealously complied with unwritten by-laws known to all. There wasn't a striving Negro woman in New York, possessing the required unwritten requisites, who didn't want to get into this club. So much so that, if she possessed the light color, good looks, education, and personal achievement, either through herself or her husband, she would fete members of the club, hoping her name would be brought up for admission. Those in the club had arrived socially. They had reached a social pinnacle up to which other women strived. They were New York's Social dictators. They knew it and acted it.

Prudence and Joan had just launched into a discussion of Dick Robinson, when Beatrice interrupted the general buzzing to call the meeting to order. Everyone quieted down. Beatrice began, "I think the first order of business should be the minutes of our last meeting in early June." She moved to the dividing point between the two sitting rooms, papers in hand, so she could be seen and heard better, haughtily conscious of the fact that she was presiding over the most looked-up-to, respected, and successful group of Negro women in New York. And that meant in the United States. She was a little less than supercilious in her tone and manner when, Veronica having finished reading the summary of the minutes of the previous meeting with its references to the dance committee and what they were supposed to do, she asked Veronica, who was chairman of the dance committee, for a report.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Veronica Peyton annoyed Beatrice. Not that Veronica didn't possess everything a member of her group ought to possess; because she did, and more than some. Veronica was a junior high school teacher, and was forever climbing up those dark, dirty, dingy steps into the filthy slum homes of some of her pupils, taking them gifts when they were ill, always meeting representatives from social agencies in their homes so that conditions she imagined existed could be corrected. Furthermore, she was always trying to enlist the services of her friends to collect money for those people — usually low-lifed Negroes. She even had the nerve to want you to go around to these slum homes, delivering packages and the like. Beatrice didn't mind giving a little donation to these small enterprises of Veronica's, but she wasn't going to be climbing any dirty, dark stairways in slum tenements and running the risk of picking up vermin. Besides, you might get raped by some of those cut-throat niggers in that area.

Then, Veronica didn't always view an occasion in the proper perspective. There she was in her slacks, well-tailored green gabardine, of course, from Wanamaker's where she had a charge account, but slacks nonetheless. This was their first fall get-together and all the girls had come out in their latest finery, new fall suits and dresses, shoes and hats and handbags, as befitted this event. But Veronica came in those slacks and a brown three-quarter length box coat, her hands shoved down in the pockets, and without a handbag. And no hat!

Veronica was standing at the end of the room with both hands pushed down into the pockets of her slacks. She reared her heels at times in narrating the progress they had made in arranging the fall dance. An unruly wisp of her long red hair was continually falling in her face as she gestured with her head. She would brush back the incorrigible strands of hair with the back of her hand, momentarily straighten up and then replace the hand in her pocket. She was wearing a kelly green sweater that blended with her green eyes. She could have posed as a sweater girl for anybody's magazine. She had a round, childlike face with a small nose upturned at the end and a little mouth which always had a smile. Her

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

height was a little below average, about five-three, but her contours were better than average.

"Now girls, you know there are five members of our entertainment committee," Veronica articulated slowly. "At no time since our last meeting have all five of us been together at one meeting and never the same ones at successive meetings. Of course, the intervening summer weeks, with everyone out of town or in and out of town, were responsible for that, not a lack of initiative on anyone's part. As for me, you know I was in France for eight weeks, but since I've been back I've met with two other members of the committee and talked with the others by phone. It seems there's a split in the committee, two against two, with me neutral, as to whether we should have our fall dance uptown or downtown. Two are dead set on having it at the Towers, the Essex House, the Taft, or the Waldorf, because it would be more in keeping with who we are and our position as a group. The other two want it at the Savoy, if we can get it for a closed dance on that particular Friday night, because they say the music is always better and everybody seems to let themselves go and have a much better time. Downtown everybody's so reserved; they don't drink as much and try so hard to present the proper picture that they act like a bunch of phonies, and then in the end don't have as much fun as they ought to have, considering the amount of money we put out for our large formal dances. As for me, I agree with the latter group and would rather have the affair at the Savoy, if we can get the hall the night we want it, but I thought that rather than cast the deciding vote myself, it ought to be put up to the club as a whole. After that decision is made, we can go to work and arrange the dance. How about a show of hands as to what section of the city you prefer for the dance?"

There was a chorus of yes's.

Beatrice was sitting statue-like, with her face cold and immobile, but with her eyes glued to Veronica as Veronica talked. Beatrice frigidly asked, "Don't you think others of us ought to be allowed to comment before a vote is taken?"

Joan melodiously said, "Oh, Veronica, darling, I too

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

think some of us should be allowed to comment before a vote is taken," and then smiled sweetly.

A few of the others nodded their heads. Veronica cut her eyes at Beatrice and then feigned a haughty attitude, throwing her head back and to one side, looking down her nose with her eyes half closed and pursing her lips. She spoke with an English accent, "My dear Beatrice, since you raised the question suppose you be the first to comment."

Without changing her expression and without moving, Beatrice said, "As far as I'm concerned this dance should be held downtown. Since this is New York City and our group is accepted at the best places, we should get as far away from common niggers as possible, not only this time, but for every affair we have. The Savoy is all right, but it's the peasants' and the laborers' hangout and even though they're excluded when we're there I don't like the location and the connotation the name Savoy has for many people."

"I would rather go downtown for our dance too, but not for exactly the same reasons that Beatrice does," Joan spoke up. "On public nights at the Savoy, if you make up a party and contact the manager beforehand, he'll make complete arrangements for you, reserve a box, assign you a waiter, and so forth, and it *is* possible to enjoy yourself observing the black proletariat enjoying itself. However, I think *our* dances should always be in a different setting, more in keeping with *our* tastes, even though the common darkies *are* excluded when we're there and we don't have to mingle with them."

Excited and irritated, arms akimbo, Veronica stormed, "Aw, for Christ's sake, no matter how great and important and high society you glamorous women think you are, in the eyes of most of white America you're still just a bunch of niggers — in spite of your extensive wardrobes, your good looks, your white faces, your cars, your homes, and your training. As for me, we ought to have the affair at the Savoy. Our last one in the spring was at the Essex House, so why not have this one uptown? Furthermore, if most of you were honest with yourselves, you'd admit you prefer having it uptown, but you just want to be damn different and do things most Negroes can't do."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Helen Terrence chimed in above others trying to speak. "I agree with Veronica."

Prudence went along with what Joan had said. Harriet Douglas agreed with Beatrice. Two others said they agreed with Beatrice. Then three others said they agreed with Veronica. So many were speaking at once and others clamoring to be heard that Beatrice rose austerely and called them to order, saying that Veronica had the floor and was conducting the meeting until the discussion of the dance was over. If they wished to speak, raise their hands and wait until recognized by Veronica, and don't interrupt another speaker, no matter how much they may disagree.

As a compromise, Veronica suggested that all formal discussion as to where the dance should be held be closed at that point and they vote on their choice at the next meeting. Joan objected. The next meeting was not scheduled for another month and since the dance was tentatively set for the first week in November, they might not be able to engage a hall on such short notice.

"Well, then," Veronica said impatiently, "each member call me up within the next couple of days and let me know what her decision is. Then I'll pass it on to the full committee and we can go to work."

Calmly, Beatrice interposed, "That's not the proper way to do it, Veronica. All members should be present in person at a meeting when such a vote is taken."

More ruffled, Veronica replied, "Am I not to be trusted? Do you think I'd give a wrong count?"

"I have an idea," Prudence said enthusiastically. "Why not have a luncheon meeting Saturday at one o'clock at Flamingo's? Everybody should have thought it over by then."

On a show of hands there were no dissenters. So the discussion as to what part of the city would be host to the Concordians and their guests was held in abeyance until Saturday afternoon. The luncheon meeting would afford them another early chance to display their good looks, their attire, and their cars.

Other minor items having been disposed of, Beatrice said the next order of business would be candidates for membership, if there were any. They hadn't accepted a candidate for

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

more than two years because they deliberately kept their membership at a fixed number of twenty-three, and nobody ever resigned from this club, except for very very special reasons. About eight months before this meeting, one of the members took up permanent residence in California and resigned. To fill this vacancy, one of the girls had submitted the name of a close friend of many years' standing, a former classmate. The candidate was very promptly blackballed, in secret ballot, by no less than five members. (One thumbs-down was enough to keep her out.) The sponsor was furious at the heavy vote against her friend and challenged the girls to give their reasons. No one spoke up but Beatrice and, in doing so, let it be known how she had cast her supposedly secret vote. Beatrice forced a smile and in a modulated tone explained, "Your candidate may possess some fine attributes as far as you're concerned, but we just don't feel she's what we want in our club. I've heard that before she married her assistant district attorney she kept company with a common bartender for some months. Because she's proved herself to be indiscriminate in one important instance and continued it over a long period, we're afraid she may do something even more reprehensible after becoming a member of our club, and we couldn't tolerate that."

The sponsor had fumed. "That's not your reason! It's mainly that she's not white-looking enough to suit you. She possesses everything else equivalent to what the others here possess."

Icily, in a manner unusual for her, Joan had said, "That may be true. Her color may have something to do with it. After all, all of us are more Anglo-Saxon than anything else and we must be careful about those with whom we mingle on a social level." Joan had let it be known how she had voted.

The sponsor had fairly screamed that it would have been more honest for Beatrice to say it was the girl's color that was keeping her out rather than mention one of her affairs, because as she well knew there was hardly a woman in "this goddamned, clannish, snobbish club" who hadn't carried on a clandestine affair with some nigger man she wouldn't be seen with publicly because he was below their so-called social

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

level. And that was true, she had added, whether they were single, married, divorced, or engaged. Indignantly, the wounded sponsor had asked for her hat and coat, saying she was resigning from the club immediately. Beatrice, Joan, and Harriet had said they were unconcerned as to what she did. If she wished to resign that was her business and she could go ahead. Some others, led by Veronica, had tried to persuade her to reconsider, but she had brushed them aside and left. Thus, the second vacancy was created.

In later days the hurt one gave unemotional thought to her action and was sorry about the hasty move she had made. Now she could not attend the club's exclusive affairs and if her name were submitted for rejoining, she'd most certainly be blackballed.

The Concordians were in no hurry to fill these two vacancies, but if anyone were presented who was up to par they might accept her, unless one of the members had a personal grudge against the candidate and blackballed her for private, unspoken reasons. Since a candidate was considered for a month before a vote was taken, a member with a personal grudge could buttonhole one or two of her friends, saying, "I don't want that woman in our club," and usually she would get one or two blackballs added to her own. Then the sponsor, who might know of one personal animosity, wouldn't be able to single out the instigator and hold *her* responsible for the rejection of her candidate.

Veronica and Helen each presented a candidate for membership. The names would be voted on at the next meeting. They were women well known to all present and they possessed all the qualities, both spelled out and unwritten, that the club required. But Veronica and Helen gave each other a knowing glance, aware that their candidates would run the gauntlet of petty feminine social scrutiny for the next four weeks.

Beatrice adjourned the meeting with a reminder to please all be present and on time at the special luncheon meeting at Flamingo's on Saturday. By prearrangement, the uniformed maid and white-coated waiter immediately brought in trays of hot food and drinks. They were served buffet style from the large and heavy table, and then the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

waiter and the maid moved about the room, attending to the guests. Beatrice went from one group to another, chatting. Frequently she would call out sternly, "George, some more ham here," or "George, scotch and soda here."

Joan and Prudence moved to a corner love-seat, as far as they could get from the others, and had their heads together, talking in low tones. Prudence was laughingly saying to Joan, "Oh, Dick Robinson is no boy friend of mine. I've known him for years. We were schoolmates at Fisk years ago, you know."

Joan asked with amazement in her voice, "How could a man with his looks and fairly good income remain single so long?"

"Well," Prudence answered, "I don't believe he wanted to get married. He's still a sort of glamor boy."

"Hmm!" uttered Joan.

"Interested?"

"Well, a little. But are you *sure* he means nothing to you?"

Hugging Joan, Prudence said, "Of course he doesn't, baby doll. I've got my usual guy coming for me tonight. I just invited Dick so he could meet the gang. I haven't laid eyes on him for almost three years. If you get the chance, turn the charm on and see how he reacts."

"I won't get the chance tonight," said Joan, "because he and Clifford will be arriving together."

"I tell you what," offered Prudence, "come to my house tomorrow night if you can. He'll be there. Also my old stand-by John. Don't worry about him, though, he won't talk."

"I'll arrange to be there, baby!"

"Tell me, sugar pie," Prudence asked, "what's the current status of the guy who was drooling over you so at Martha's Vineyard all summer?"

"Oh, well, he served his temporary purpose and the day Emma and I closed the house at the Vineyard I told him I didn't want to see him again and not to telephone me in New York."

"You know, I suppose, that your having been seen with him so much during those weeks — on the beach, in your

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

car, at parties, and the like — caused some gossip, some of which has come to my ears here in New York?"

"Yes, I understand that damn catty and prissy Beatrice made some remarks based on hearsay. She'd love to get something on me."

"That I know," Prudence agreed. "Earlier this evening when I arrived she sought me out and tried to pick me, knowing we're so close, and can you imagine what she said? She said, among other things in the same vein, 'I understand Joan took the Island by storm last summer. She's supposed to have had a new handsome guy who took up *all* her time. Do you know who he was?' I played dumb and said I didn't know anything about it, so she let me alone."

"I must say," Joan said, "my maid Emma is perfect. On the few weekends Clifford came up she would answer the phone and keep everything straight. On one occasion the guy even came to the house unannounced, while Clifford and I were in the rear, but she gracefully steered him away."

The men had started arriving. Some who came before the close of the meeting were directed downstairs to the recreation room where Judge Lynch was tending bar for the male guests. Robert Henry Lynch was tall, portly, and heavy jowled. His color was light brown and his thinning hair was graying. Although he was a Tammany judge, he had been no mean lawyer. It was conceded by all who were competent to appraise him that he had been an able lawyer, was extremely well versed in the law, and was one of the most capable judges on the bench in New York County. He was benign, learned, and sociable — the popular conception of what a good judge should be like. In truth, he was every inch a judge. He made a good host.

Judge Lynch was behind the bar, leaning across it resting on his arms, in conversation with Clifford, who was an old friend, and Dick Robinson, whom he had just met. Dick mentioned that though he had been transferred on request to New York, he hadn't been given the assignment he wanted. The judge told him if he had any further trouble getting what he desired he'd use his influence to get it for him.

Clifford said, "And if Judge Lynch says he'll do it, it's

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

the same as having been done. He's highly respected in this town."

Dick mumbled his thanks.

The rest of the men, glasses in hand, were watching a wrestling match on the television set at the end of the room.

Robert Lynch, Jr., who should have been in bed hours before, poked his half-blond head into the room where the women were still scattered about. Someone spied him and called out, "Come here, Bob, and give me a hug." Bob smiled and displayed the braces on his teeth. He walked over to the lady who had called him and, dignified, submitted to her embrace. Others called him and he was introduced to those he didn't know. He bowed, shook hands, yielded to embraces, always exuding the culture and upper-class manners that had been instilled in him at home and at the exclusive private school.

Robert was a precocious child, having a natural bent to literature and science, which was encouraged by his father and mother. His literary inclinations were satisfied in his father's extensive library and his propensity for science was spurred by the junior science sets his parents supplied. He was a potentially handsome and lively boy. But he was a lonely child. He had few companions and no close ones. His mother supervised his recreation and kept him from playing with ordinary boys. "You must be discriminating," she would say. "That young man is not in our class, so you can't play with him." The boy whiled away his free hours with his books, his amateur science, and his mother, whom he loved and respected.

After he had spoken to all the women present, Robert's mother took him by the hand and led him to the door, saying, "Bob, it's time you were in bed." She kissed him and Robert ran off to bed, calling "Good night, mother dear," as Beatrice, smiling, stood watching him as he ascended the stairs. She was proud of her son.

Prudence moved over to the baby grand and struck up a popular tune. Harriet, standing over her, started singing in a soprano voice. A few of the men were now in the room. Everyone stopped to listen. Prudence joined in the song as

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

she played, picking up the alto notes and turning her face toward the audience, gesticulating with her head and eyes as she sang. The way they rendered the song they could have been professionals in any theater or night club. Then they played a duet with both accompanying in song. They were both good pianists and their voices were harmonious. Whenever they met and there was a piano around they teamed up. They had done it so often they had become proficient at it, to their own and others' enjoyment. The end of each number was greeted with applause.

Harriet was married to Dr. Harvey Douglas, a dentist whose earnings were high. She was an undergraduate at the University of Chicago and he was in the dental school when they met. Upon her graduation, they married and settled in New York. At first they lived in the rear of the apartment where he had his office in uptown New York. Later, when his practice increased, they took another apartment for living only and he spread his offices into the other rooms and enlarged his equipment. Recently they had built a large ranch house in Queens and had moved in just two weeks before this meeting. Prudence was to be hostess for the next meeting one month hence, but at Harriet's request, they had switched dates so Harriet would have an early chance to show off the new house. Harriet was affectedly modest and sweet. She had one of those childish voices which seemed more childish than it naturally was. She always wore her straight, dark brown hair parted in the middle, pulled back and done up in a bun on the nape of her neck — to make her girlish round face stand out, she thought. Tonight Harriet was attired in a youthful, low-necked beige dress with touches of brown, and matching brown pumps. The shade of her outfit was slightly darker than her large, light brown eyes which she used as would a youngster who has just been told she has beautiful large eyes.

Prudence and Harriet had just ended another song when Dr. Douglas, hat in hand, walked over and said, "C'mon, dear, it's almost midnight and we have quite a ride home."

"Yes," said Harriet to Prudence, "we haven't been out there long enough to have gotten used to the 'Long Voyage Home' after an evening in New York. But believe me,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Prudence, our place is worth the long trip. You'll think so too when you see it," she bragged.

Near the door, Judge Lynch had joined Beatrice to say good night to the guests. As the women approached to leave, some were heard to ask, "What are you going to wear Saturday?" Generally the answer was, "Oh, I have something around the house I haven't worn for some time that I'll put on." In fact, not a single one of them would be seen at the Saturday afternoon meeting without a new outfit. They knew if they came in something that had ever been seen before they would be picked to pieces. For that reason and because they had to keep up with the Joneses, they *would* have new apparel for Saturday.

Every one of these women had her proper charge accounts at New York's better stores and they used them, as their appearance established. A listing of their stores included Bergdorf Goodman, Tailored Woman, Franklin Simon, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, and other stores of similar renown. If they went to another store of lesser fame because of a special sale or a special article they fancied, they would never mention it. They were label-conscious and they couldn't tolerate trade marks inside their garments that didn't indicate purchase at the right stores for those in their class.

To make it seem innocent, Joan's last words to Prudence, as Clifford stood by on the sidewalk in front of the Lynches', were, "See you after dinner tomorrow night at your house and we can go over those unfinished club matters."

"Swell," Prudence called back, running to her car, knock-kneed like most girls run. "Good night, Clifford."

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

2

THE PRINCIPAL and the female senior class advisor were not dismayed or disappointed about the girl who was voted "Prettiest Girl." She was certainly the prettiest girl in the graduating class at Springfield High, and probably the most attractive girl they had seen in many classes, and both had been at Springfield High for over twenty years. But this girl was a colored girl. They had seen attractive colored girls at their high school before, some of whom were prettier than the traditional white girl voted "Prettiest Girl." Heretofore, the students seemed always to follow a code, not set down, but abided by, which said that no non-white would be elected "Prettiest Girl," even if she were. For some reason, which the principal and the old maid senior class advisor were trying to figure out, the 1937 class didn't adhere to this custom.

"Joan Turner is a pretty and attractive girl, even if she is colored," the dignified principal said to his companion in the privacy of his office.

"Still have an eye for a pretty girl, haven't you?" the old maid chuckled.

Straightening up and assuming an august manner, the principal said, "And she's been a good student," studying the card in front of him. "All marks above eighty. And a good many in the nineties."

"She has a pleasing personality that sort of draws you to her," the teacher added. "Sometimes I have wanted to hug her and kiss her on her cheek when we have been discussing problems that have come up regarding different school organizations with which she's connected. You know, of course, that she has been active in extracurricular activities — the drama club, debating club, art club, and the entertainment committee. Last year at the junior prom, do you remember her escort was Henry Jackson, the manufacturer's son? I don't think he knew at the time that she was a Negro.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

She surely doesn't look it and her parents don't either, so when he went to call for her, that wouldn't have given her away."

"Yes, I remember seeing them together. I noticed it, but I never said anything about it. Subconsciously, I thought he couldn't have been with a more attractive and intelligent girl. Besides, she has such a pleasing personality."

"There you go again," chortled the teacher.

Resuming a stern manner, the principal said, "I should like to call to your attention that I have been happily married now for many years and that there are two children resulting from this union. My only interest in other girls or women is purely aesthetic, the same as you might like to look at beautiful flowers."

Anne Clarke made a wry face. "You know, I have known you for many, many years, Dr. Grahame. As a young boy and young man you were always interested in good-looking ladies. You grew up chasing teen-agers, you went away to college and returned still chasing, but those a little older. Then you married and as far as the public and the school board were concerned you settled down and stopped chasing. But I know better and you know I know better. Do you remember my good friend Mary? And what happened? The only difficulty is you've gotten old now so there's nothing for you to do but live the life the public has always thought you lived."

And then the principal said in a more ingratiating manner, "Let's forget my private life and continue with the discussion for which you came. Before that, I should like to say this though: why have you never married? As a youngster you were attractive, your womanhood bloomed, and in your middle age with your white hair and young face you still could have had a man if you had wanted to. Even me, only I was already married." He paused. "I do believe, though, pardon my saying so, that you've known a man or two in your life. You couldn't help it — you were too attractive and for that reason subjected to so many temptations. Anyhow, there's one thing I've got to say for you in addition to the fact that you have a well-developed mind.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

You have managed to stay young along with each succeeding class. They love you for it, come to you with whatever is bothering them, because they know you'll be sympathetic and will understand and advise wisely. Yours is an unusual quality, *never* found in old maid teachers and seldom found in married ones. Do you know that I know some ten years ago one of our girls became pregnant, came to you with her problem, and you arranged everything? She had the abortion, was out of school for about a week, returned, and graduated with her class. She went on to college, graduated, married, and now has two children. She's very happy. Without your intervention her life might have been ruined. As for me, considering the pedestal on which I sit here in this small town, there would have been nothing for me to do but expel her in disgrace if the matter had been brought to my attention. The board would have stood for nothing less. However, when I learned of it — I won't tell you how — I loved you for it and was proud of you for the way you handled it. The parents, too, would have groveled at your feet for having saved their daughter from shame."

Miss Clarke replied, "I don't know how you learned of that girl's trouble that occurred ten years ago — and I won't ask — but I do know she's making out all right. Just one little mistake, so why should her life have been ruined by the puritanical attitudes of many people in this city? As for my personal affairs, whether I've known a man or two is none of your business, my drying-up friend. I've lived a full life, but always discriminating and with an eye to the mores of my group. Anyone who lives in a cloister is in no position to advise and guide teen-agers. As to why I've never married, well, briefly let me say this. I've devoted my life to this school and now I guess I'm a little less than married to it. In all my years in this crass town, with but one exception all the eligible men I've met were drips. And that one had to go off and get himself killed in an auto accident. I gave up looking for a worthwhile man in this area years ago. Now, let's stop talking about me and get back to Joan Turner, which is the reason I'm down here in your office in the first place. A reporter is coming here today to get some background for a piece on Joan. The local paper considers it front-page news

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

when a colored girl is selected 'Prettiest Girl' in her high school graduating class."

Dr. Grahame said, "You know, if any of the students didn't know she's colored, they'll know it now."

"Well, I'm sure they all know it now, even before her election. In recent months she's been associating with Negroes exclusively, outside of school. They're like her, though, of a particular class. That colored dentist's son, the caterer's daughter, the undertaker's daughter, and some others of similar background."

"What does her father do?"

"For years he's had a barber shop in the colored section in the north end. The family, father, mother, and Joan — she's an only child — used to live over the shop. Evidently he's a good businessman because two years ago they bought and furnished attractively a new house in Pine Point. I've been there. An evening with them would in no way indicate they're anything but middle-class whites. They certainly don't look Negroid. They're nothing like the traditional concept of what Negroes are supposed to be like or how they're supposed to live: not like what you read in books or sociological reports, or the gibberish you see in the movies."

"What does Joan intend to do after graduation?"

"She's going up to Smith."

"Good, she'll do well there. When that local reporter comes I'll refer him to you because you're able to fill him in on detailed questions which I wouldn't be able to answer. About all I can give him is her scholastic record."

"All right. Buzz me when he gets here."

The colored dentist's son, Henry, Jr., accompanied Joan to the senior prom at the Hotel Kimball. He was sixteen and hadn't yet learned to dance decently, but with Joan's guidance they didn't look too bad on the ballroom floor. He was obviously colored. But handsome. Otherwise, Joan wouldn't have been with him. Her parents wouldn't have approved.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Joan was wearing her first grown-up evening gown. It was pale blue taffeta and flared out from her small waist and rustled. The neckline was low, not too low, and kind to her budding breasts. The sleeves were short and puffed. Her slippers were pale blue satin. That afternoon — the appointment was made a week before — she had her first experience with a professional hairdresser. He had one of those French names and had a salon on Main Street. He had set her natural waves with his experienced hand (feminine, Joan thought), added some more, and said when she was leaving, "Comb it out just before you leave for your affair."

Joan's mother had supervised the final touches to her make-up and her hair. She finally said, "Nobody could look any better. Now go and have a good time." Downstairs, her father dropped his evening paper long enough to take her in from head to foot, remark that she certainly looked mighty good, and shake hands with the young man in his first tuxedo; he admonished him to take good care of their only daughter, and hoped they would have a good time.

When they arrived at the ballroom there were cries: *Here comes Joan. Isn't she positively gorgeous!* Hair and eyes glistening and with a sparkling smile, her arm looped in Henry's, Joan traversed the length of the ballroom, nodding and shaking hands, and giving a hug now and then. All eyes were on her, and opportunely for her entrance, the band wasn't playing, so she received full attention. They made her get up on the platform and say a few words into the microphone. She concluded, "I have made some friends at Springfield High who shall be friends of mine for the rest of my life. Springfield High is the best in the United States." Her escort was unobtrusively standing on the sidelines. Joan had to search for him after her little speech. After all, she did have to give him the first dance and she had granted enough requests to fill her program for the rest of the evening. The males had virtually surrounded her after her speech and at their insistent requests she had filled her book.

The prom ended at three and Joan had to look for her escort. She should have given him the last dance, but, hell, she didn't know when the final number was coming up and she still hadn't danced with six boys listed in her book.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Henry should have had a fairly good time. There was another colored girl there, sort of pretty too, and Joan had seen Henry talking with her. He had danced with her too, so at least he had danced with one other person. The boys all knew him and liked him and she saw them shaking hands with him. After all, he did play on the varsity football and basketball teams.

Before leaving, Joan spoke to the principal, decked out in white tie and tails, at a table with his wife. The wife was in a pink dress, too low for her full bosom. Dr. Grahame stood up, shook her hand warmly, and wished her the best of good fortune in whatever she went on to do. "Remember," he said, "you've gotten an excellent foundation at Springfield High." His big-breasted wife smiled and nodded agreement.

Five couples went to an all-night lunch wagon in two cars, one of them Henry's father's. They had so pestered Miss Clarke to join them that she finally acquiesced, stating she would come along later after she had seen everyone safely out of the ballroom. She eventually pulled up to the lunch wagon in her sporty roadster, with a middle-aged mustached drip driving it. The soon-to-be graduates ushered her to a table with cheers. They crowded around her and sang their pet songs about the most popular teacher. Her escort was in the background somewhere. After exchanging quips and banter with the youngsters, she sought out Joan and asked her to sit down beside her for a private conversation. She shooed away the others.

"Listen, my pretty and favorite," she said. "I want you to keep in touch with me, wherever you go and whatever you do or don't do. You're going to Smith, I know. That's my alma mater. If any problems arise, call on me. The dean was my classmate. Knowing you as I do, you should, and probably will, sweep that campus. You're a good student, so why not make Phi Beta Kappa your goal? Oh, you'll finish, but I want you to do more than that. With your good looks and personality I'm afraid you'll be drawn into too many extracurricular activities and your academic work will suffer."

"Seriously," Joan answered, waving away a young man who interrupted to ask a question, "I don't plan to take part

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

in anything but studies for my first year at Smith. After that, and with my feet on the ground, I'll go into other things for which you don't gain credits."

Talking low and to Joan only, with her head bent to Joan's ear, Miss Clarke continued. "I don't know what financial arrangements have been made for your higher education, but if you should find yourself running short, don't be reluctant to call on me for aid there too. I know your father is doing well for a small businessman but it's expensive to send a girl to one of these women's schools. I'm still unmarried as you know — I'm aware that the students refer to me as 'that modern, understanding old maid' — so my income is good, after teaching and guiding students like you for over a generation. There wouldn't be any difficulty for me to help you. I live in a mortgage-free, rambling house with my retired father and my mother. The only expenses I have now are my clothes." She laughed. "So, there you are, and I know of nothing better I could do with my extra money than help such a fine prospect as you."

Joan couldn't reply immediately. She put her arm around the teacher's waist and kissed her on her cheek. Pensively, she said, "I do love you for your offer, but so far the funds for my college education appear to be secure. I have a widowed aunt who's splitting college costs with my father." And then, with spontaneous enthusiasm, "My parents are giving me a party on graduation night. My aunt will be there. Would you come, if only for a few minutes?"

"Of course I will. Now you and the rest of this crowd go on home to bed. It's after four!"

Mrs. Turner, dozing in the living room chair, heard the car pull up in front of the house. By the time she reached the door, peered through and made certain it was her little girl, they were on the porch. Henry had his hat in hand, mumbling about what a swell evening it had been. Joan was smiling sweetly, telling him to be sure and come to the graduation party. Her mother opened the door and sleepily asked if they had had a good time. Joan replied that it had been a scrumptious evening and swung on her mother's neck, nearly upsetting her. The young man agreed that it had been a

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

fine evening. He bowed good night to Mrs. Turner, got in the car, and drove around the corner on two wheels.

As a young man, on his return from World War I, Mr. Turner had gone back to Hampton Institute to complete his course. It was there that he met the meek and demure young lady who later became his wife. They were both from nearby towns in North Carolina. When they announced their engagement, their parents advised them to go north where opportunities were better. They picked Springfield because Mr. Turner had an Army buddy who lived there and he spoke glowingly of the town. Barbering was something Mr. Turner had learned as a sideline to help him through school but now he would make it his livelihood. With what he and his wife had saved, plus presents from their parents, they set out for Springfield. His Army buddy had made preliminary arrangements for a place to stay. Within five days Mr. Turner had found a location for his shop in the colored section. He opened his doors for business two weeks after he had set foot in town. His Army buddy took a job with him and had been with him ever since. Business had been good from the start and had remained so on through the years. His four-chair shop was a fixture in the neighborhood. At first they lived upstairs over the shop. Later he bought the building. He and his wife were conservative, respected citizens. They were cultured too, they believed. Mrs. Turner belonged to two book clubs and read the right women's magazines. Mr. Turner, besides the daily paper, read *Time* and the *Saturday Review of Literature*. They had had an automobile since they married and each time they turned one in, the next one was more expensive, in accordance with Mr. Turner's increased earnings and the paying off their bills. They took vacations in the proper faraway places and sent back postcards as proof they were there.

The Turners had been in Springfield not fully two years when their daughter Joan was born. She was a beautiful baby, looked like a white child, and had curly blond hair

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN