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THE WHITE BAND

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THE WHITE BAND

a novel by **Carter Brooke Jones**

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, NEW YORK

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1

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To the memory of my father,
Carter Helm Jones

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1

But what was the lowdown? people asked. Why, really, underneath all the bunk, was Joe Duffield retiring from politics?

Here he was, at the age of forty-eight, in his very prime, you could say, leaving the United States Senate after one term.

Most people who gave much thought to such things probably felt that the Honorable Joseph Duffield's announcement was a cover-up for something else. He was a figure in politics, and not just in the state; no doubt of that. Before going to the Senate, he had served three terms in the House of Representatives. He had achieved a certain prominence as a congressman, but the Senate had given him a much greater opportunity for displaying his particular gifts: a flair for old-time oratory rare these days even in the most oracular of legislative bodies; a native shrewdness which could cut into the heart of an issue and expose it in harmony with his own peculiar logic; sharp-

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ness at repartee, at give-and-take on the floor. Most people liked him, regardless of whether they always agreed with him. He had a youthful face, good-looking enough for most purposes, a well-knit figure, an affable personality. Why should he step out, or at least sidetrack himself at the threshold, you might say, of a notable career?

The Senator had issued a statement explaining that he had served in Congress twelve years and that he felt he had contributed what little he could to the welfare of his state and the country. His private affairs required his attention; he could give them little time when he had to be in Washington most of the year. He didn't feel he could settle down to a lifetime of office-holding, or until somebody beat him at the polls. It was, contrary to what most people thought, a financial sacrifice to serve in Congress. The salary might sound large, but when the constant claims against it were considered it actually was small. A man had his children to educate, his future to think of. He would always be humbly grateful to the people of his district and of the entire state for so honoring him, for trusting him to represent them in the Nation's Capital. He was sure that in someone like John Byroad—Mr. Duffield's favored candidate among several who had expressed a willingness to succeed him—the people would find a senator who not only would carry on his, Mr. Duffield's, work, but would advance it.

Some of his more cynical constituents asked what Joe Duffield was up to. A few even suggested that maybe he'd got himself into some sort of jam in Washington.

It was typical of Senator Duffield that his statement had been both truthful and disingenuous. It was private business that was depriving the Senate of his services (beyond any question he could have been reelected), but the particular business would be a well-guarded secret for some time—until

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he and his new associates thought the moment propitious to make it known.

On a day in late summer, while Riverport waited somnolently for cooler weather, Joseph Duffield and three of these associates were having another in the series of conferences which had occupied them from time to time since late spring. This time they were meeting in an upper suite at the Bradley Hotel. The rooms were air-conditioned, and the men relaxed comfortably from the heat of the street as the afternoon dragged on.

Senator Duffield looked from one to another, not staring but, with casual glances, studying them as they talked. At the moment he was listening; beyond a nod or a noncommittal "I see" he had little to say.

"The way I look at it," Henry Caldwell was saying, "we can't let any grass grow under us. There are other outfits horning in on this fight. I hear the Klan's starting up again."

Dave Beckett said, "I agree with you entirely. We have to push off in a big way."

Duffield lit a fresh cigar, pulled down his tie, opened his soft collar, and settled back in the big soft chair. He contrasted the two young men, both of pleasant appearance, well-groomed, adequately educated, but differing, naturally, in temperament and taste, in capacity. He'd known both since they were small boys, watched them grow up, for Riverport, until just a few years ago, had been a much smaller city; you knew almost everyone when he was a youth. Now that it was a leading metropolis of the Deep South, a distribution center for trade, if still not too important industrially, everything was different; you passed crowds of strangers on the

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downtown streets instead of spotting somebody you knew every few steps.

He had the feeling that Hank Caldwell, blond and chubby at thirty-four, still a junior executive in his father's construction firm, though probably drawing a good salary, was incurably lazy. The way he talked, the way he sat, more especially the way he moved, denoted almost a horror of energy. The Senator wondered how Hank had ever managed to become a lieutenant-commander in the late war. He must have found somewhere the power to show a burst of activity now and then. But Hank had his points: he was affable, disarmingly easygoing, made friends, and came from a family that packed plenty of influence in the state.

Hank picked up the phone. "What'll you fellows have?"

The Senator wanted bourbon and water, the others Tom Collinses.

Dave Beckett proffered his cigarettes around and lit one. "I think Joe should announce his new position—at once. How do you feel about it, Joe?"

Duffield delayed his answer. Not that he hadn't reflected on it often in recent weeks; not that he was in much doubt. But he had a trick of waiting a moment or two before replying to a cogent question. He had found that in political give--and-take it confused opponents or hecklers, whether out in the hustings or on the floor of Congress. The device was hardly applicable here with these men he had known for years, but it had grown into a habit, and sometimes he found himself pausing similarly when Sarah, his wife, asked some simple question.

Dave Beckett, only three or four years older than Hank, was much the stronger character. He was a tall, dark young man, well put together. He was junior member of a good law firm and already had something of a reputation as a trial law-

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yer. He was quiet, didn't as a rule have a lot to say unless something that concerned him came up, but you felt strength in his firm handshake, a reserve capacity in the way he looked at you over his slow smile. But Duffield wondered what Dave was like underneath his polished manners and his detached, even aloof, outward personality. It was hard to say. There was no reason to question his integrity, to doubt his candor, and yet there was something about him, some elusive impression . . . well, no matter. Years in politics made a man too cynical, too ready to doubt everybody.

"I've given it prayerful consideration," said the Senator. The others laughed. "My inclination is to announce it at once. As you know, the only thing that held me back was that I was still in the Senate, and while Congress was in session I felt it would give my enemies—and I've got some good ones—another chance to blast me and perhaps impair my usefulness during the short time that remained till the end of my term. Now . . . well, it's true that I haven't resigned, just announced I won't run again, and that my term doesn't run out until the end of the year, but the session's over, and it's extremely doubtful that we'll be called into special session. I don't see that it matters, so far as I'm concerned, whether I announce my new connection now or at the end of the year."

The fourth man, who had kept an attentive silence, spoke. "It makes a hell of a lot of difference to us, Joe. We've got to get going. The Klan's being revived, in some form or other, and these Citizens' Councils, whatever they are. . . . We've got to get going big before they beat us to it."

"I can see that," Duffield agreed.

The fourth man was considerably older than the others. He was one of those men whose age is hard to guess. He might be anywhere from the beginning to the far side of middle age. Actually he was fifty-six. Damon Quiller was a

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small, desiccated-looking man, with a voice that somehow suggested attics and brittle, dusty mementos.

The drinks came. They waited while the bellboy distributed them. Hank paid him, and he left.

Joe Duffield leaned toward the small man. "We'll announce any way you want to do it."

"Splendid," said Damon Quiller. He laughed. He had a way of laughing dryly, when there was nothing funny, and keeping a straight face, or perhaps smiling just a little, when somebody told a joke.

The Senator had known Quiller almost as long as he could remember. Joe had no doubt of his attitude toward this adroit lawyer, whose reputation was mixed, to put it charitably; who preferred to work behind the scenes, to settle rather than go to trial, to . . . "fix" was probably the word. You couldn't trust him. Yet he was a successful man in his field: criminal cases and the shabbier types of lawsuits, such as certain divorces which other lawyers wouldn't touch. There was no question of his value to this organization. He had been an officer of the old White Band when it flourished in the middle twenties; he knew how such an outfit should be run. You couldn't always pick your associates. Joe reflected that he'd had to work closely in Washington and at home, for party harmony or other cogent reasons, with men he wouldn't believe on oath. You simply accepted such contacts as inevitable in politics. You went ahead and worked with such men; you watched them too, saw that they didn't slip over fast ones on you.

"Swell," said Hank Caldwell, "now we can go to town."

"I'll be around," Duffield explained, "most of the time. Of course I'll still have to fly up to Washington now and then, for two or three days maybe. Loose ends to tie up, things to handle, even when we're not in session. I suppose I could

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have stepped out entirely, resigned as of a day certain, as we lawyers say, and let the Governor appoint somebody to serve *ad interim*. But it didn't seem the best thing to do. I had some things on the fire; I wanted to round out my term. I delayed announcing my retirement as long as possible. It was only fair to give my would-be successors time to qualify and fight it out."

"We haven't wasted much time," Dave Beckett observed. "Reactivated the White Band the middle of May, almost as soon as the Supreme Court's decision came down. Since then we've been busy organizing. And we're really moving, let me tell you."

Duffield laughed. "Reactivated. Sounds like something out of the Pentagon."

"I was at the Pentagon a while," Dave recalled. "Too long." He had been a lieutenant-colonel in something, Joe remembered, probably air intelligence.

They were quiet a moment, and the sound of traffic floated up thinly to the closed windows of their eighth-floor suite. Joe sipped his highball. He remembered hearing of the White Band in the twenties, along with the Klan, the Silver Shirts, and other such groups. The White Band had quietly faded during the depression, like a lot of other things, though, he learned from Quiller, it had never been officially disbanded. Well, he wouldn't have had anything to do with it in the twenties, when demagogues were conjuring up phony issues. Now there was a real issue. Moreover, if they got the jump on the other outfits, there'd be a pile of money in it, more than you could ever make as a senator.

"We were hot stuff back in the Coolidge-Hoover era," Damon Quiller added. "We had them joining so fast we could hardly keep up with them with an adding machine."

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"What did you do?" the Senator asked. "I mean you personally."

"I was known as Grand Counsellor. Which meant I was general counsel. We'd have kept right on if the bottom hadn't dropped out of everything. The slump, Roosevelt the Lesser, all those New Deal subsidies to cotton- and tobacco-growers, the government promising everybody the world. Naturally our members were confused, and lots of them dropped out. Others didn't even have the five bucks a year for dues."

"We'd figured," Beckett put in, "that Damon would function in the same capacity in the new—I should say revived—Band."

"Sure," said Duffield. He wondered whether Damon would do. The man's reputation among lawyers was not too savory, and yet no one had ever gotten enough on him to start disbarment proceedings; he was clever enough to avoid such an extremity.

"I don't care much what I do," Damon said. "I have enough law practice to keep me fairly busy, but I want to do what I can to get this thing whirling again."

"I think you should be—Counsellor, or whatever we'll call it," Joe said casually.

"You see," Damon added, "it'll be different this time. Instead of . . . well, demonstrating and asserting our strength in—er—other ways, we'll probably be going into court a lot in an effort to stop this insanity. Injunctions, writs of *mandamus*, what have you. In the old days we avoided courts as much as we could. Times do change."

"Will we," Hank Caldwell asked, "be able to intervene as an organization in these various moves to thwart what our Yankee friends call the law of the land? I don't know too much law."

"I don't see why not," Damon replied. "That Red outfit

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in the North, the American Civil Liberties Union, is always doing it. An organization can intervene in such a proceeding, as *amicus curiae*, or what have you. Or it can initiate."

Hank finished his drink. "I see."

"We've been enrolling at a great rate," Dave added. "We've got chapters in five states already. So far we've deferred doing much, other than putting out a few pamphlets and issuing a few statements. It was obvious nothing much would happen until fall, until the schools opened. We needed a big name on top. Now we've got that."

Joe laughed.

"Nothing can stop us now."

Joe looked at his wrist watch. "Fine. I've got an appointment. I'll see you fellows soon, any time. We'll go into details as they come up. By the way, I want to see whatever announcement you cook up."

"Naturally," Dave said. "We thought you'd want to write a statement and put it out over your signature."

"That's a good idea." Joe stood up, putting on his jacket.

"We thought if you were ready we'd release the news in the two Sunday papers in Riverport and for Sunday papers elsewhere, because there'll be interest in it a lot of other places."

"I'll write out a statement tomorrow," Joe promised, "and get it over to you."

"That's the stuff."

Joe paused in the doorway. "What's my title to be?"

"My thought," said Damon Quiller, "is that we'd keep the old titles. You'll be Grand Protector. Can you think of a better name?"

"Not at the moment. It sounds okay."

Senator Duffield waved his hand to the three men and stepped into the corridor, closing the door quietly behind him.

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2

THE NEXT SATURDAY MORNING, in Dave Beckett's private office, they went over the brief announcement they had prepared for the papers—Dave, Joe Duffield, Hank Caldwell, and Damon Quiller. Joe had written the part quoting him, and the four men had collaborated on the rest.

They'd put out a teaser the previous day in the form of a story which the two local papers had carried: The revived White Band was to hold a rally at Memorial Hall Saturday night at which an important announcement would be made. This was the announcement, which the chairman of the meeting would read and Joe would amplify in an address. "The kickoff," Hank commented.

Joe wondered if they'd get a crowd. "You needn't worry," said Dave, pulling some dodgers out of a drawer. "These have been scattered all over town and into surrounding towns like Millrace. There'll be a mob, unless I'm all wet."

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Joe picked up one of the dodgers. It was headlined:

DO YOU WANT DESEGREGATION FORCED ON YOU?
SHOULD COLORED AND WHITE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL TOGETHER?
WHERE IS THIS FEDERAL INTERFERENCE LEADING?
WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

These questions will be squarely faced at a mass meeting at Memorial Hall at 8:30 Saturday night, August 28. Notable speakers and an important announcement. Don't miss this timely meeting. Admission free. Everybody invited. Auspices: The White Band.

Joe laughed. "This ought to fetch 'em."

Damon chuckled in a way that suggested the rustling of dry leaves. "If I know Riverport."

"It'll get us a lot of new members," Hank Caldwell suggested.

"I'm having Doc Whimsett set up a table in back to take applications," Damon disclosed.

"Who's Doc Whimsett?" Joe asked.

"A friend of mine. A good guy. He'll be useful in the organization."

Joe stuffed a dodger and a copy of the statement into his pocket. "Be seeing you fellows around." He got up.

"We deliberately left your name out of the dodger and the preliminary story," Dave explained. "Have to leave some element of surprise for the meeting and the story in the Sunday papers."

"I think it was good timing," Joe reflected. "I've always found in politics that you've got to space out your publicity,

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not tell everything at once. You shoot your wad, and the rest is anticlimax."

"We might have drawn a bigger crowd if we'd announced you were to speak," Dave conceded, "but the papers would have guessed you were affiliating yourself with the White Band and that would have dampened the Sunday story pretty well. As it is, I think we'll have a crowd, and if I'm not mistaken, the papers, maybe even the press associations, will have reporters at the meeting. The issue is red-hot right now —national news."

"By the way," Damon Quiller added, "we'll need a press agent."

"You mean full time?" Hank asked.

"Sure. It's important."

Dave said they'd take that up in due course. Joe said sure, good idea, adding, "We can complete our organization in the next week or two. We'll need lots of help if memberships pour in at the rate they should. I'll be running along. Unless there's something else to take up at the moment. See you around eight tonight."

It was a stifling night. Memorial Hall, a civic enterprise dedicated to the memory of Riverport soldiers lost in World War I, dated back to the days when air conditioning was a new marvel, and the city had never gotten around to putting in a cooling system. The auditorium, a handsome structure of Yankee limestone (Indiana), selected over the protests of those who wanted marble from neighboring Georgia, rarely was rented in summer. The singers, pianists, orchestras, and ballets always came in winter. But there were fans, and the outer and side doors had been propped open, so it was, as somebody remarked audibly while the audience quieted for

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the chairman, no hotter than anywhere else. But men fanned themselves and their ladies with their straw hats, and a few palmleaf fans were turned up from somewhere and applied vigorously. Many of the men wore sport shirts with open collars.

There was a big audience. Although the floor and gallery held three thousand comfortably (or uncomfortably, as the case might be), it was pretty well filled.

The chairman held up his hand and gradually got complete silence. He spoke into the microphone, thanking those who had come out on this sticky night and assuring them their time and effort would not be wasted.

The chairman was an alderman named Tom Vale, a veteran of twenty years in the City Council, a gaunt, balding man whom everybody knew and most people liked or at least regarded with benevolent indifference. He was no orator, and his grammar might be uncertain at times, but his shrewdness and his dedication to what he conceived to be the city's best interests were generally conceded, though there were those cynics who were always suspicious when a man held property at points close to new boulevards or expanded parks.

"I'm not a-gonta take up your time," said Mr. Vale, "for you're to hear distinguished speakers, one in particular of national prominence."

Probably few had noticed that Senator Duffield sat among a score of citizens occupying chairs back of the speaker's stand. And those who had spotted him no doubt thought he had looked in and been compelled to sit on the platform, naturally.

"You're wondering, I'm sure, what this meeting is all about. That placard you saw and the announcement in the paper didn't tell you much. We wanted you here in person, and I think we've got the cream of Riverport right in this beautiful

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auditorium." There was scattering laughter and some applause. The chairman grinned. "Well, I take it most of you have heard what the Supreme Court did back in May." There were derisive murmurs. "I thought you had. Our granddaddies had hoped back in eighteen sixty-five that the War Between the States was over. But we see we was wrong. They're invadin' the poor old South again. Trying to dictate to us how we'll live our daily lives. Now they want us to send our children to school with the nigger children."

He paused for the hooting to subside. "Now we can be driven just so far. And no farther. The same spirit that characterized our grandfathers at Manassas, and Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, and Chickamauga is not dead. At least I don't think it is. What can we do? Hell and plenty!" Laughter, applause. "As a great American once said, we've just begun to fight."

He paused. "Now this mass meeting," he went on more slowly, "is under the auspices of an organization called the White Band. It is not a new organization. Some of you older Riverportians remember it back in the twenties and early thirties. It was dedicated, not to causing trouble, as its enemies always charged, but to serving the interests of the white race. It sort of died out, because it didn't seem to be needed so much. Some of its aims at least had been accomplished. Now, as it turns out, it's needed more than ever, and it's come to life. Like Lazarus, it's been raised from the dead." There was laughter. "And it's a-gonta try its utmost to solve—in a legal and peaceful way, we hope—this new problem our friends up North have thrust upon us. . . . Now I want to read you a brief announcement which you're hearing for the first time. You'll find it in your morning paper. I quote:

" 'The White Band is pleased to announce that pursuant to reorganization plans which have been under way for several

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months, the Honorable Joseph Duffield, who is retiring as junior Senator from our beloved state, has consented to head this organization, to become Grand Protector of the White Band. He . . .' "

Heavy applause and cheers interrupted the chairman, and he paused with a grin for the demonstration to subside. "I thought that'd please you. I go on with the formal announcement:

" 'Senator Duffield is serving without salary, in the hope that he can help his state and the whole South in meeting in a constitutional way a racial crisis which has not been of our choosing but which is the fruit of radical and left-wing liberal thinking in another section of the country. Men who believe as we do that the South and each of its states is in a better position to carry on its own traditions and customs, to determine the best basis for interracial harmony and progress, are invited to join the White Band.' You'll find application blanks in back of the hall as you leave. And now I want to present one who needs no introduction to a Riverport audience, her honored, her favorite, son, the Honorable Joseph Duffield!"

The audience, in a relaxed, cheering mood by now, greeted the Senator vociferously, rising as an added mark of respect.

Joe Duffield allowed the clapping and shouts to continue for a while, then he raised his hand for silence and approached the mike. "My fellow citizens, my dear friends, nobody but a bronze statue or maybe a Supreme Court Justice from Vermont could remain unmoved at the warmth of this reception." He paused for the laughter to fade. "Please accept my heartfelt thanks."

The second balcony, ordinarily reserved for colored patrons at Memorial Hall programs, was almost empty tonight. A few white youths had chosen to occupy the first row, or most of it, but in a corner sat the only Negro present. And he

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might have passed for white, so light was his skin—might have been what is called in Harlem a "passee"—but, as a matter of fact, he rarely impersonated the ruling race, and then only when it was expedient to accomplish something. He preferred to stay with his own people. He was dressed quietly but well, in dark tropicals. He was a well-built man on the youngish side of middle age, his thick, dark hair graying at the edges. His features were nearly Caucasian, his nose almost classical in its symmetry. He leaned over the balcony railing.

He saw a handsome man who looked younger than his forty-eight years—a slim, athletic figure, perhaps five-eleven, with a winning smile and a deceptive air of candor. He had a way of pausing for rhetorical effect, his smile sometimes expanding into a grin. He also had a few gestures, never overdone, which conveyed emphasis here and there.

But the man and his oratorical tricks were an old story to Ned Tarver. Not only had he seen Joe Duffield many times during his years in Congress, but he had talked to him often. They had, in fact, been friends, of a sort, ever since they were classmates at the Georgetown Law School in Washington.

So this was it. Ned Tarver had wondered, like a lot of other people, why the Senator was quitting—in full career, you might say. He had met Joe Duffield on F Street, in Washington's downtown shopping district, only the other day, and asked him what it was all about. Joe had only smiled mysteriously and said he didn't want to stay in Congress the rest of his life; he wanted to make some money, provide for his family, his future. A phrase from the announcement flashed back: ". . . serving without salary." What the hell? But Ned Tarver laughed inaudibly to himself. He thought he knew.

Joe, standing before the mike with long-practiced poise, delivering his speech with his customary suavity, was saying:

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"I feel that at this momentous point in her history I can better serve the South out of Congress than in it."

The boys in the gallery, in their late teens or early twenties, whistled through their teeth or shouted. One called down, "Atta boy, Joe!" They did not notice the quiet, attentive man in the corner.

"I believe," Senator Duffield added, "that this fine organization, the White Band, will be able to help you and others like you all over the South. Help you with the legal, moral, and social problems inherent in the Supreme Court's unfortunate decision. Mind you—and I emphasize this point—" he paused with a characteristic side-thrust of his right arm, "we will never encourage or condone lawlessness or violence in any form. The South is a God-fearing, law-abiding section of the country. Oh, some of our more exuberant citizens may get a little out of hand now and then, perhaps rough up somebody, but in this we're no different from any other section of the country. And I may say our highest judicial tribunal is encouraging lawlessness when it undertakes to dictate to us, to overthrow some of our long-standing customs, to tell us with whom we and our children shall associate on an intimate basis."

He stopped for the applause to subside. "Friends, we've had our problems cut out for us, ever since some of our ancestors were misguided enough to bring in slaves. And did you know, by the way, that New England was the first to run slave ships? It's a fact, though they've always looked down their noses at us. But never mind that. I started to say we've had our difficulties, and we've tried to cope with them sanely. I don't say we always succeeded, but we've tried, and on the whole I think we've done pretty well."

High above him Ned Tarver grinned. Nice going, Joe. I knew you when . . . but never mind.

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"We had, living side by side, two races—races superficially much alike, but actually differing in many ways, in different stages of development. Our nigras have done exceedingly well considering that a few generations ago they were slaves and, before that, African tribesmen. Nobody deplores slavery more than I. It was wrong morally and a bad thing in every way. But you and I had nothing to do with it. We inherited freed nigras, many thousands of them. Now I'm no Afrophobiac." The speaker laughed. "That's a six-bit word I picked up at Princeton or Georgetown or somewhere. I mean I'm not obsessed with a fear of colored blood, of a dark pigmentation. I'm no professional nigra-baiter. My close friends know I've always been friendly with them, tried to help them all I could.

"But I realize that although certain individuals have soared into prominence in the arts and sciences, in the professions, the race as a whole still has a long way to go. Educationally, morally, in manners, in general culture, the average still is pretty primitive."

I don't grant it, mused Ned Tarver, but assuming it's true, whose fault is it?

"But that's to be expected, and nigras deserve great credit for doing as well as they did."

Considering their white friends, Tarver added.

"Now, friends and neighbors, this is obvious to you, but I repeat it—for the record, as lawyers say. We have found, through years of bitter experiences, that our two races get along better, live in greater peace and prosperity, living their separate lives. Each has, on the whole, its own way of life, and it's much better for them to be apart. Segregation has become a dirty word to Northern radicals, but we've found that it works pretty well. I'm not saying it's an ideal arrangement. Few things are ideal in this imperfect world. And yet

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it's the best solution to a practical problem, a duality of races which has been with us for nearly a century. We've found that segregation in most places—schools, restaurants, theaters, playgrounds—works best. And we intend to continue that policy!"

Applause swelled into cheers. Ned Tarver, peering down from his perch below the rafters, clapped his hands in mock approval. A boy near him, his voice lost in the raucous demonstration, shouted: "Tell 'em to go screw theirselves!"

When the audience had quieted, Joe Duffield asked: "Does that mean we're going to tell the Supreme Court—well, in effect, to go to hell?"

"Sure, tell 'em," somebody yelled.

Joe laughed. "Well, we may feel like it, but, after all, it's the supreme law of the land, and we're good, law-abiding Americans. No, we're not defying the Supreme Court. But we have many remedies left, legal and otherwise, and by the 'otherwise' I don't mean violence. Even the Court, which is so stacked against us, said we should be given time to work this out." He had emphasized the last three words, and he added: "Well, we'll work it out." Laughter and applause. "How? you may ask. The Supreme Court has spoken, and it's supposed to be the last word. Well, I can tell you the states have not entirely surrendered their sovereignty despite the New Deal Supreme Court with which we're afflicted. I don't think the founding fathers of this republic intended for any branch of the government to oppress any substantial number of the people, whether that branch is executive, legislative, or judicial. You can be sure this state and our sister states will solve this problem and solve it without surrendering to the anti-South clique which seems to be in the saddle in Washington. Our best legal minds are at work on the problem, and you can offer odds to anyone who wants to wager

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that they'll come up with a solution—or several solutions—which will add up to maintaining our sovereignty and our way of life."

He paused and glanced up at the top gallery, but saw only a blur of faces on the front row. "Our state legislators are not asleep, and I can assure you this: you can send your children to school week after next without any fear that they'll be required to share their classrooms, perhaps even their desks, with colored children."

Spirited applause swelled as it traveled over the hall, like a wave gathering size and force. "But where does organization, the White Band, come in? I'll tell you, neighbors, where it comes in. It plans to help the state legislatures and the people to solve this pressing problem, to help wherever it can. We stand ready to offer legal aid where it is needed—and it will be needed—and to hold meetings and discuss measures; in short, to do what we can—and I think we can do a great deal—to protect you folks, who are busy with your jobs and your homes and can't be expected to have the necessary time to devote to this urgent matter. The White Band is an old fraternal order, started in nineteen twenty-two. It has always been devoted to the best ideals, the finest aims of Southerners and those from other sections who are interested in protecting the purity of the white race, in preserving pure Americans from the encroachments of alien cultures.

"This issue, thrust at our vitals by a judicial whim, a doctrinaire constitutional conception, has revived the White Band overnight. It has become again a vital force throughout the South. You'll see. We invite men of good moral character, citizens of standing and repute—and we don't want any other kind—to join this fine fraternal order. We charge a reasonable initiation fee and moderate dues. We have to. The fight we face will involve heavy expenses, and we have to meet them

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some way. We invite the men in this audience who are interested to sign application blanks which you'll find at a desk in the rear of this auditorium. The application will not commit you in any way, but you'll receive an invitation to a meeting in your area, at which the order will be explained in more detail. If then you want to join, we'll be delighted to have you—if you measure up to the sort of man we want. And we won't take just anybody. For you good ladies there may be an auxiliary or something of the sort. I hope so.

"Now a personal word, and I close. I felt that I should get into this fight, do what I could to help preserve our South as it has been, as our fathers and grandfathers knew it. I've done what I could for you in the Senate."

"You've done it, Joe!" a voice shouted.

"Thank you, friend. Well, I've always tried. But there's not much the Senate or the House of Representatives can do about a decision of the Supreme Court. Oh, we could amend the Constitution, but, as you know, that's a slow process. I felt I should get out on the firing line. I felt my state was menaced as clearly as it was the day my grandfather enlisted in eighteen sixty-one and went off to join Joe Wheeler's cavalry. It seemed to me the White Band was the answer to a prayer. The gentlemen who were leading the movement to revive it invited me to join them, in fact to take the top post. I couldn't do that and stay in the Senate—it wouldn't have been right. So I'm relinquishing my seat in the Senate at the end of my term to give full time to this movement, at least for a while, after the first of the year. I'm serving without salary as a civic and patriotic duty.

"This will be a long, hard fight. It won't be won even three years from now, but it can be lost in the first skirmish if we're not courageous and vigilant. I know we can count on every one of you and thousands like you in a dozen states.

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I'm grateful to all of you for coming out this sultry night. Thank you each and every one."

The Senator sat down to a noisy outburst of adulation. Ned Tarver made his way down the two long flights of steps unnoticed. In an eddy of the surging crowd in the lobby a line of men waited to be signed up at the table where a thickset man presided. Tarver resisted a vagrant impulse to line up with them, hand in his name, sign up. It wouldn't do. Somebody, sooner or later, might recognize him, and his usefulness on this mission would be ended.

As he left the auditorium, the heat of the streets, cooked in the sun all day, steamed on, as a dish removed from the stove continues to exude steam. At a side street he turned out of the laughing, chattering crowd and walked down a lonely stretch of mean shops for two blocks. He paused at a three-story brick building. There was an electric sign, "Hotel," and below it in smaller letters, "For Colored."

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3

JOE DUFFIELD took off the coat of his tropical suit, a green-ish weave, and unknotted a tie of matching green stripes. His dacron shirt was plastered against him with sweat. With an exclamation of discomfort and weariness, he started taking off the limp shirt. His wife, Sarah, stood in the doorway of his room.

"Hot work, wasn't it," she said.

"You can say that again. When'll our progressive city air condition that gaudy hall?"

"Some vagrant January," she said.

Sarah loved to use unusual adjectives, and phrases which might sound strained or inapplicable came to her readily. This quaint practice had charmed him in their early years together; now it merely annoyed him. He used to tell her she was a poet, and she did write verses then, not very good ones. Now he said nothing, or turned away impatiently when she came

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out with what she imagined to be an original way of putting things.

A faded beauty still clung to her, and she was far too young to be losing her looks, yet she no longer had that breath-taking loveliness compounded of a rare touch of natural color on her cheeks, the symmetry of a wide mouth, an unobtrusive nose, and big dark eyes. Her cheeks were puffed with too many drinks, and her trim figure had been lost; she bulged in the middle. Her dark brown hair was graying, not unbecomingly.

"The Rednecks were in good form," she commented. "I've heard you do better."

"My speech," he explained, annoyed, "was on the informative side. I wasn't trying to be eloquent. And they were not all Rednecks. There were some pretty high-grade people in that audience."

She had gone, to his surprise; out of curiosity. He had offered her a seat on the platform—there were other women there—but she had preferred to sit in the audience.

"But one thing I don't understand," she added. "That part of the statement in which you affirmed that you'd serve without salary. I thought you said . . ."

"I thought you understood," he said wearily. "But I guess I didn't explain too clearly. There'll be profits, big ones."

"And you'll share in them."

"Naturally."

"You didn't tell them that."

"And why should I have?"

"Oh. Well, I didn't think you were going into this as an idealistic gesture."

"Maybe in a way I am."

She laughed. "Maybe. Well, good night."

"Good night."

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He was aware of her clinging reddish dressing gown as she went to her room across the hall. Once he would have found it and her alluring. No more. They were friendly, most of the time, but their separate rooms attested a changed relationship. They had, as the Victorian novelists said, drifted apart.

He wondered whether Ted, his sixteen-year-old son, was home, but he was too tired to find out. Probably not. And it was doubtful that he had bothered to go to the meeting. Their daughter, Sally, whose formal name, of course, was Sarah, was a more stable sort; she'd given them very little worry. And she was prettier, he reflected, as he got into the shower, than her mother ever was. At the moment Sally was visiting a girl friend up in North Carolina. In a few weeks she'd be going back for her junior year at Bryn Mawr.

Cooled and tingling pleasantly from the lightly applied towel, he got into his silk summer pajamas and stepped back into his bedroom. He went to an open window. A nice breeze was stirring through the tall pines of their place on the edge of town. Duffields, a colonial house standing on a hill over Dogwood Road, was charming, if old-fashioned. They'd moved here eight years ago, at a cost beyond his means, and it would take him another ten years to pay for the place, unless the White Band. . . . Well, there were possibilities.

He started, gratefully, for bed.

Joe Duffield was at the law office he had kept in Riverport throughout his years in Congress. He had maintained what he called a lukewarm practice, which he left largely to his colorless but learned partner, Will Belforth. Then, too, it was desirable for a member of Congress to have an office in his home town, a place to meet his constituents and the state's

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more important politicians when Congress was not in session.

The new Professional Tower, in which they had a corner suite just below the top floor, the twentieth, was air-conditioned, a triumph of modernistic architecture, with setbacks every five stories, soaring (for Riverport) into a graceful spire. He was settled back in his swivel chair, the morning after the meeting, with nothing special to do. He had gone through the mail and dictated answers to the few letters that required them.

His secretary, a tall girl with cornsilk hair, opened the door. "There's a gentleman to see you. A Mr.—Carver, I believe. He says he's an old friend of yours, and just dropped in."

"Carver? I don't remember him. Probably I know him, though. God, a man can't remember the names of all his constituents, though he must always pretend to. Show him in."

A moment later Ned Tarver walked in, cool-looking in a fancy brown weave of seersucker.

Joe stood. "Why, Ned Tarver! I'll be good and goddamned. My girl said 'Carver.'"

"They usually get it wrong."

They shook hands. "How are you, Joe? You're looking fine."

"Never felt better. Sit down."

They talked a moment of Riverport and the weather, which can be taken for granted in the Deep South and needs no comment. Then Tarver said: "I was at your meeting last night."

Joe smiled. "Well . . ." He hardly knew what to say.

Ned laughed. "That was your white-collar speech, Joe. You didn't say a word about nigger rapists or our smelly neighbors."

"Now, Ned . . ."

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"But I will say, Joe, there was always more class to you than your Stone-Age ideas would indicate. You used to be able to argue against the federal lynching bill in Congress without descending to the vituperative levels of a Bilbo or a Huey Long."

"Thank you, Ned, my old college pal."

"We had a lot of fun in those days, Joe."

"We sure did. Cigarette?"

"I don't mind. Thanks. But in those days, Senator, you didn't have the . . . shall I say 'extreme' views about the interracial situation you now entertain."

"Well, Ned, I don't know that I've changed so much. But when you get into politics in the South . . ."

"I know, I understand, and I won't try to embarrass you."

Joe looked out the window over the skyline. Quite a metropolis Riverport was becoming. The Cherokee River cut gleaming through the city, twisting in the sun like molten metal. "What brings you here, Ned? If you care to tell me."

"I do—that's why I came in, one reason—I'm always glad to see an old friend. I'm general counsel for this new organization, the League for Racial Justice."

"I've heard of it," Joe mused. "What is it?"

"Just what it purports to be."

"I see. I suppose the segregation issue—or should I call it the desegregation issue—brings you down here."

"Naturally." Ned tapped his cigarette reflectively on the big brass ashtray on Joe's desk. "I suppose, Joe, this thing will get into the courts in various ways. I'm just hoping we can avoid hysteria and violence, on both sides."

"I'm with you there, Ned."

"I'm sure you are. But what about this White Band?"

"Well, it's agin you, naturally. You know the attitude of Southerners—of perhaps ninety percent of them. They don't

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want desegregation—integration—whatever you want to call it. They're determined not to have it."

Ned raised his hands and dropped them. "But what can they do? The Supreme Court has spoken."

"And how! Well, you know as a lawyer there are many lines of legal attack, even when your last remedy seems exhausted."

"I suppose so. I got a new trial for a boy in Washington who was about to go to the hot seat. I got it after the Supreme Court had refused to review his case."

"There you are. And the various state legislatures are discussing plans to, to . . ."

"Nullify."

Joe laughed. "If you want to call it that."

"I don't want to pry into your business, Joe, but is this White Band a secret society?"

"Yes, to an extent. I think we'll carry on the formalities it used back in the twenties: white masks when appearing in public, if there should be parades or demonstration, and they'd be to attract recruits, raise money maybe—it costs a lot to fight through the courts."

"A sort of Ku Klux?"

"No, that's not my understanding. We don't plan to intimidate anybody or to make threats."

"I see." Ned wondered if Joe was sincere in saying that. You couldn't be sure. He was too enmeshed in Southern politics to be trusted any longer. There had been a time, when they were both very young . . .

"How," Joe asked, "did your outfit happen to spring up? I thought the N.A.A.C.P. was looking after the interests of the nigras."

"It's doing its share and more, but we were set up particularly to handle the legal end, to advise our people, to try to

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smooth out situations where there is serious tension, as I'm afraid there will be in a lot of places. We're a small organization, financed by subscriptions and by some substantial gifts from Northern liberals."

"I hope," said Joe, "the Commies don't horn in on this thing."

Ned's face tensed, but he controlled an instinctive wave of anger. "They always do. But our outfit is pro-American and anti-Red. They'll call us Reds, they have already. Everything that is against the status quo is called Red sooner or later."

"I know. I'm not accusing you of reddishness. I was simply thinking. The Reds always show up in times of stress and cause trouble if they can."

"That's perfectly true, and it's something we both have to guard against."

They were silent a moment, then Ned said, "I thought since you and I were heads of two organizations in the middle of this thing, naturally on opposite sides, we might sort of ease things where we could. For instance, if we get into court, we could stipulate facts here and there and maybe save dragging in a lot of witnesses and perhaps engendering local hatred or fanning it."

"I'm with you there. I'll do what I can. I won't be going into court personally. But I'll introduce you to our general counsel, and I'm sure he'll cooperate wherever it seems feasible."

"Fine."

Joe thought of something else. "Look, Ned, are you going to advise colored parents to send their children to white schools."

"It's what the Supreme Court said they were to do." Ned laughed. "But, no, we won't advise any such thing as a mass movement—it would simply cause trouble. In some individual

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instances we may have to. After all, we too may decide to make a test case or two, in the interest of enforcing the law."

"I see." Joe's serious expression relaxed into a grin. "Look, Ned, why don't we go out and have a drink? It's a little early in the day, but we can have coffee, coke, anything you like."

"That's nice of you, Joe. But somebody might recognize me, and that would ruin your career."

Joe laughed. "That I doubt. Anyway, it would be a hell of a note if I couldn't have a cup of coffee or a mug of beer with an old friend."

Ned leaned over the desk reflectively. "There was a time when you and I more or less agreed this was all a lot of nonsense."

"I know." Joe looked around and lowered his voice, as if afraid someone was eavesdropping. "*Entre nous*, Ned, I haven't changed so much. I think, down deep, interracial contacts are a matter of congeniality, not color or blood. God, they'd shoot me if they heard me say this. . . ."

"I'll never tell."

"You want to know the truth? I wouldn't really mind if my children went to school with colored children. Didn't I sit right beside you as we heard Professor Blaisdell expound the law of contracts?"

"Sure, and didn't we trot down the half block to the courts together to listen in and get practical knowledge of procedure?"

"We did, often."

"And didn't you and I and Rafferty and that tall Swede—Larsen?—go to that speak nights and settle the problems of the universe?"

"Sure."

"Well," Joe added, "as you know, I've been in the middle

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of Southern politics for some years. You can't be elected constable if you entertain such views. Then, too, Ned, you Yankees oversimplify the whole problem."

"We Yankees. Merciful God! You forget I was brought up in Alabama?"

"So you were. But you've been away a long time. It's one thing for two people or four people of common interests but different races and perhaps different colors to associate socially. It's another thing to force a mass integration of two races when their average levels of culture are so different, their divergence so pronounced, their prejudices against each other so bitter. It's bound to come. But it can't be forced all at once by edict."

Ned turned away thoughtfully. "I realize the difficulties, Joe. But just the same we've got to try, and hope it will work out." He stood up. "Well, it's nice to talk to you, Joe, and I'll be seeing you around."

"Good."

They shook hands and the visitor left.

Ned Tarver pushed through the revolving doors and turned down Dogwood Street, the main thoroughfare, and it reminded him of entering the steamroom in the turkish bath in Harlem he patronized occasionally. Well, New York could be hot too, very much like this some days.

Suddenly aware of intense thirst, he spotted a tavern, and impulsively went in. He twisted himself into a high chair at the bar. No one challenged him. He ordered a beer, and glanced at himself in the mirror back of the bottles. His features were as Caucasian as the bartender's or those of any of the half-dozen men at the bar. There were one or two with complexions as dark as his.

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He drained the beer without pause and ordered another. The intense humidity had given him a terrific thirst.

Poor old Joe. A successful man, to be sure, and no doubt happy. Or was he happy, or even content? That was hard to say. A lot of men would consider a seat in the Senate the apex of their ambition. But Joe. . . . And now he'd gone into this—well, it couldn't be, in the final analysis, anything but a hate society, however Joe and his associates gilded it. Ned thought of Joe as he had been twenty-five years ago. A brilliant youth, crackling with potentialities. He'd gone to law school with a university degree, an education more on the classical than the more popular practical side . . . liberal arts: languages, philosophy. Afterward his law degree, and postgraduate courses in London and Paris. A young man equipped to lead the South instead of following it, and yet he was ending, like so many others, nowhere.

Down the bar two men in slacks and sport shirts, middle-aged men who probably were artisans of some sort, were discussing the big issue.

". . . but what the hell can they do?"

"They can send federal troops down if they wanta."

"They ain't a-gonta do that?"

"I'd like to know why the hell not? What's to stop 'em?"

"Think they want another war, like back in 'sixty-four when Sherman come down here?"

"They wouldn't care a damn."

"They ain't soldiers enough to force us to send our kids to school with niggers."

"I think you're right. They'd hafta de-tail a corporal's guard to every family. I know I'd a damned sight druther my kids grew up not knowin' how to read and write and add a column of figures than have 'em go to school with a lot of niggers."

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"Me too."

The other laughed. "Next they'll be saying I gotta have niggers in to dinner once a week."

"I wouldn't be surprised none at what they'd do."

Ned drained his second beer and left.

He walked two blocks and waited for a bus. He knew Riverport. He had been here often, the first time when he was eleven, or maybe barely twelve, and he had worked for a grocer in an interim between schools.

Boarding the bus, he instinctively started to the back, where Negro patrons were supposed to sit. They could, if there were enough of them, fill the seats toward the front, half-way at least, though the drivers always saw that there were seats reserved for white passengers who might get on. But he took a vacant seat near the front, and no one bothered him. When in the South he usually followed the routine devised for his race; it was best not to tempt providence or whatever it was that controlled fate. He was in a perverse mood today, no doubt about it. There was always the chance that somebody would recognize him. Last year he had delivered the commencement address at Carwell College, to which he was on his way at this moment, and recently a weekly news magazine had written him up rather extensively, with a picture. Oh, well.

The campus, quite pretty with its rows of poplars and the taller pines in back, the ivy-subdued brick buildings, was quiet. A few students of the summer school were passing, but the big rush wouldn't be on for three weeks, when the regular session started.

In the outer office of the president's suite the secretary, a dark, pretty girl, recognized him. "How are you, Mr. Tarver? Dr. Jameson will be right with you. Sit down, won't you."

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"Thank you."

In a few minutes he was ushered into the inner office, where a tall, thin, black man greeted him with a warm handshake. "Good to see you, Ned. You're looking well."

"Bearing up quite nicely, thanks. And you?"

"I do very well considering my age and burdens." Dr. Jameson laughed. He was a Ph.D. from Cornell, who had specialized in soil chemistry, and he had devised some improved fertilizing formulas and some new crop-rotating procedures. "Sit down, Ned. Lunch'll be ready in a little while."

"Thank you. I hope I'm not putting you to any trouble."

"On the contrary, it's only a pleasure. How's your family?"

"Quite well. Nell's giving a one-man—I should say, one-woman—show soon at some little gallery down in the Village."

"Your wife's really got it, hasn't she?"

"They say she has. I'm no judge of painting, and I suppose I'd be a prejudiced critic. My oldest boy's in the army. He's in Germany at the moment. He got a commission."

"Good for him."

"As long as he doesn't come South."

They both laughed. "He got through Columbia before the Army took him," Ned added. "Your family well?"

"All quite well. Jim, that's my youngest boy, is doing research in physics for the government. Nuclear. All quite hush."

"Fine."

"I believe it's in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, though he can't say too much about it. I hope so. How's your mission going?"

"Just starting, so I don't know. I had a talk with Joe Duffield this morning."

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"Joe Duffield? Oh, I believe you told me once you and he were more or less friends."

"We are. We went to Georgetown Law together."

"You did? Well, I'll be damned. I see he's taking over that White Band. It was revived recently. One of the most vicious of those secret societies that flourished in the twenties. Well, it's too bad. I once had hopes of Joe Duffield."

"We all had."

"They all end up the same way—down here. What did he have to say?"

"The usual thing. Of course he denied the White Band would be used for intimidation or violence."

"That has a familiar ring," said the educator. "They always deny it. When the Ku Klux was reborn nearly forty years ago, they said it was merely a fraternal order—of course for white, gentile Protestants. But what are your plans? What about the League for Racial Justice?"

"We're moving along, doctor, sort of feeling our way. But the schools open in two weeks, and we hope to make a few test cases, get the ball to rolling, you might say."

"The Supreme Court," Dr. Jameson reflected, "agreed to allow a reasonable time to put its ruling into effect. I suppose some of our Southern white friends will construe that as anywhere from twenty-five years to a century."

Ned laughed. "I don't doubt it. And I don't want to precipitate trouble. There's enough of it on the horizon already. But we felt, our board of directors, that we ought to test the thing in some way, at least make a formal showing of complying with the court's order, and let the federal courts construe the meaning of 'reasonable.' We can't let it lapse by default."

"I think you're on the right track, Ned. It shouldn't cause trouble—though you never know. Let some Negro children

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apply for admission to a public school. Of course they'll be turned down, with one excuse or another, and then you can apply for *mandamus* or *certiorari* or whatever you always call it."

"Exactly."

"What you wrote me about Baynesville . . ."

"Yes?"

"It might do very well. It's a typical mill town, and the Negro grade school there is particularly bad. The building is unsanitary and about to fall apart, and the school is pitifully understaffed. The old gag about separate but comparable facilities is ludicrous at Baynesville, as it is in many places. The white schools there are new and quite good."

"We heard the situation was pretty bad there."

Baynesville was only twenty miles from Riverport. Ned recalled it vaguely as a little county seat, with the usual brick courthouse presiding over the usual square. Since then some big textile mills had moved down from New England. He picked up a glass paperweight from the educator's uncluttered desk. It was a pretty thing, with marine fossils seeming to grow in depths at its bottom.

Dr. Jameson glanced at a ship's chronometer on the wall. "I'm sure lunch is ready. Suppose we start."

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4

JOE DUFFIELD tossed the morning paper on the dining-room table indignantly. "Harry Holmes," he said, "you might know."

Sarah took a sip of her cooled-off coffee. "He's always been against you, hasn't he?"

"He's against everything," Joe said, "except his own brand of enlightenment—what he regards as the liberal attitude toward the South. Look at this editorial!"

"Let's see it." Sarah, cool-looking in a thin, blue lounging robe, picked up the paper and read:

> Apparently the White Band, one of the better hate societies of the lamented '20's, is being revived in a big way to combat this dreadful scourge of integration in the schools. The announced head of it is none other than our retiring (although that's not quite the word) junior Senator, the Hon. Joseph Duffield. Between pious platitudes at a meeting

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at which he ended the breathless public suspense over his immediate future, he explained that he was serving this fine secret society without salary. We have no reason to doubt the word of a man who is still a Senator of the United States. Probably he is serving without salary. But then . . . let us express the hope that he is not sacrificing too much for the welfare of his beloved South.

"Personally he's not a bad guy," Joe commented. "But he's obsessed with the idea that he and a few other editors—God knows they are few enough—can change the South's thinking. He'll hurt the *Dispatch*, cause subscriptions to be canceled; worse, the paper'll lose advertising. But Harry's the kind who would rather be right than make a living. He's nuts."

"Wasn't such a trait once considered rather noble?" Sarah asked.

Joe put down his coffee cup. "No doubt. Still is, perhaps. But this is a practical world. And if you're in public life—and editors as well as politicians are—you can get only so far ahead of public opinion. You've got to consider what people, most people, think, even if you regard them as a lot of dolts."

"Tra-la-la," said Sarah, "but why is the South worked up into such a zither?"

"Dither."

"As you like. But why? This thing'll be worked out no doubt. Most things are, I've found. A way out's usually found, sooner or later."

"No doubt," Joe said indifferently. "But you're from the North, Sarah, and, though you've been down here a long time, you can't yet see through Southern eyes."

"I'm afraid I don't want to," she retorted. "The South's

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still living in eighteen-seventy. It can't face up to the fact that it's nineteen fifty-four and another world."

"There's a lot of truth in what you say," Joe conceded. "It is a different world. But Southerners still don't like to be told what to do, to have their most cherished mores upset by a bunch of doctrinaires."

"I suppose not. I confess I'd hoped to the last you'd decide to run again. I must say I prefer the life of a senator's wife to . . . God knows what. I liked Washington. We went to some nice parties. We met a lot of worthwhile people."

"My political career," Joe pointed out, "is not necessarily ended. In fact, and I'm speaking confidentially . . ."

"Thanks for your trust, dear heart."

Ignoring her sarcasm, he said, "This thing I'm going into may advance my career. How'd you like to be the wife of a vice president or . . ."

"Or president?"

"I'm not aspiring that high yet. And I have no desire to be a dictator, like the late Huey, but you'll admit, I take it, that I have some practical knowledge of politics."

"You're a positive genius at it."

"That's as may be. But I know my way around. Well, I hope niggers move into the block where Harry Holmes lives!"

"That could hardly happen in Riverport. Aren't there covenants among property owners in the 'better' sections? Restricting ownership to certain races and certain faiths."

"I believe so. Just the same I wish it would happen to him."

"Maybe he wouldn't mind."

"Maybe he thinks he wouldn't."

Joe left the table, lighting a cigarette. The phone rang. He answered it. Dave Beckett wanted to see him. Was he coming into town? Yes, he'd be in shortly, within half an hour.

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The dark young man was in a good humor. "We've jumped into this thing at just the right time, Joe. It's going like fury. Hank and I have had to hire a dozen clerks to take care of the mail—the checks, the membership certificates. We've got thousands of new members in five states."

"Great." Joe, leaning over Dave's desk, flicked the ashes from his cigarette. "I guess the ten bucks initiation hasn't scared many off."

"No. My God, it's what the White Band charged back in the twenties, and prices have gone up about three hundred percent since."

"I know, but it still sounds like a spot of money to many men. And the dues. We fixed them at twenty dollars a year, didn't we?"

"Yeah, payable quarterly. Five bucks every three months won't hurt anybody. Only the poorest whites—sharecroppers and migratory workers—will stay out."

"We don't want them anyway," said Joe. "What good would they be? We'll have their support anyway, for whatever it's worth."

"Sure."

"There's something," Joe reflected, "called the Citizens' Councils started over in Mississippi and reported spreading. It has our aim—well, the aim of almost everybody in the South—to preserve the white race, if you want to simplify, although at the moment the issue is only schools."

"I know about them," Dave Beckett said. "Fats Gilliam was over on the Ole Miss campus last week, and he told me all about them."

"Who's Fats Gilliam?"

"Why, Joe, you mean to say you don't remember the coach at Baynesville State Teachers, the onetime All-American guard at State U?"

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"Of course! Sometimes I can't remember my mother's maiden name." A picture of an enormous man with a loud chuckle took shape. There were many Gilliams around this country. They pronounced it Gill-um. "What did he say?"

"Simply that it's no competitor of ours, except we're all working for the same end. It's not a fraternal or secret order like ours. It's composed of Rotarians, Kiwanians, what have you; leading citizens in most towns. They simply meet and pass resolutions and petition the legislatures and so on. The White Band will be much more—effective."

"Fats Gilliam is with us?"

"Decidedly. I think he was the first man to join at Baynesville. Hank and I were thinking of bringing him into the inner council, making him an officer. That is, if you approve."

"Sure, anything you want."

"He has a lot of friends, a lot of influence, especially in the younger crowd, the men we particularly want. But what I wanted to tell you today was something else. One of my spies," Dave Beckett laughed, "brought me word that the nigras are fixing to make the first test of this new ruling, if you want to call it a ruling—I call it a piece of legislation by the Supreme Court—anyway that they're planning to test it over at Baynesville."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. They claim Baynesville has one of the worst colored schools in the state and a high school that's substandard."

"Certainly they're not up to what we've given them in Riverport."

"No. And I hear an Afro lawyer named Ned Tarver is in Riverport and is going down there to make trouble when the schools open."

"I'm not surprised. I know Ned. In fact, I saw him yesterday."

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"You saw him?"

"Sure, he came up to my office. We talked over the situation a little."

"You knew him before?"

"I knew him around Washington," Joe said vaguely. "Not a bad guy. Quite brilliant."

"Oh, they have them," Dave conceded. "I've known them. Remember, I went to school up North, like you did. Sure, their leaders are as well-educated as we are, some better than most of us, and they should know better. But they come down here and stir up the poor morons on the farms and in the towns and only cause them trouble."

"That's true. But what can you do?"

"Nothing," said Dave significantly, "but meet each situation as it happens."

"I suppose they'll go into Federal Court and ask *certiorari*, and we'll have Damon Quiller there to oppose them, and if the judge grants them relief, we'll appeal on one ground or another, although the basic question appears to have been settled."

Dave looked up with a small, sardonic smile. "That's about how the legal end of it will shape up."

Joe changed the subject. "How are plans for headquarters coming?"

"Oh, I'm glad you asked. We've got a chance to lease the whole top floor of the Darby Building at Dogwood and Henry. A very nice building."

"I know."

"We want you to meet there with us within the next few days to go over the deal. We feel we can't do much better, but you must be satisfied, Joe."

"I'll be glad to meet with you. Call me. If I'm not in,

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leave word with my secretary. I'll be running along. Everything looks fine—super, in fact."

"I'll say."

Joe, trying to ignore the discomfort of the steamy street, reflecting how much like Washington Riverport could be, found vague but impressive figures flashing through his mind. Why, if this thing went as it should, as it promised to, he'd be a rich man in a year; they'd all be—Dave, and Hank, and Damon, and perhaps one or two others who would be cut in. With thousands coming in, week after week, the money would pile up. Their overhead wouldn't be much, as such things went. Maybe he'd have enough in six months to pull out. This was nothing he wanted for a permanent connection. He needed money. And he'd have it. More than he could make as a senator in thirty years. In Washington you never had enough: you had to maintain a decent home, if you were a senator, entertain a certain amount. It took a wealthy man to get by.

He returned the greetings of two men who called, "Hello, Senator." He hadn't the slightest idea who they were. When he, his family—of course he included them in everything, even if Sarah was strange and distant these days, more interested in the next drink than in him—when they accumulated enough, and it shouldn't be long, he could think about resuming his political career . . . if he still wanted it. They'd be electing a new governor in two years, and that might be a better stepping-stone even than senator: you were closer to your own state. Then, too, he wouldn't be at all surprised if a new party was organized in the South, better, more effective than the Dixiecrats of 'fifty-two, a split-off from the liberal Democrats of the North. And who was better fitted to lead them? Oh, he had no political illusions. He knew such a candidate couldn't be elected, any more than Strom Thur-

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mond could, and yet, if the movement were South-wide, more cohesive, more determined, more intelligent, the presidential candidate would come out of the campaign with a prestige the leaders, the manipulators, North and South, would have to reckon with. A man had to plan ahead.

He turned into a side street and soon came to the old brown mansion that housed the Cherokee Club. He pushed into its spacious, cool, hushed rooms, sat down in the main lounge, and rang for a drink before lunch.

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5

HARRY HOLMES was bent over his battered desk reading the editorial-page galley proofs. He was sixty-seven and looked older—a veteran who had started on the *Dispatch* as a copy boy in the days when the first Roosevelt was president, and the automobile was a stared-at novelty, and you could buy a substantial lunch for fifteen cents. This rickety three-story building, which you entered down a little street that was no more than an alley off Forrest Square, actually was the paper's third home, though it looked as if it might have been the original building. The *Dispatch* dated back to eighteen seventy-one, when Sherman's march was still a fresh memory and a Federal provost guard prowled the streets at night. But now the owners had drawn plans for a resplendent new building. The editor wondered if he'd live or his job would last long enough to work in the new place. He didn't own any of the paper; he was still only a salaried employee.

He was aware of a figure looming in the doorway, though

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it had approached noiselessly. John Braden always loomed; he was that sort of well-filled-out, bulgy-jawed man, whose age must be around fifty, though he never mentioned it. John Braden was the principal owner of the chain of papers which had bought the *Dispatch* five years ago. Everything, Harry Holmes reflected, tended to chains these days: newspapers, hotels, groceries, even drugstores.

"Don't let me interrupt you, Harry," said John Braden.

"Oh, that's all right, John, I was just going over these proofs. No hurry. There's time for them. Have a seat."

"Thanks." The owner pulled up an uncomfortable straight chair and lit his half-smoked cigar. His cigars were always going out. He'd forget them, then suddenly remember them. He had been in town several days, so that Harry Holmes was not surprised to see him again. This, he sensed, was to be a conference; the other meetings had been merely to pass the time of day.

"How are things going, Harry?" John, who looked vociferous and blustery, was surprisingly soft-spoken, and yet he never failed to make his points.

"All right, I guess, John. No particular complaints. This segregation thing has got us all worried."

"That's one thing I wanted to speak to you about."

"Yes?"

John Braden puffed on his revived cigar. "Your editorial about Joe Duffield was clever. I had to laugh." Harry knew that his employer had not brought up the editorial to compliment him, and he waited. "But don't you think," the owner added, with an obvious striving after tact, "that you went a little far?"

"Maybe." Harry, a small man who seemed to shrink as the years piled on him, ran a hand through his thinning gray hair.

"After all, Joe is a very popular man."

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"No doubt of that."

"I think you were entirely right in everything you—implied," Braden went on. "But an editorial like that might hurt us, cost us subscribers, even advertisers. I hear this White Band is going great, really taking on proportions."

"I don't doubt it."

"And the segregation thing is a red-hot issue, as you know. When the Court's decision was announced, this paper supported it, although you were tactful in what you said: they couldn't expect too much from the South all at once, but it had to come. We were right of course. Remember, Harry, I'm a Yankee, and I don't see much wrong with desegregating the schools, but I realize most Southerners do, and we've got to get along with them. We've got that paper in Florida too, though Jack Beamer is not as liberal as you are, Harry, and he hopped all over the Court, and I let him alone, just as I let you alone. And I'm not trying to tell you what to do now. You're the editor, and I believe strongly in local management of our papers. And yet . . . well, we can't go too far in antagonizing the people who are our bread and butter. I don't need to labor that point, Harry. You've been a newspaperman a damned sight longer than I have, and you're one of the best editors we have."

"Thank you." There was no sarcasm in the editor's tone, though a measure of it in what he felt. Twenty years ago he'd have said get somebody else, I can't be a half-way editor. But now—where could he get another job at his age? And how could he and his wife get along on the pension they'd probably dole out to him, though the children were grown, married, scattered, making their own way? But how could you compromise with principle, with what you felt to be right?

"I just thought," John Braden went on, "that you might sort of tone things down, at least until things simmer down.

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I suppose there'll be some sort of compromise—there generally is in situations like this."

"I wonder." Harry smoothed back what was left of his hair.

"I've heard some pretty harsh things said about the *Dispatch* the last few days," Braden added. "Of course I'm not for spineless, do-nothing papers. Nobody has any respect for them. Just the same, I've wondered, Harry, what made you so —so liberal. You were born down in this country and grew up, I suppose, with the prejudices of the region."

"I did. My father was a kid soldier in the Confederacy. He was at Chickamauga and Atlanta and in some other battles. I absorbed most of his feelings when I was young. It was only later that I began to think for myself. I'm not sure what it was. I remember we were desperately poor. My brothers and sisters, five of them, and my father trying to make a go of a country store. The boys had to drop out of school when they were in their teens. Then my father died, and my mother tried to run the store, but there wasn't much in it, and she had to sell out for what she could get. We had a small farm, but everything brought so little it was hardly worth holding out. I went up to Riverport—I was around seventeen—and got on here as a copy boy. I stayed. I became a reporter. But you don't want a biography of me. You're wondering how a Southerner who grew up just after Reconstruction got the ideas I seem to have."

Harry Holmes paused and filled his caked old pipe, a straight briar. He lighted it carefully and took a few puffs. "I used to see the nigras, especially in the country, trying to scrab a living in those days, and they were worse off than we were, though some of them were more efficient farmers. They were still held in a sort of economic slavery. Very few of them could afford much of an education, and their schools in

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those days, where there were any at all, were one-room shacks. I'd know boys who tried desperately to better themselves. There are some good nigra colleges in the South—Tuskegee, Morehouse in Atlanta, Carwell right here in Riverport—but it was hard for boys to qualify for these colleges, and harder to work their way through when they could make the grade. And even when they did, what was there for them afterward? I've seen young men with B.A.'s, even M.A.'s, become waiters or janitors because there was nothing else for them. There were not enough teaching jobs. Oh, they could go North. But there wasn't much for them there, unless they became lawyers or doctors, and they couldn't all go into those professions."

"Harry," John Braden interposed, "every kid has that problem, white, black, or green, whatever his color or antecedents."

"To an extent, John, but the Negroes"—suddenly he pronounced the name as Northerners and Westerners do—"have a tougher time. Down here they can't vote except at general elections. You know how much a general election counts in the South. They can't vote at Democratic primaries, which decide who will rule them. They have no voice in their government. They are segregated in every way: at theaters, restaurants, station waiting-rooms, drinking fountains, toilets. Either they're citizens or they're not. Let's be honest and call them a servile class without rights or else give them full citizenship. I can't see making somebody half a citizen."

John held his half-smoked cigar, which had gone out, and looked away at the scrounged-up plaster on the far wall. He said nothing.

"Another thing," Harry added. "I'm against segregation because of its effect on the white people."

"The white people?"

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"Sure. It's had a bad effect on us. We've grown up with the idea that we are superior merely because we happened to be born with skin of a certain pigmentation. We've had a people living all around us—cooking for us, looking after our children, keeping our homes clean, driving our cars, running our errands—whom we considered inferior regardless of their qualities or achievements, racially or individually. Our superiority complex, which of course stemmed from a secret fear that we were not as superior as we told ourselves we were, gave us an artificial attitude toward a lot of things. Take sex. We put Southern women on a pedestal they don't deserve and don't even want, if they could once be honest about it. The platitudes we have to listen to about the purity of Southern womanhood, whose lily-white blood we shall never allow to be contaminated with the blood of an inferior race! Hell!

"Our demagogues—and that means all our politicians and most of our civic leaders and clergymen—imply or say outright that we must protect the unsullied virtue of our women from the savage impulses of prowling primitives. In other words, from rape. From niggers. All this has given sex in the South an amount of artificiality it lacks in any other part of the country. Many Southern women have grown up with the idea that they are conferring quite a favor on their lucky husbands to allow them to end this precious virginity, to encroach on this vaunted virtue. And most of them are completely dishonest, because the Southern gal is by nature what is known as a 'hot baby.' Of course, many break over the traces and experiment before they enter the sanctifying bonds of matrimony. But Southern boys in particular grow up with an unnatural and distorted idea of sex, and this causes many marriages to fail. Usually these boys have their first experiences with colored gals. You remember the old story about

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the boy who was twenty-five before he knew white girls did it. Well, they bring to their marriages a sense of guilt and an appalling lack of understanding. But I didn't mean to make a speech. Sorry, John."

"It's all been very interesting." John Braden got up. "And instructive. You've got logic on your side. But these people —you could never persuade them."

"I don't expect to."

"Well, don't worry too much about what I said. Just give it some thought."

"I will, John."

"Will you lunch with me tomorrow, Harry? There'll be a couple of other men there, men you know—Will Hardin and Jefferson Smith."

"I'll be glad to. Thank you."

"We'll meet at the Cherokee Club. At one. I'm leaving tomorrow night."

They shook hands. Braden left, and Harry went back to his galleys.

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6

BAYNESVILLE WAS IN process of turning from a country town into a city. On courthouse square, a fine new steel-and-brick office building of eight stories was flanked on one side by a seventy-year-old livery stable, converted with a minimum of effort into an auto repair shop; on the other side by Wallen's market, a rickety old frame building. Across the square, the new city library, of limestone, stood next to the old Travellers' Hotel, a rambling frame structure which had decayed into a cheap rooming house. The new stone-and-brick Baynesville Hotel, a block off the square, towered ten stories. There was a new residential suburb, where executives of the textile mills transplanted from New England (because of cheap labor and accessibility to raw cotton) had built their expensive homes. The Baynesville Country Club had one of the state's sportiest golf courses.

But there was one section of the fast-growing little city which had changed hardly at all—the area, roughly eight square blocks, known as Niggertown. It was a haphazard collection of wooden houses, some in fair preservation, others mere hovels, with sagging roofs and crumpling joints. There were, on the fringes, some brick houses which had been solid

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residences of white persons two generations back, but these, overcrowded and unpainted for many years, didn't look much better. There were, it was true, a few houses on one extreme edge, along Belton and Davis Streets, of better quality—bungalows finished in brick or attractive stucco, belonging to the more successful Negro merchants or professional men, though these were hardly in the same class with a handful of really fine residences just beyond Riverport's Darktown. These housed the larger city's few affluent Negroes, and they had become tourist attractions. "You see what nigras can do if they really try. We don't hold 'em back."

In one of the larger frame houses of Baynesville's Niggertown, a house which had not decayed greatly and looked pretty well kept, Ned Tarver sat on the porch in a summer canvas chair talking to Jack Dornin. Three Dornin children played in the yard, along with two children of the Jacksons, the family that shared the house.

Jack Dornin was discussing things the visitor had said. "It's just like I say, Mr. Tarver, I'd like to see my kids get a better break. Who wouldn't? They won't learn a lot at that Spread Creek school. One teacher for over two hundred of 'em. I reckon it's okay if a kid listens close-like, but you know how kids are. They wants to ask questions, and the teacher'ud ought to be able to give each one some attention. But this one simply ain't got time. Sure, I'd like to have mine in one of them nice, painted-up, white schools, with maybe one teacher for every thirty or forty and indoor toilets and everything. But, like I say, I don't want no trouble with the white folks. So I reckon I'll just drift along till they tell me different."

"I don't think you'd have any trouble," Ned Tarver said. "It's just to make a test case—in the courts, you understand."

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"I understand, but you don't know these white folks around here. Where was you brought up, Mr. Ned?"

"Over in Alabama."

"Golly, you ought to know. I bet you didn't talk outa turn over there. But you've lived up North a long time."

"I went North when I was seventeen."

"Maybe you've forgotten how it was when you was a little shaver."

"No, Jack, I haven't forgotten."

"Well, you can't get away with nothing out of the way. You best go along in the regular way, and keep your mouf shut and speak when you're spoken to. I wouldn't have my job three days iffen I was to mess in this school thing." He drove a truck for one of the mills.

Tarver stood up. "I don't want to cause you any trouble, Jack. But the only way we'll get anywhere in this fight, even if the Supreme Court has decided it, is to keep putting the pressure on them."

Jack Dornin laughed. "Well, let somebody else put the pressure on. Not me. I knows when I'm well off."

"Think it over. And thanks just the same."

Ned started down the street, with a backward wave. It was a mild day, with a haze on the pine hills that surrounded the town and a hint of autumn in the air.

It was hard to break through the shell which fear, compliance, and indifference had formed in these people. He didn't blame them for not wanting to stick their necks out. The whites would retaliate, undoubtedly. But what could you do? You couldn't let the decision languish by default. Well, the lawyer, Goodwin, had offered to take his two children over to the white school and ask to have them enrolled. And Smith, the colored undertaker, was willing to proffer his eight-year-old girl any time. Probably he could get others. One

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was enough to make a test case, but he had wanted a score: a large number would make a more impressive petition. Or would it matter? The books were full of important decisions in which a single citizen had been upheld in some plea. Besides, the Court had acted. This would merely constitute defiance, contempt of court.

It was time to act. The schools had opened two weeks ago, and nothing had yet happened. He had planned to make a test the opening day, but there was so much confusion and so much delay in obtaining volunteers that he hadn't yet been able to prepare the papers and go into court. He didn't feel that the delay greatly mattered; perhaps it would strengthen their cause to have allowed the white schools more time to prepare for integration . . . which not one was doing, none south of a border state.

Well, he'd stop in at one more house, just for luck. He selected one of the least inviting places, a sagging old house which was little more than a shack. Integration, disintegration, he thought as he knocked. After some time a nervous little woman opened the door a crack. "What is it, please?"

"Could I speak to you a minute?"

She looked at him suspiciously. It was the old story. He looked too much like a white man; it was hard to get them to believe he was one of them. Sometimes he wished for a skin like coal. "Is your husband around?"

She opened the door a little wider. "I haven't got a husband. I'm a widow."

"Oh, do you have children?"

"Yassah, three."

"Could we sit here on the porch a minute and talk? It's about the children."

She came out then. "Well, sit down, mister." She remained standing. One pillar of the porch was gone, and a corner of

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the roof which it had supported had lurched forward until it looked as if it might tumble over any time. He sat on a broken kitchen chair. "What ages are your children?"

"Nine, eleven, twelve. . . . If you're the truant officer, they're all in school, up at Spread Creek, and they goes regular—I sees to that."

He laughed. "I'm nothing like that. I represent the League for Racial Justice."

She stared at him. "What mought that be?"

"Well, it's an organization to try to get full citizenship rights for the colored people. I'm colored, just like you."

She studied him. "You don't much look it."

"I know, but I am. Wouldn't you like to have your children go to a better school?"

The little woman's eyes flashed. "I shore would. It ain't that the teacher's not okay at Spread Creek. But last year seven, maybe eight chillun come down with the typhoid fever, and I was scared sick my chillun would get it. So was the other mothers. We figured it come from the well they gets drinkin' water. The health officer tested it, says it warn't that. I don't know. He said it mought be the milk. He raised hell—closed up one dairy till it got rid of some cows. I don't think he'd've bothered much except he was afraid t'would spread to white folks. They got it stopped, though, wherever it was a-comin' from."

"That was a worry all right. You've got outdoor toilets at the Spread Creek school?"

"Oh, shore."

"You've heard about the Supreme Court, how it's held Negro children were entitled to go to white schools?"

"I heard about it; so did the white people. I heard plenty talk, too. I'm a charwoman at the new ho-tel. I heard 'em

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sayin' ain't none of their chillun gonta go to school with nigger chillun."

"That's what they say, but the courts feel differently, and what the courts say goes."

"Maybe. I ain't sayin' one way or the other."

"If you'd be willing to cooperate with us, to help us to the extent of just taking your children to the white school and offering to enroll them . . ." He explained how they had to test the issue.

To his surprise she said, "Shore. I ain't got nothin' to lose." But suddenly she eyed him suspiciously. "How do I know you're not a white man tryin' git me into a jam?"

He laughed softly. "I guess you'll just have to take my word for it. Of course I've got papers to prove who I am, if you'd like to . . ."

He reached into his inside pocket, but she held up a restraining hand. "Never mind. Somehow or other I believe you. And I'll do what you say."

He took down her name and the names of her children.

The next night Ned Tarver had dinner at the home of Tom Goodwin, the lawyer.

The Goodwins lived in one of the new houses on the Belton Street edge of Niggertown. Tom, who had a good practice, as much as he could handle, had built this bungalow. It had a carefully tended, sloping lawn, on the fringes of which ran the flower garden that was Tom's particular pride. Tom, an open-faced brown man with an infectious grin, had studied law at a state university in the North. His wife, youthful and pretty, with a complexion like cream, had gone to Howard University in Washington. She had under-furnished rather than over-furnished the house, with a taste that ran to spare,

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blond, modern furniture. There were a few prints of Cézanne and Gauguin.

Ned and Tom were at the flat desk in a corner of the living room going over the petition they had drawn up earlier in the day in Tom's office. Ella Goodwin sat at the small piano playing a Chopin nocturne in a *pianissimo* that was a mere breath of sound.

"If I'm disturbing you two . . ." She paused.

"Not at all," Ned assured her. "I love it. You can really play, Ella."

"Thank you, Ned. I had a good teacher, but I don't practice the way I used to, and I can't play much any more."

"I must," Ned retorted, "ask the court to rule out that statement as obviously untrue."

They all laughed. The two children, the girl twelve and the boy nine, were in another corner going over their school books.

The two lawyers bent over their papers. "Of course," Ned observed, "if our clients are admitted to the white school, we won't need this."

Tom Goodwin laughed hard. "You can be funny. Know any more good ones? Well, we'll have the evidence for a *prima facie* case by tomorrow night."

Ella began playing again, very softly. It was a mild evening, half summer, half autumn, and through the screen door a faint background chorus of crickets drifted in.

Suddenly there was another sound, vague at first, then definite . . . the music of a band. It was swelling, approaching. They all went out on the porch. The band was coming up Belton Street, through the middle of Niggertown.

"What could that be?" Tom wondered. "The colored Elks maybe. They hang on a parade every now and then."

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"It's 'The Stars and Stripes Forever' they're playing," Ned remarked, "though their tempo is a little ragged."

"It certainly is," Ella agreed.

The band finished the number, and the drums rolled a beat for hundreds of marching men. As the procession neared the "nice" part of Belton Street the drums beat a flourish, and the band launched into "Year of Jubilo." Ella shuddered and laughed. "Did you hear that trumpet? Brother! Was it ever flat."

The van of the parade approached. The short autumnal twilight was fading into darkness, but the marchers carried flares—a relic of the torchlight political parades of two generations ago—and the watchers could see them well and read their banners. The color-bearers in front carried an American flag, and beside it an enormous white placard which flared out in the wind, flaunting its words:

THE FRATERNAL AND BENEVOLENT ORDER OF
THE WHITE BAND

The bandsmen and all the men who marched behind them wore white masks across their faces, from their foreheads to the tips of their noses, with holes for their eyes. There were placards along the line. The first one said:

COLORED FRIENDS, STAY IN YOUR PLACE
AND ALL WILL BE WELL

"Well, I'll be damned," Ned remarked softly.

"I know that fat guy," said Tom Goodwin, pointing. "He's Duffendorf, the grocer. You couldn't mistake that bulge."

"They don't really disguise themselves much," said Ella.

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"It's not like the Klan," said Ned. "Those hoods and nightgowns really hid them."

The second banner said:

WHITE SCHOOLS FOR WHITE CHILDREN!

A third proclaimed:

COLORED CITIZENS, YOU'VE GOT YOUR SCHOOLS
STAY IN THEM . . . . . OR ELSE!

Another paraphrased Kipling:

WHITE IS WHITE AND BLACK IS BLACK
AND NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

"I don't know what Duffendorf would do without the Negro trade," Tom said. "He's right in the middle of Niggertown. I wonder where the great Joe Duffield is. Suppose he's marching there somewhere?"

"Oh, he wouldn't take part in a thing like that," Ned was sure.

"He's too exalted?"

"Yes."

There were other placards.

THE WHITE BAND
AN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WHITE PEOPLE

And:

SUPREME COURT, TAKE NOTICE!
A MONGREL SOUTH—NEVER!

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Later:

COLORED BROTHERS, IF YOU DON'T
LIKE THE WHITE SOUTH, GO NORTH
OR GO BACK TO AFRICA

A marcher called up to the group on the porch, "Can you boys read them signs?"

They laughed and nodded.

"Be goddam sure you read 'em, then."

"Maybe," Tom murmured, "I'd have been happier if I hadn't learned to read."

"That could well be," Ned conceded.

The last marchers passed, and the music faded into the distance. The gathering night quieted again, and the small, strident nocturne of insects floated back on the mild air.

"I get the impression," said Tom Goodwin, lighting a cigar, "that they're trying to intimidate us niggers."

"You get the damnedest ideas." Ned gestured down the ill-lit street. "I'm just afraid that the few I lined up will back out now."

Tom blew a smoke ring. "I know two that won't."

"I'm sure of that. But the others . . ."

"We'll see."

Belton Street and the other streets of Niggertown were strangely deserted. There were no raucous groups of children; even the porches and stoops, where families habitually lounged about, were empty. Doors were closed, shades drawn, and dim streaks of light came from the silent houses.

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7

JOE DUFFIELD looked over the luxurious corner suite reserved for the Grand Protector of the White Band. It looked too pretty to be used, he remarked to Dave Beckett and Hank Caldwell as they conducted him on a tour of the headquarters, the entire sixteenth floor of the Darby Building.

Joe's desk was long, low, glass-topped, and the furniture was on the modernistic side, though the large chairs, upholstered in some sort of cream-colored material, looked comfortable, which was more than you could say for most of this neo stuff. The other offices looked equally sharp, and Joe remarked that the furnishings must have cost a pretty penny. Well, yes, the young men agreed, but Dave pointed out that you had to make an appearance with an organization that almost overnight had attained South-wide scope.

They looked out one of Joe's large windows. The view was magnificent. The skyline of Riverport stretched about them, quite metropolitan these days; the Cherokee River

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wound lazily through outer sections of the city; in the distance, steep little pine-thick hills formed the horizon. The day was warm, though it was late September, but air conditioning made the offices a temperate sixty-eight degrees.

The morning *Dispatch* was spread over Joe's desk; otherwise the desk was empty. His secretary, who would occupy the outer office, had yet to be installed. At the end of the year, when he ceased to be a senator, he would close his other office.

"Quite a ride they gave the parade in Baynesville," said Hank, glancing at the front page of the *Dispatch*.

Joe nodded. "Yeah."

"The *Gazette*'ll play it down," Hank predicted.

The afternoon paper, the only other daily in Riverport, was owned by Henry Calhoun Gaines, the aging newspaper magnate. It was a comparatively new paper, and for years it had been trying, with little success, to win advertising away from the eighty-year-old *Dispatch*.

"Gaines is in for gains," Hank punned. "Harry Holmes will cost the *Dispatch* plenty if he's allowed to continue his fight on segregation."

Gaines encouraged his papers to go along with local sentiment, whatever it appeared to be. The *Gazette* was careful never to offend what it took to be the prevailing opinion on any issue. It had avoided editorial discussion of the Supreme Court edict, and confined itself to reporting the news growing out of it, doing this colorlessly enough to annoy no one.

"Harry," Joe remarked, "is a dedicated liberal. But I can't see Braden letting him get away with this. Braden is a businessman. He doesn't care a single damn about issues."

The *Dispatch* had an inside page of pictures of the parade, the work of a staff photographer. Several of the placards were shown. The three men studied the pictures.

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Joe turned to his two younger colleagues. "What effect do you think such a parade has? To cause more trouble?"

"On the contrary," Dave said quickly. "I think it may prevent trouble. It'll show the niggers we mean business, and by 'we' I don't mean merely the White Band but the whole white community. I wouldn't be surprised if the nigra families who had decided to petition the court dropped out."

"Intimidated?"

"If you want to call it that. But maybe it's actually a move toward peace. If the coloreds get to running into court and agitating this thing in other ways maybe, you know there'll be trouble sooner or later, and the White Band won't start it."

"If the issue isn't tested there, it'll be tested somewhere else," Joe observed.

"Sure," Hank agreed, "but Baynesville is shaping up as a battleground."

Dave wondered why.

"Several factors," Hank explained. "The mills. A concentration of nigra and white wage-earners, rivals in a way, and the fact that the colored schools are pretty bad. Ned Tarver has gone there to file the first test case. There's a lawyer there named Tom Goodwin who is district representative of the N.A.A.C.P. He's in on the fight. I've heard a couple of organizers from the International Friends of Labor are due there any minute."

"What in the hell's the International Friends of Labor?" Dave demanded.

"I know that outfit," Joe explained. "A Commie front if there ever was one. It's on the Attorney General's list. Our Subversive Control Committee found out . . ."

He was interrupted by the phone. He picked it up. "Yes? This is Duffield. Yes, yes. Just a moment."

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Joe held his hand over the speaker. "It's somebody named Blanship. Says he's head of the chapter in Baynesville."

"That's right," Dave said.

"Wants me to address a mass meeting Saturday night. What do you fellows think?"

"Okay, I'd say," Dave replied.

"Fine," Hank added.

Joe returned to the phone. "Yes, Mr. Blanship. I'd be glad to do it. Sure, I'll be down, some time late in the afternoon. Thanks, I'll be glad to. Dinner at six-thirty, meeting at eight-thirty. Fine. Thanks a lot. Good-by."

"This is Wednesday," Dave mused. "Things'll pick up fast down there."

"They'll actually have to file their proceeding in Federal Court here," Joe reflected.

"Yes," said Dave, "but, as it happens, Judge Hurben will be sitting at Baynesville next week—you know, he has a circuit—and if he cares to he may hear the case there."

"Well, it does look like Baynesville will be the center of the hurricane for a while," Joe commented. "Of course, other towns will be in the picture. Other tests will be brought. But Baynesville may set a precedent at that."

Hank Caldwell, who was Grand Recorder and so recipient of all membership lists and of national headquarters' share of initiation fees and dues, poked Dave's arm. "There are a lot of angles to this thing and a lot of organizations horning in on it, on one side or the other, but the White Band'll hold its own. We have nine thousand new members in the last week. By the way, one of our largest chapters is at Baynesville.

Joe laughed softly in a way he had when he was pleased. "Good, good. Everything looks fine."

"For the white race," Dave added, with a cynical laugh, "and for us."

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8

THE COACH, puffing into his office under the gym, took off his sweater, slacks, and cleated shoes, and put on a tweed suit. He was a huge man, but not merely fat; he bulged with muscles; even his ample stomach could have withstood a powerful blow. His face was symmetrically broad, so that he was not bad-looking, but his eyes were disproportionately small, with a piggish look when he narrowed them to glare at someone.

The tall young man who edged in apologetically was Tim O'Hearn, star halfback and team captain, a senior whose grades never caused anyone the slightest worry; he'd made Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year.

"Mind if I come in a minute, Mr. Gill-um?"

"Come right in, Tim. Sit down, if you can find a seat. There. This place is a mess. Anything bothering you?"

"Nothing about the team, sir." He looked at the framed football pictures on the wall, some dating back to Fats Gilliam's undergraduate days at State U. "It's just that . . .

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well, Coach, do you know anything about the White Band?"

"Something, sure. Why do you ask? You interested in it?"

"I don't know. A man on the campus asked me to join. He couldn't tell me a lot about it except it's against integration."

Gilliam tapped a cigarette on his desk. "Well, Tim, it's a good outfit. I don't mind telling you I'm in it, though its rolls are supposed to be more or less secret."

"I don't think integration can possibly work, at least not in the South, Coach, but I'm opposed to force and intimidation. I hope we don't have any trouble."

"The White Band's not for force, Tim. We're trying to prevent it by convincing the niggers and everybody else concerned that integration won't work, and they'd better forget the whole thing. After all, if the niggers don't try to enroll in our schools, the thing'll be a dead letter after a while."

"That's right." The young man paused and studied a trophy in a glass case over the coach's desk. "I heard a nigra is going to try to enroll here."

"You mean in some Baynesville school or at State Teachers?"

"At Teachers."

"That's interesting. Where'd you hear that?"

"It's just a . . . well, a sort of rumor around the campus. Maybe nothing to it. There was talk around the Phi-O house."

"I'm not surprised," said Fats Gilliam. "There's hell being cooked up right here in town. Some radicals are down from the North agitating the niggers. All hell's liable to pop. Well, one thing I am confident of. Doc Davison won't let a nigger in. Doc's a good old conservative. He thinks the New Deal went too far, made the federal government too powerful, in fact changed our whole form of government. I agree."

Tim O'Hearn was silent, and the coach went on, "If you're

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interested in the White Band, why not come to our meeting Saturday night? We're having a mass meeting that's not secret, open to everybody. Joe Duffield will be the principal speaker."

"He's a smart guy," Tim conceded.

"I'll say. I'd like to get you and some more of our campus leaders in the White Band. You have to be twenty-one, but the seniors . . ."

"I'm twenty-three."

"Yeah. Well, come out Saturday night. Odd Fellows' hall. Be an overflow, I expect; probably have to put loudspeakers outside. Come early and get a seat."

"I think I will," Tim said, "and thanks for the information, Coach."

"Don't mention it."

At that moment, in the office of the president of the State Teachers College, Dr. Davison was talking to the dean of the faculty, Dr. Rowen. Both men were turning gray, and their hair had thinned considerably. Dr. Rowen was a spare, ascetic-looking man, with a quiet voice. The president, robustly built, more hearty in manner, was talking.

"So if he applies, I'll admit him, and let nature take its course."

Dr. Rowen laughed. His laugh too was thin. "The trouble is, Bill, nature won't take its course; the demagogues will take theirs, and we'll be in for turmoil, I'm afraid."

Dr. Davison put down the paperweight he'd been playing with. "So be it. I can't help it."

"It's not that you're not right," the dean went on. "You are."

"It's a simple matter of justice," the president added. "I'm

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against a lot of this leftist stuff. You know that. I don't believe in taxing wealth out of existence. I didn't believe in expanding the federal government until it became the monstrosity it is today. There's a lot of this liberal junk I don't believe in. I've never tried to conceal that. But I still believe in justice. If this fellow comes here and is qualified—and I understand he has the very best grades from the colored high at Riverport, which is the best colored high school in the state, and one of our best, white or colored—why, I intend to admit him, that's all. And I hope the board of trustees will back me up."

"I think they will."

"Mind you, Jim, I'm not sure integration in general will ever work. It'll be tough in some of those Mississippi towns, for instance, where the nigras outnumber the whites three or four to one. But on this level of education it's different, as I see it. And, after all, what harm can one colored student do among three thousand white students?"

"They'll argue," said the dean, "that once you open the door they'll pour in."

"But that's not true. Not many are qualified, and not many will want to come here. Most of our nigras who want to go to college prefer to go North, where they can get into almost any school if they have the grades."

"I've no doubt this fellow is being put up to it by the radicals."

"Probably. But still, I have no right to assume anything if he's qualified. Look at it this way. He's a citizen, he has the requisite grades, he's entitled to enter State Teachers if he wants to. Right is right."

"Naturally, but still . . ." The dean rose. "I've got to be going."

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"See you tomorrow, Jim. I intend to put this before the trustees. If it happens, as I'm reliably informed it will."

"Good. And I hope we get by with it."

"We will."

"Maybe," said Dr. Rowen dubiously, waving a small, veined hand in parting.

Joe Duffield returned home quite early that afternoon, around three o'clock, partly because he had nothing more to do downtown, and partly because the day was cool and pleasant, and he thought he might take Sarah, Ted too if he were around, out to the Country Club for supper. He could get in nine holes, cool off, have a couple of drinks, maybe, and, if Sarah stayed reasonably sober, a pleasant evening.

Ted, as it happened, was in the back yard playing with Harrigan, the Irish setter. At sixteen, Ted was at a stage where he was too tall for the rest of his body. He had, as Aunt Martha, their ancient servitor said, shot up like a ol' beanpole. His thin frame was approaching six feet, but it would fill out; he would be, in a year or two, a well-proportioned boy. Meanwhile he seemed all legs and arms. He ran the dashes for the high school track team, and he was stronger than he looked.

Joe Duffield stood in the kitchen doorway. It was Martha's evening off, and the big kitchen was scrubbed and ordered.

" 'Lo, Ted. Where's your mother?"

Ted looked up, his arm still around the panting red dog. "Taking a nap, I guess, Dad." The limber-jointed boy accompanied his words with a half-smile and what might be a wink. His father was annoyed, but said nothing. Ted had known his mother's hardly secret failing for a long time.

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How could you fool a child of even average intelligence? And Ted had never been lacking in perception.

"I thought," Joe Duffield added, "we might all go out to the Country Club for supper."

"Swell," said Ted. "I'd like a swim. I guess Mommy'll be stirring in a little while. Say, Dad . . ." The boy paused as if undecided whether to say what had reached his tongue.

"Well?" His father smiled encouragingly.

"Ben Peterson—he's a senior and pretty smug—well, at school today he was sneering around about the White Band."

"What did he say?"

"He said it was a lynching, whipping outfit, like the old Ku Klux Klan. I said you wouldn't be connected with it if it was anything like that. He said he wasn't so sure. I told him I was, and asked him did he want to make something of it. It seemed like he did, but Johnny Weston—he's president of the Student Council—stepped up and made us break it up."

Joe Duffield grinned. "Thanks for coming to my defense, but I don't want you getting into fights about the White Band."

Ted stood up. He was wearing slacks and a T-shirt. "I hear Ben's father's a radical. He's high up in some union, and he's going around telling people integration is coming and we might as well accept it."

"That so? Well, there are people who think so."

"Gosh, Sis is bad enough; she got a lot of funny ideas off at school."

Ted's father laughed. Sally was going through a slightly radical stage. A lot of young people did; it didn't, as he saw it, matter. Perhaps it was a good indication: that she did her own thinking, and didn't echo the clichés of others. Though the liberals too had their clichés.

"I bet I never go to school with niggers," Ted Duffield said.

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"You probably won't have to, Ted, unless you go North to college; then you'll probably encounter them."

"I'm going to Princeton," Ted proclaimed.

"You won't run into many there, a few."

"It's different anyway in college," Ted pondered. "There wouldn't be many. I don't suppose they'd bother you any. But if they came into Riverport High they'd be all over the place and . . ."

"Joe!" The voice came from upstairs. Joe Duffield retreated into the kitchen. "Yes, Sarah?"

She floated downstairs in a blue duster, fresh from a cold shower, and she seemed all right. Good. "Got any plans for tonight, Joe?" On Thursdays they often went out to dinner, though sometimes Sarah, if she were in the mood, fixed them a supper.

"Hello, dear. I thought we might go out to the Country Club. How do you feel about that?"

"Suits me fine," she said. She swallowed as if she had a bad taste in her mouth, and her eyes were reddened, but she was certainly sober.

He went upstairs to change into white linens. He had a cold shower, and shaved lightly again, though he didn't particularly need it.

What, he wondered, had happened to Sarah . . . perhaps he should say, to Sarah and him? There had been a time, nearly twenty years ago, when they had both been delighted with life and with each other. Was it his fault? Was it anyone's, least of all Sarah's? No woman in her right senses, no man, would deliberately choose to become an alcoholic. Some people were constitutionally unfit to drink at all. They couldn't, as the saying went, hold it, and yet it was almost impossible for them to leave it alone. Liquor had never been a problem in his life. He could stay away from it, days at a time, and

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not miss it particularly, unless others around him were drinking and it became a social thing. Who was it said, I drink to make my friends bearable. Was it Huneker? Worthy of him, anyway. Or Mencken.

Twenty years ago, when he was serving his first term in the state legislature and had gone to Washington on a legal mission, he had met Mencken at a party. They had got to talking in a corner behind some palms, drinks in their hands. He couldn't remember what they'd talked about at first, the South perhaps, but Mencken had said, "You don't sound much like a rising young statesman from the Bible Belt." He, Joe, had been outspoken—well, within reason. He was politically ambitious, but in those days he hadn't altogether submerged his cynical doubt of popular ideas, his opinion of the prevailing political parties. Their talk had ended with an invitation to attend a soirée a few nights later at a German restaurant in Baltimore. He remembered Mencken's saying, "The music will be bad, but the food will be good."

What a time he'd had with Mencken and a few of his friends, getting pleasantly drunk, eating sauerbraten and apple strudel, listening to an ensemble including two fiddles and a flute, with Mencken at the piano. What he'd give for such an evening now! There was no one like that around, no one he knew, here or in Washington.

His evening with Mencken had been followed by correspondence. At Mencken's suggestion, he had written an article on the state of politics in the South for the *American Mercury*—necessarily under a pseudonym, and it had caused quite a stir, since the author obviously was a Southerner. Two or three editorials had made reference to fouling one's nest. Whose nest had you a better right to foul?

That time in Washington he'd looked up an old friend. One Ned Tarver. They'd dined at a downtown restaurant.

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Ned had offered to take him to what he called a black-and-tan joint, but had explained, "You'd be embarrassed there, a white man among so many niggers. Me, I won't be embarrassed at all at the Occidental."

Well, you'd never know to look at Ned . . . the tar brush. What was it? What did it matter? They'd had a grand time that night talking over the sad state of the world. What had happened, among other things, to their friendship? Now, with this thing, what the papers called an explosive issue, pending, they were enemies, in a way, though he'd always liked and admired Ned.

Sarah's voice floated up. "Joe! You about ready?"

"In two shakes," he called back.

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9

BAYNESVILLE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS bear street or sectional designations rather than the numbers by which schools are known in many other cities. Thus the white school on the edge of Niggertown is called the Taylor School, after the old Taylor plantation, which began, fifty years ago when the school was built, a short distance away. The plantation had been sold and cut into streets so many years ago that only old-timers could remember it, but the name of the school persisted. The brick building, considered quite modern in its day, had long since outlived its effectiveness, and though it was painted occasionally and its interior had been repaired and remodelled in various ways at various times, it contained none of the features of the newer schools. More than one member of the school board had remarked that it would have been a lot cheaper to put up a new school than to keep this old, battered thing in halfway decent shape. Why not give it to the niggers? one member had suggested.

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Ivy had spread across the front wall, giving the old building a certain academic charm and hiding the signs of decay. The interior more clearly revealed the struggle against obsolescence. The floors sagged in places, and there were holes in corridor corners through which rats had emerged on certain terrifying occasions. The desks were carved up and colorless. The plumbing in the toilets was always getting out of order. Teachers considered it a sort of assignment to Siberia to be sent to the Taylor School.

And yet, to some of the Negro families living on adjacent streets this old school seemed luxurious. Compared to the school their children had to attend, Spread Creek up on the hill, Taylor was the latest in design and equipment. If segregation were removed, there was every logical reason why their children, at least those living on the near side of Niggertown, should go to Taylor, though there were few mothers and fathers who dared believe this revolutionary measure would ever come about. Most of them had heard of the Supreme Court decision, but it meant little to them. It was something said up North to which nobody living down South would pay any mind.

On this Wednesday morning in September, hazy and cool, with even a touch of chill in the air that blew in from the pine hills, a small, strange procession approached Taylor School. There were six children and five adults. All were Negroes. There were three mothers and two men unrelated to the children. These were lawyers, namely Ned Tarver and Tom Goodwin. The children ranged in age from seven to eleven; four were boys.

The children, comprehending little of what was at issue, skipped along, restrained from too much exuberance by their mothers. The adults were serious, talking, when they did, quietly.

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At the time the little parade reached the school, the pupils were ranged about the yard awaiting the starting bell. The white children paid no attention to the Negroes at first, thinking they were merely passing, but when they started up the walk toward the building the pupils stared, struck suddenly silent in their amazement. They could not believe what they were seeing. The Negro children, aware now of intense curiosity and growing hostility, hesitated as they started up the walk, but their mothers caught their arms and urged them on gently.

"It's all right, Mamie Lou, ain't nobody goin' hurt you. . . . Come on, Joe. White chillun ain't studyin' you. . . ."

One of the older boys in the yard whistled shrilly through his teeth. Some big boys beside him, eighth-graders, began to laugh jeeringly. One shouted, "Nigger, nigger, never die! Please tell us the reason why!" Another remembered an old song his mother used to sing: "Nigger child bowlegged; he walk too soon."

At that moment the school bell clanged, and the pupils instinctively began lining up. But some of the older boys continued to laugh raucously and call insults. Then the principal, a thin young man who always looked harassed, even when things were tranquil, appeared on the steps. "Quiet, quiet!" he ordered. "Line up as usual. What's the matter with you boys? I don't want to hear any more noise. What's this all about anyway?"

Then he saw the small procession of Negroes and paused. His children lined up obediently and marched into the schoolhouse. The principal waited on the steps to receive the delegation. He did not ask them in, but stood on the third step, with a stubborn expression, as if ready to defend the school single-handed.

"What is it?" he asked.

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Ned Tarver spoke. "My name's Tarver. I represent the League for Racial Justice. This is Tom Goodwin, a member of the bar, and these are the mothers of these schoolchildren. They all live nearby, within this area, and these children want to enroll in Taylor School."

The principal, after pausing to find words, said, "But aren't they already enrolled in the Spread Creek School probably?"

"Yes," Ned explained, "but they want to transfer here. It's nearer their homes. The Supreme Court . . ."

"I know," said the principal. "But there's nothing I can do. No arrangements have been made . . . yet. The Board told me not to accept any—any nigras at present. There's nothing I can do."

"Could I ask your name?" Ned inquired.

"Deever—James Deever." The young man pulled out an immaculate handkerchief and swished it around his face. He looked away.

"Just for the record," said Ned Tarver, "I hand you a list of the names of these proffered pupils. They are all residents of the state and county and live within the school district. I understand you refuse to enroll them."

James Deever took the paper from Ned and held it gingerly but did not look at it. "There's nothing else I can do. I can't enroll them, as of the moment, anyway. I haven't the authority."

"I see. Well, that's all. Thank you, Mr. Deever."

"Don't mention it." The principal laughed nervously and turned back up the steps.

Ned paused. "Unless you think of anything else we should do, Tom?"

But the lawyer smiled and said, "No, Ned, you handled it admirably. And I'd rather you had. After all, I live here, however much I want to do."

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Ned signaled to the others, and they followed him out to the street.

William Davison, Ph.D. (Harvard), never called himself doctor. The title, he felt, was honorary and should be reserved for doctors of medicine. But virtually everybody else called him doctor except his intimates, who called him Bill. He was a plain man, hearty, with a good appetite, who liked a highball before dinner, who put on few airs. Students instinctively liked him; they could come to him with their problems. He was easy to talk to, and his secretary, who had her instructions, rarely shunted them to someone else when the curricular or extra-curricular perplexity was substantial.

He was talking at this moment to a prospective student, one who was about to enroll. The student was a Negro, quite dark, tall, with fine, regular features. His name, he had explained, was Jack Taylor. He was eighteen, and had graduated from Dunbar High School in Riverport. Dr. Davison had asked him to sit down, and called him Jack, not that he would have gagged at mister, but he customarily called his students by their first names—he found it put them more at their ease. Jack sat on the edge of the chair, a little nervous but determined.

"I've got all my credits here," he explained, touching a thin briefcase. "I—I got all A's my senior year."

"I've heard of your record, Jack." The president of Baynesville State Teachers College swung about in his chair, a mannerism of his. "It's a very commendable record. I'm sure you're fully qualified."

Jack Taylor waited for the president to go on, and Dr. Davison asked, "So you want to be a teacher?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

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The president looked at the youth quizzically. "Why do you want to be a teacher, Jack?"

Jack did not hesitate more than a moment. "Because, Dr. Davison, it appeals to me as a career. I feel—this may sound like I'm taking myself pretty seriously, but I don't mean it that way—I feel I can do a lot of good among my own people if I'm properly prepared to teach. I'm sure that I can get what I need here."

Dr. Davison swung back toward his desk. "A most commendable attitude, Jack. I'm sure it's no whim, that you've thought about it a long time."

"Yes, sir, I have."

Dr. Davison was reviewing in his mind the meeting of the board of trustees the previous afternoon. He had hardly known what to expect. He knew the trustees fairly well, though there were three new ones he knew only by reputation. They were a fairly progressive, open-minded little group, for this state, and yet a break in the old, moss-covered wall of segregation was something only an occasional Southerner could contemplate without a shudder. Yet they had voted, four to three, to take no action. This meant a victory for him. The idea was, as those who backed him pointed out, that this was an administrative matter which it was his responsibility to decide, not theirs. True, it was also a matter of policy, a new, trail-breaking racial policy, and yet if they chose to view it as an administrative matter, that was all right with him. He hadn't sought support so much as a definition of where he stood. He hadn't wanted to defy the board of trustees; he could hardly do that, he'd better have resigned first.

The president swung back to face his visitor. "Well, Jack, I'm going to let you enroll."

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"I'm most grateful, Dr. Davison, and I'll try to be worthy of your trust in me."

"I'm sure you will. . . . I suppose you've thought about—well, the difficulties of your position here, at least at first."

Jack Taylor smiled. "Indeed I have, doctor. Naturally. I suppose I'm the first Negro ever to enroll here."

"I believe you are."

"Well, Dr. Davison, if they'll just give me a chance, I'm sure I'll show them it's not so bad having a Negro in some of their classes. I won't—I won't try to mess in any of their social activities. If they'll just let me alone, I'll be as—as . . ."

"Unobtrusive?" Dr. Davison suggested.

"That's the word, doctor. As unobtrusive as possible."

"Well, we'll see how it works out. And I'm thinking only of your happiness. I don't care whether they like it or not, the others. But if they'll just give us a chance, I'm sure it'll work out beautifully. It's mostly an idea they've grown up with, this color bar, nothing based on anything substantial."

He swung back to his desk, pulled a pen out of its holder and wrote on a memorandum pad. "Now if you'll just take this to the registrar's office, room 318."

Jack Taylor got up and took the memorandum. "Dr. Davison, I don't know how to thank you."

"You don't need to, Jack; it's something I'm glad to do. And I wish you every success, here and later in life."

They shook hands.

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10

NED TARVER opened the letter which the bellboy had just handed him. Who knew that he was stopping at Baynesville's only "colored" hotel? Tom Goodwin, but Tom would phone. He had told his family to write him general delivery; he had not known where he would stay. Tom had a guest room and had wanted him, but he had decided he'd be better off at the hotel, bad as it was; he'd be more independent. Nice as the Goodwins were, he'd have to shape his hours to suit their habits. It was not that he was temperamental about such things, but he preferred to be free to come and go as the moment indicated. He couldn't be bound by any routine.

The envelope had been typewritten, addressed, "Ned Tarver, Cotton Hotel." The letter too was typewritten—even the signature. He read:

> Listen, nigger, you better get going. Go back to Harlem and mind your own business, don't mess in ours. This is

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fair warning. Next time it won't be a warning. It will be something much worse.

The White Men of Baynesville.

He had a good laugh at the signature. He seemed to see all the white men of the busy textile town grouped as in a gigantic football huddle, all pressing forward to help dictate this letter. Probably two or three men, the worse for several drinks, had contrived it. He thought of taking it to the police but dismissed this idea as useless. They'd tell him sure, they'd investigate, but after he left they'd enjoy a laugh with the desk sergeant: somebody had scared that nigger, but good. They'd agree with whoever sent the note. No, there was no point in even keeping it; there was nothing by which to identify anybody. As he lit a cigarette, he held the match to an edge of the letter and to a corner of the envelope. He dropped the burning paper in the ashtray and watched it blaze into a charred heap.

He went into the dark bathroom and pulled on the light by its dangling string. A big cockroach looked up at him from the rim of the tinny old tub. He got a slipper and dispatched the repulsive crawler. Maybe it too was entitled to live, but he couldn't stomach the thing; it suggested filth, squalor. In New York this place would have rated somewhere between a fourth-rate hotel and a flophouse. They did make an effort to keep it clean, but the rooms had needed doing over for so long the plaster was flaking off. The plumbing was uncertain, or perhaps you should say it was certain not to work as it should; you had to coax it, and you were lucky if it did not break down entirely. Oh, well. What did you expect for your color?

He stretched out on the bed, with its frayed blue spread. He picked up a magazine, but quickly put it down. He closed

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his eyes, thinking to supplement a wakeful night with a brief nap, but he couldn't sleep. His mind ran here and there with the indirection and persistence of a moth.

His life, he often thought, was divided into a series of sealed compartments that, once left, could not be reentered. But they could be recalled, and he remembered the early years in Alabama almost as clearly as any later time.

His family had been sharecroppers. They lived in a cabin between a pine patch and a cotton field. His mother was a handsome yellow woman, slender, rather tall, with a contagious laugh. The man he called Pop, much older than his mother, was not his father; he'd always known that. Pop was the father of the two younger children, but not of him, or Amy or Mark, who were older than he. His stepfather was a tall, strong, graying, kindly man, who worked unceasingly —there was always something for him to do, day and night, it seemed—and still, no matter how tired he was, he remained tranquil, good-humored, ready to do what he could for any of them. Ned remembered often wishing Pop were his father.

His mother would never tell him who his father had been, but, when he was older and reflected more closely about such things, he began to suspect that his father had been a white man. He still thought so, though his mother, dead these many years, never would even hint at the man's identity. Once, when he was around fifteen, working in Riverport and starting in the colored high school, he tried to pin his mother down, asking her outright if his father hadn't been a white man. She laughed. "Hush your mouf'," she said, "that's not for you to know." He never brought up the matter with her again. But none of the other children had his light skin, and he figured that the others were his half-brothers and -sisters. They all resembled his mother in some way, but none had skin remotely like his. He'd wondered so often what his father

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was like. In his earliest reflections he saw a big, arrogant man, with a thick, black mustache, a Simon Legree type, who had seized his mother one day when she was walking through a path in the woods and had his way with her. But as he grew older he began to think that things like that rarely happened any more, and it was more likely his father was an ingratiating sort who had been kind to his mother, won her confidence and thus persuaded her. Maybe she had even fallen for him, in a way. Perhaps there had been a true affection between them. He preferred to imagine this version. He was beginning to read romances in which there were sometimes "love children," born out of wedlock but the fruits of a great passion. When he was still older, and realized fully the great gulf between the races, he knew this had not been likely in his mother's life, and yet it was possible. His mother was a good-looking woman to her last day—she never came to look very old—and in her youth she must have been a dark beauty. She was always fastidious, despite the primitive way they had to live, not like so many Negroes (and poor whites) he had known, to whom washing was only an occasional ceremony, who were oblivious to dirt. She was always darting her hands in a pan of water, scrubbing her arms and neck, washing her hair. And when Pop got his annual settlement from the white landowner for their share of the cotton, usually a sum pitifully inadequate for their needs, he always gave his wife some money for her personal wants, and, whatever else she bought, she always came home from the county seat with some perfume and sachet, however cheap. She trailed a pleasant odor. It might be dime-store perfume, but at least she tried.

There were the other compartments of his life. There were the years he grew up, after he left home "to better himself," as people said. There were . . .

But a jumble of figures, vague noises, intervened. He

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opened his eyes to the clawed-out, color-drained plaster of the room. He had dozed.

Jack Taylor sat in the president's private office. Seated around him were the president, Dr. Davison, the dean, Dr. Rowen, and Roger Clay, registrar of the State Teachers College. Jack was trembling, not altogether from fear, but from a mixture of terror, rage, and sheer astonishment. He had the normal boy's fear of violence, and yet mingled with this emotion was a stubborn quality—you could call it courage—which had enabled him to go through many situations he would have preferred to avoid. Somehow the other reactions outweighed the fear. It is the sort of emotional formula that allows a youth to push on into battle, though terrified by awareness that at any moment he may lose his life.

A window over the campus was half open to the mild September afternoon. From the campus came the heavy, throbbing sound that can be either a turbulent stream or a throng of people in scattered talk.

"Of course there are some students," said the registrar, "but I saw a lot of young men I've never seen on the campus—they're from town, young men and older men." Roger Clay was a short, portly man, on the young side of middle age, who looked as if he should always have a pipe stuck in his teeth, and, in fact, he often had.

"I know," Dr. Davison agreed, "I think the town fellows are the ringleaders. They've stirred up the students."

"Some students," Dr. Rowen added, his thin voice almost a whisper, "are all too ready to be stirred up."

Jack Taylor felt he should say something. "I—I just went to classes, like I was supposed to."

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