

*One Hundred Dollar
Misunderstanding
by Robert
Gover*



one hundred dollar misunderstanding

A novel by Robert Gover

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Author's Note

The caricatures in this story never were and aren't. If a reader happens to transmute them from typographical symbols to figments of his imagination, they will continue to not exist, except as figments of his imagination. This also applies to the events which are this story—they didn't happen and don't. Any reader who imagines them happening is asked to please remember he is doing just that—imagining. In other words, the following is a made-up, untrue story.

one hundred dollar misunderstanding

Immediately, right off the bat, without further ado, here and now, I wish to say that much of what happened to me that fateful week-end is completely unprintable, since it happened with a lady (colored) of ill repute. So all pornography-seekers are warned to seek elsewhere. I wish to make that point quite clear before proceeding further.

(Especially since Dad is chairman of our town's obscenity board so is well acquainted with the general subject and has impressed upon me the immense harm obscenity might do this great nation. (Not that I'm a prude. Far from it! But nor am I a conveyer of illicit images and user of four-letter words and the mails to defraud.)

I mean, I plan to keep the telling of these unlikely events on as high a literary plain as I'm able, fully aware of my own shortcomings as I attempt this. After all, I'm a college sophomore, not a paid professional writer. You may ask why I didn't tell my experience to a paid professional ghost writer and have him write it for me. Well, I have a very good reason for that. I mean, for why I didn't do that. You see, I wish to remain anonymous for reasons which may or may not become clear to the reader but are indeed clear to me. Only my legal initials will be used, but lots of others go by the same initials, so you'll never track me down from them.

So, to begin at the beginning, as they say, let me say that. . . .

Well, first of all, on Friday, we got our midterm grades and I found I was flunking three—repeated three—subjects (biology, psychology, French) and so the second half of that semester was going to be a heck, sheer heck.

Second, Barbara, who is my steady girl friend, telephoned to tell me she received a telegram telling her to come home immediately, that her grandmother had died. Which proved coincidental.

You see, I also received a letter from my grandmother and found in it a check for \$100—a little birthday present. A bit late, yes, but better late than never, as they say.

Third, Dad called to say he was unable to bring me the Chevy for the weekend as per our previous agreement, that he had been urged by the hospital administration to attend some convention or clinic or something in Cleveland or some god-forsaken place like that, and Mom needed the stationwagon having planned for months to attend her annual bridge tournament in Boston, and that left the Cadillac which is only used for special occasions and which I couldn't get home to get anyway.

No car, no girl, and that second half semester staring me in the face! I was in poor condition, I can tell you. I mean, I was depressed—psychologically depressed! You see—I've completely neglected to mention—it was the weekend of the big frat formal. It was *the* weekend of all weekends. And that year, Christmas! The formal was scheduled to be held at the Sheldon Country Club, no less—the swankiest place in town.

Some of the brothers tried to cheer me up by saying they could fix me up with a blind date, some freshman, and I could travel with my roommate, Hank, in his car, certainly. But . . . I was feeling just too too low. I mean! A man can weather a little ill fortune once in a while, but a triple whammy like that was too psychologically depressing. I was in no mood!

I mean, it was that psychological depression—that was the trouble. That's what led to all my difficulties. That and all the stuff I'd been hearing.

The thing is, I didn't have to flunk those subjects. I mean I'm not a stupe, by a long shot. As for the other two strokes of misfortune . . . Well, I was entirely a victim of circumstances.

Anyway, about nine o'clock that evening I found myself sitting there in that fraternity house completely by myself. Everyone else was either at the big dance or had gone home. There I was, in front of the TV in the livingroom, all alone. And that started me thinking, being alone.

It was probably Hank, who is always trying to fill my head with lewd thoughts, beating and beating

his filthy obscenities into my mind. (I never asked to have him for a roommate. I barely knew him before I moved in. They just assigned me to a room and there he was.) He's constantly running off with a bunch of the brothers to some Negro house of ill repute, saying—and I repeat this one bit of smut only to show what sort of fellows I've been forced to live with—they're going to get their *ashes hauled*. That's a way of saying they're going to pay and then make love (or, I should say, fornicate) with some Negro. They think that little phrase they use is pretty funny. One night they sat around for over an hour and talked about nothing but. That phrase, I mean. One brother (he's a jerk) said he thought it was a sort of poetry. (Good grief!)

What I'm trying to say is I'm constantly subjected to this kind of talk. It's constantly being beaten and beaten into my ears. And Hank (who calls me Soph O'More, and thinks he's being funny because—so *he* says—sophomore once meant Wise Fool) (but he's never proven that statement with hard cold facts) —Hank is forever telling me I should go and have my ashes hauled.

Well, after making a great and sustained effort to respond as little as possible to that foolish suggestion, I gave up and told him why I thought I shouldn't.

There are two very good reasons, too. Why I shouldn't, I mean. One, as I've already mentioned, that Dad is a member of our town's obscenity board. Chairman, no less. And if word ever got back to him that I'd done, or even contemplated doing such a thing, well . . . I'm not sure exactly what would happen, but I am sure it wouldn't be good.

The other reason is that—contrary to what some of these brothers around here think—I'm no prude and have myself a couple of very good unprofessional ladies of ill repute (though that isn't really what they're called, ha ha) back home. But when I finally did get around to telling Hank about them, I was countered by laughing and saying I'd never be a man until— Well, I won't say it the way he did. What he meant was that I must miscegenate before I can consider myself much of anything. Which I know is entirely fantastic, a horrid idea and utterly ridiculous, unfounded on hard cold fact, unsubstantiated—an old wives' tale, for gosh sakes! No, I don't mean *wives* exactly. I mean it's just another obscenity like ashes hauled. And I, of course, realize this full well. As for my masculinity, I pointed out to Hank that my chest is very hairy and his hasn't a hair on it—not one! He tried to defend against this concrete evidence by laughing his same old deluded laugh, and also by sticking to his silly miscegenation as a criterion.

So please, Dear Reader, get this picture: Here I am sitting in front of this TV all alone in that empty frat house, left without a date, without a car, flunking at midterms three subjects—biology, psychology, French—stranded miles from home in this god-forsaken town with nothing but a little extra cash, feeling extremely psychologically depressed. I mean, this picture is important!

That and what Hank is always saying. I mean, he also talks as if the Negro is sexually superior to the Whiteman, for gosh sakes! *Then*, he tries to say *that* isn't what he *means*! I mean, when I point that out—when I tell him that, in effect, is what he is trying to tell me—he *denies* it. I keep trying to tell him how cockeyed his idea is, but he keeps insisting *superior* isn't what he means, and I keep trying to tell him superior is exactly the false conception he has, and he keeps trying to deny this, so I never can get my point across.

And to top things off, Hank, for gosh sakes, has amply demonstrated—though he won't admit it to either—the extreme psychotic degree of confusion to which he and other brothers have gone by once saying that we live—and I now quote directly—in a state of whoredom—unquote. This, I was quick to mention, was an attempt to temper by rationalization the fact that he enters frequently into the sort of commerce transacted in non-white houses of ill repute.

But—like Max Shulman in those clever cigarette advertisements—I digress.

About nine o'clock, I thought: James Cartwright Holland, Holy Christmas! (An assumed name, as mentioned earlier, though J. C. are, as a matter of hard cold fact, my initials.) (Sometimes I take a

awful ribbing because of those two actual initials, as any quick-witted reader might readily guess, but I assure you they're actually legally mine.) I thought: Aren't things bad enough without sitting around thinking about them?

Then all the stories I'd been subjected to about this Negro house of ill repute (located in the redlight district with other houses, some of which have white girls, for crying out loud!) all the stories got the best of me and I decided to take a look for myself.

I mean, I certainly never intended to go fornicate with some paid professional woman of either race, I just meant to take a look for myself. I thought: When I return, I'll have an even clearer idea of what I'm talking about, so that next time I find myself in a discussion with Hank, I'll be even better prepared.

(As it actually turned out, my knowledge certainly was intensely deepened.)

So I checked my wallet (\$135 in all) and took off for a night on the town. What I had in mind was going to this one bar the brothers are always going to when they have nothing better to do, where they have this jazz combo everyone says is very good, and where they also have paid professional ladies of ill repute floating about, sort of, because it's right smack dab in the middle of this redlight district. So I did. I went there. I took a taxi and went.

This place—it's called the Black-n-Tan—was, well, I don't know how to describe it. I wish I were (were) a writer so I could do it justice. (I mean a paid professional writer, of course, ha ha.) To begin with, it was jam-packed. It took me half an hour to work my way to the bar and then I got lucky and jumped onto a stool the moment some fellow left it. There seemed to be a lot of students in that place but I didn't see anyone I recognized, so after awhile I relaxed and inspected the place. I just sat and listened and looked around.

I don't know much about jazz. I'll admit it—I don't. All I could tell was that one minute it was very loud and the next it wasn't. And it wasn't the sort of jazz you hear played on the radio. Also, the musicians (colored) seemed completely lost in what they were playing, and I could see where they would be. I couldn't tell where what ended and what began. The only thing I could conclude was that this type of jazz just wasn't *normal*.

But the people in that place! Wow! I'd never seen such a motley collection of people. In one place at one time, I mean. There was black and white and every shade in between. I even saw two Chinese students and a Chinese girl. And Christmas! At one end of the bar sat these two dolls—and I mean *dolls*—who were non-white, but pretty nevertheless. One had blonde hair, for gosh sakes! No doubt she dyed it, of course. And there was this guy with these two girls (you could tell he was with them by the way he would lean over and talk to them) this big, very Negro guy dressed in an Ivy League suit and sitting there looking around as if he were looking for someone, expecting to see someone he knew. As a matter of fact, our eyes happened to meet once, while I was giving those girls the once-over, and he stared me down. Not only that, but the next time I looked up, there he was staring at me again. Christmas! He gave me the creeps! I don't mean he gave me dirty looks; I mean he kept looking at us as if we'd met some place and he suddenly recognized me. *Me*, for gosh sakes!

I was forced to conclude the two colored girls were paid professionals and he was sort of the solicitor, so to speak. (I'm aware that there's another word for what he was, but I'm trying to keep the factual narrative on a high plain.)

Though it's difficult, because the very next thing I knew, I was being tapped on the shoulder and when I turned around, here was some beady-eyed character (colored) staring at me. He said (and you may not believe this, but he actually said it): 'Looking for a date?'

'Certainly not!' I quickly responded. (To tell the truth, I wasn't sure, at that moment, what he meant exactly, and was tempted to give him a taste of my knuckles, just in case.)

Then he said, 'Got some fine girls, right around the corner.'

Which clarified things. Somewhat.

But I said, 'No. No thank you.'

He said, 'Just looking around?'

And I said, 'Well . . . yes. As a matter of fact, I am just looking around.' Which, of course, was true.

'Okay,' he said, and moved on. He sort of shoved his way through the crowd along behind the stools. I watched him for a time, thinking: Well, James Cartwright Holland, you've seen yourself a real one for sure. It's official. (And I won't say what! But I became certain of my observations when I stopped a few stools from mine and tapped another fellow who looked like a university student.)

Well, that's the way it works. Enough said.

I went back to looking and listening, and hadn't been doing this long before the beady-eyed character returned. This time, all he did was tap and when I swung around, stared at me with that comical grin on his face. I thought: Well, after all, no one here knows me and I have yet to see the inside of a house of ill repute. What the heck! Question: Who would be the wiser? Answer: Me!

So I said, 'Where are your girls?'

And he started mumbling directions, which I didn't catch until I had him repeat them. I was to go out, turn left, walk to the corner and turn right, and the place was three doors down on the right.

The whole thing seemed just too fantastic. But the people in that place! Wow! I'd never seen such a motley collection of people. In one place at one time, I mean. There was black and white and every shade in between. I even saw two Chinese students and a Chinese girl. And Christmas! At one end of the bar sat these two dolls—and I mean *dolls*—who were non-white, but pretty nevertheless. One had blonde hair, for gosh sakes! No doubt she dyed it, of course. And there was this guy with these two girls (you could tell he was with them by the way he would lean over and talk to them) this big very-Negro guy dressed in an Ivy League suit and sitting there looking around as if he were looking for someone, expecting to see someone he knew. As a matter of fact, our eyes happened to meet once while I was giving those girls the once-over, and he stared me down. Not only that, but the next time I looked up, there he was staring at me again. Christmas! He gave me the creeps! I don't mean he gave me dirty looks; I mean he kept looking as if we'd met some place and he suddenly recognized me. *M* for gosh sakes!

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I know such things go on elsewhere. But America! I'd always thought America was such a decent country. But then, even in the most decent country, the danger of moral cancer, as Dad calls it, is ever present. And don't get me wrong. I was not, for gosh sakes, diseased! I was curious. I mean, I owe this little excursion to my education, so to speak.

So, feeling very much like Dad must feel when he has to inspect things or places for indecency, I went. I mean, I felt like a detective. That's how I felt. I just adopted a very scientifically objective viewpoint on the entire matter and went. And my feeling of detecting increased handsomely when I discovered I was hot on the heels of two other university students.

But wow! What a neighborhood! I mean, I found myself deep in the heart of a slum area with inadequate housing and all that. I mean, they show pictures on TV of blighted areas and tell how they need more money for slum clearance and urban renewal, but gosh! They can't give you the sounds and smells on TV.

I'll try. (After adding that I walked slowly—past some pretty ugly-looking Negro men, ju

standing around doing nothing—walked slowly to let those other two students get ahead of me.) Right off the bat, as soon as I turned off the avenue onto the sidestreet—Bamb!

No lights!

In fact, there was only one streetlight the whole length of that block, for crying out loud! It shined down over a vacant lot right across the street from where I stood (on the corner).

Well, I was about to go back and catch a taxi and take off for the frat house again, when I saw a sudden ray of light, and then those two college guys going in through a doorway—from which came the light, of course. Then I thought: Come come, JC, you're not going to be frightened off by darkness for gosh sakes! Are you?

And right about here, I almost had a heart attack! There, right in the middle of that vacant lot, was this figure of a man. It would lean down and stand up and walk a step or two, then lean down again. I hadn't noticed him before, but there he was, all right. A rag picker, or something like that. Certainly a person of which to be leery. And, I can tell you, that, in spite of my scientific viewpoint, I was just that—leery.

So leery, in fact, that I began to worry about which door was the correct one to the ill repute house. I thought: Christmas, JC! Suppose you knock on the wrong door. Good gosh, in this neighborhood, not telling what might happen!

But I recovered from the sight of that dark and dismal figure of a bum picking about in that vacant lot (the police should have been notified, I realize), and went bravely forward. I thought: JC my friend, you'll see the inside of an ill repute house if it's the last thing you ever do. And since you've come this far, you might as well keep up your courage and go on.

I did. Listening, all the time I was going bravely onward, to the most eerie-sounding barking dogs I'd ever heard. I mean, dogs barking here, there, everywhere. Not right where I was, exactly. But not so far away either. I couldn't be sure exactly where, I mean.

And, also, as referred to above, there were smells. Smells which you don't even get on TV public service programs. And a good thing, too, because they weren't very pleasant smells. It smelled dangerous sort of. Like a mixture of wet earth and rotting lumber. It made me shudder, I can tell you. The whole place—that entire neighborhood made me shudder.

Still, I continued forging ahead. I marched. I said to myself, *Hup* two three four, *Hup* two three four, and marched! So that I finally made it to the third door from the corner, walked (marched) up the rotting wooden steps, and—Bamb! Here goes me, I'm in the big chair. In come this trick by hisself College Joe. I kin tell them anywhere.

She-it! This one walk like he ain got no toes. Jittery? Kee-ryess is he jittery.

Jackie an Carmie upstairs wiff two tricks jes come in a minit fore this one. On'y hiyellas left Flow an Francine, so I spect this mothah gonna go up wiff Flow.

That godam Francine been botherin me agen, sittin on the arm o' the big chair an messin roun.

Madam tell this jittery Whiteboy we is all the cats they is jes now, an everybody waitin fer him t'pick one o'us. But he jes standin there, lookin roun the sittin room like he think more girls gonna come outta the walls.

I say t'myseff, Girl you gotta git yer Friday night cherry broke sometime, might jes's well try an hussle this jittery Joe. So I smile.

He lookin roun dum, my smile catch his eye an he smile back. Jes a lil ol bashful smile, like I afraid it gonna break his face, he smile fer real. I smile agen an try lookin Pickaninny pritty, an he smile agen.

Madam see him smilin, she jes touch him on the back an send him on his way.

Nex, Gee-zuz! Francine stan up. She think alla time this *daddio* been smilin at her. She think he fixin t'go up wiff her. Yeah! He so gee-gee jittery an all, she guess she gonna git his gun wiff her.

hardly no work. She likes them jittery tricks cause they pop fast, give her a chance t'jackoff an piss
roun while us other cats go on workin.

But I stan up too. Yeah! An he nod t'me.

I say, Come on, pritty baby, we go upstairs.

He comin. He okay. Dress like he got loot. I say t'myseff, Girl maybe this trick like you enuff t'git
you a pers'nal tip. Yeah! He dress like he got the jack fer tippin.

I say, This way, prittyboy.

Fore I swing on up, I look back at Francine an she lookin mean. Piss on Francine! I say t'myseff,
say, Keep a pucker' pussy, Francine, you'll get yer ass upstairs okay. Don' worry, Friday's big night,
lotta bizness fer everybody, Friday night.

She-it! That Francine, she ack like she wanna go wiff my trick jes cause he wanna go wiff me. How
come she alla time buggin me?

Piss on Francine!

I swing ass upstairs an my trick come on along behind. Some College Joes grab ass when I swing
it, but this mothah, he too jittery for grabbin. Bout all he kin do t'git up them stairs.

I take him on in this room Francine alla time callin her room. Yeah! Godam that Francine! Nobod
give one fas' toot bout no room but her, an she gotta go callin this one room her room, counta the bed
don' make's much noise.

I take me my jittery trick on the hell in that room anyhow! Yeah! Way that Francine ack, she a
gonna need her no room a-tall!

Them quiet jittery ones, they's trouble sometime. This mothah, I git him in that room, he jes sta
there lookin dum.

I say, Well Hello, Sweet Baby. Wha's on yer mind?

He don' say nothin.

I say, Hey Lover, what're we gonna do?

An he jes look dum.

I say, Yoo-hoo, pritty baby, you wanna lil french? Haff an haff? How bout jes a straight? I say
Twenty berries an you alla roun the mothahfuggin worl'.

An then he look at me like he is gonna pee his pants! Right now! Yeah! I say, Mothahfuggin worl'
an he bout t'shout.

Madam alla time tellin us cats, Don' never say *mothahfug* roun them real fay tricks, but Kee-ryess
Least that git him woke up some. Fore, he jes standin there lookin alla roun, dreamin. Jes dum a
dreamy.

I say, Hey Baby, this a cathouse, you dig? This an no place t'do yer daydreamin at. I say, Cathouse
fer funnin, Sweetheart. Yeah! How bout we do us some funnin?

An he still jes look dum. Gee-zuz! I don' know jes where the fug he think he is at. I can' be takin n
all night fer one fast fiver, so I start in playin roun wiff his lil ol pecker. I'm playin, he's lookin roun
real gone, an we jes gittin along like seven crabs in one big bumhole.

Nex, he look like he bout t'come alive, an he go t'say somethin, then he shut up agen.

Kee-ryess! Maybe he walk in here by mistake. What a muddlehead.

I start in all over agen. I say, Hey Baby, you feel like havin some fun?

He say, Yeah!

I say t'myseff, Well kiss my blackass! This mothah kin talk after all!

Then I gotta tell him how much is what. Fack, I gotta tell him an tell him, an still he look dum
Yeah! I talkin, he standin there wiff a lil ol hardon, lookin roun real dum. Gee-zuz! How dum kin on
Whiteboy git?

I say, Kee-ryess Sugar! I can' make it no plainer! Ain you got no jack?

He say, Huh?

I say, Ain you got no green? No loot?

He say, Huh?

I say, Ain you got no skins, no kale? No bread? No bones, no berries, no boys?

He say, Whaaa?

I say, Man yer in a cathouse. You come here, us cats figure you wanna do some screwin. Fore yo do yer screwin, you gotta pay.

An kiss my lil ol blackass Pickaninny me, I say that, this daddio pull out the biggest fuggin wa o'green I ever in my everlovin born days ever-ever did see in this mothahless cathouse! Yeah! Ooh ooh-oooh Skinny Minnie! That bundle cork my ass! Yeah! It knock me clean off my feet! He so fish flush he gone, an we jes gittin along like seven crabs in one big bumhole.

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Jackie alla time sayin, Girl one o'these days yer gonna bump int'some nice invessment.

Look like I bump! Now what the hell m'I gonna do?

Jackie say, Treat invessment real real fine, an he ask you yer phone, an then yer in bizness. Yeah!

On'y I know what he wanna do, I kin treat him real fine, but he ain sayin. He askin me what I want do. Kee-ryess! An then he askin bout roun the worl' an alla time so jimjam jittery he ain gonna make t'the corner!

She-it!

Nex, I say, Baby you don' want you no roun the worl'. Right now, jes yet. What you wanna do, yo wanna stay fer the whole mothah—Eh, you wanna stay fer all night!

He say, No. He say, He don' wanna do that. He say, He don' like the looks o'this place.

What the fug the looks o'the place got t'do wiff it? Ooh-wee! I do me some more considerin.

Then I say, Tell you what, Sugar. How bout a lil ol haff an haff, jes fer now, like. See how you lil that. Huh?

He say, I say so, tha's okay by him.

Gee-zuz!

I say, Okay man, I say so.

He say, Fine.

Bless my blackass Pickaninny me!

Nex, he say, How much?

Ooh-ooh-ooh Skinny Minnie! Might je's well git me a lil ol English tip right now!

I say, Ten.

He say, Ten dollah?

What the fug he think? Ten peenuts?

I say, Yeah man, ten dollah.

Counta my considerin tell me, invessment or no invessment, this sweet baby got so much I mig jes's well git me three lil boys fer myseff.

See, haff and haff really on'y cost seven, but crap! He ain gonna miss him no three outta that wa Nooh-oh! He give me a five and five ones. I'm gonna git me three. Yeah. Tha's English tip.

Sep, he go an give me a spot, I ain gonna git me no three. I gotta go an put three in the tipbox fer a them other cats t'share my three, he give me a spot. I don' mind sharin, but I kin always use me thro o'my own. Yeah!

So Kee-ryess! He do. He give me a spot, an that finish that.

I ask him, Ain you got no lil bills, man?

He say, No. He say, Sorry.

So I don' git no English tip. I stick that ten tween my titties an swing ass down the hall. I pay u seven an git back three and put them three in the tipbox, an then I go fer the soap an water.

At first I thought my ears were deceiving me. Such language! From a girl! I mean! Even if she w non-white, such profanity! (I certainly won't repeat what she said, You'll just have to take my word fo it that it was foul, dirty, and in exceptionally poor taste.)

And that room! I was flabbergasted! (I mean, this room this woman of ill repute took me to. description of which will follow.)

Also, the downstairs! (Of the ill repute house.) (Which, I fear, I'm unable to describe witho jeopardizing the high literary plain I'm attempting to maintain.)

And the stairway! It was practically as wide as a linen dispenser and every bit as steep as a ladde (I'll bet that house was a hundred years old if it was a single day!) And this girl (yes, as you may hav surmised by now, I permitted myself to continue along with this misadventure) (or investigation, as prefer to think of it.) (After all, I thought: JC, it's now or never!)—this girl (I mean, this profession prostitute) wasn't as bad looking as I'd expected. She was Negro, yes, and she had that tight kinky ha and—well, she wasn't at all white in any way. I mean, there was a partly white one sitting on the ar of the chair in which sat this one which I picked out, but I figured as long as I was where I was when was, I might as well pick a dark one. She wore a black blouse and a tight red skirt and didn't look ve old. Matter of fact, she appeared approximately my age. (Nineteen.) But Christmas! Going up tho narrow stairs, I almost bumped into her rear end, it was so dark. I mean, it wasn't so dark I couldn't s her rear end (which certainly did stick out far enough) (for such a little person, I mean) (in that tig skirt and all) (presenting me with two shiny spots, for gosh sakes!) but it was about all I could do keep from bumping into her. It's a good thing we had only one flight up to climb. The way she sway her rear end, I might have ended up hypnotized. (I mean, like you can become hypnotized watching pendulum swinging back and forth.)

And the second floor was just one long hallway with doors all along either side, and one ba lightbulb hanging up for light. (Of course.) (But it didn't throw much, is what I mean.) Then, right o the bat, the next thing I knew, we were in this tiny little room and she was talking.

Which is where the big trouble really began. I mean, I couldn't understand a word she was sayin

At first. Gradually, as I got acclimatized to her dialect, I began hearing the wildest, most unprintable obscenities I think I've ever heard—and I mean I've been around. Around women who swore, even, but not this way. Hence, Dear Reader, even though I quite possibly might, at this juncture, give a snatch of dialogue, the language she employed was so utterly indecent it would have to be thoroughly censored before it would be legally permissible. And I am strictly against censorship. Therefore, refrain from direct quotations. I mean, even a writer of filth could never quote such a person verbatim and expect to get it past even the lower courts. Her entire vocabulary, such as it was, seemed composed of pornographic slang and insincere endearments.

But, finally, I got so I could understand her enough for us to conduct our business transaction, so I speak.

But that room threw me. I certainly wish I was a paid professional writer so I could describe it to you. I'll try.

There was a lightbulb. I mean, this one bare lightbulb, and that's all. And there was a bed. Or almost a bed. Really, it was just an old bedframe with an old mattress on it and an old bedspread over the mattress. And when I say old, I mean old! And the walls—good gosh, the walls! The wallpaper looked like it held up the entire building. And you couldn't be certain how much longer the building was going to hold up! Because the wallpaper was just sort of . . . disintegrating. It was crumbling and peeling off and just coming off the walls right before your very eyes! Under the wallpaper there were strips of old broken wood, only. Flimsy? Wow! Then, beyond those strips—upon which the wallpaper was supposed to hang—there was nothing but a surface, very substandard, which I am forced to conclude was the inside of the outside of that clapboard building—if you can call it a building.

Anyway: this room. The excuse for a bed was just inside the door to the right, between the door and the right wall. The room was that small. The left wall was that crumbling wallpaper and the right wall was sort of a partition affair—very temporary looking, but like it might hold up longer than the other wall. Because it was newer, I mean. The far wall (also disintegrating) had a round hole in it, which I was forced to conclude was supposed to serve as a window. And in the far right corner stood the dresser. Or, what had been a dresser. It no longer had drawers, just openings where drawers were supposed to be. And on top of it, looking very very out of place, sat this vase! With flowers in it. Imagine! Flowers in that room!

The floor was old wood and bare. Just as bare as anything. Nothing could be bare-er than the wooden floor.

And, believe it or not, that was all there was to this tiny room. I know that sounds fantastic, but it is factually true. Just this bed, the skeleton of a dresser, and that's all.

But the girl (did I neglect to describe her?) wasn't bad. I mean, of course, bad looking. For a nonwhite. I mean, she was, as they say, ha ha, stacked! Not at all what I'd expected. Though don't get me wrong. I'm not prejudiced. Far from it.) She had a very childish face. Also very dark. And eyes which were large and watery looking, with drooping eyelids, which never seemed to look directly at you. (Me.) And her voice was tiny and high-pitched, like a young girl's. Though, of course, I realize she had to be at least my age—at least—in order to be there.

But she moved like she was 60. That was the thing. I mean, she moved slow and easy—very slow. (Coming up the stairs, she even swayed her rear end slow, unlike most girls whom I know of, who are white, of course, and wiggle—if they do—quickly and nervous like. Squirrely, if you get what I mean.)

But I don't, for gosh sakes, wish to dwell unduly on physical detail. So I will skip recounting certain actions she went through, as well as certain phrases she used while going through these aforementioned actions.

And, until we got around to sealing the transaction (if you can call it that) she seemed utterly and

completely detached. I mean! Talk about scientific detachment! Scientists should be so detached! As a matter of hard cold fact, it was her detachment which aggravated me. I don't know what I had expected, but I had not expected detachment, for gosh sakes!

Just one word about her lingo. Or, as much of it as I could catch. She muttered something about, among other things, French. Which made me think of my flunking grades—biology, psychology, French—and for one fraction of a second, I thought she wanted to discuss grades and other aspects of university life, though I certainly had no idea how we might go about such a discussion. She and I, I mean. However, this proved an erroneous assumption on my part. (As I learned later, French, in her dialect, meant something entirely different and as unprintable as nine-tenths of her jargon.)

She finally sort of fell back down on the bed and sat there looking slightly shaken, though for the life of me I was unable to learn what had troubled her. I didn't wish to appear boorish (I try to treat all peoples as equals, regardless of race, color or creed) so I asked, in an attempt to snap her out of her sudden mysterious depression, how she would like to spend our time together. (And I wish to make it quite clear that—at this point, at least—I certainly had not resorted to any rationalizing or anything like that. But, after all, I had never found myself in an ill repute house before, and was not, for gosh sakes, familiar with their customs.) (I mean, by asking, I wished to kill two birds with one stone. I wished to disrupt her detachment, engage her interest in me as a person, so to speak, and also—secondarily—to show her that I was magnanimous enough to consider her feelings in the matter, even if she was a paid professional of another color.) And apparently I was successful in this doublebarreled endeavor for she looked up after a moment of depression with new interest. (No doubt such persons have their own brand of troubles.) And we completed our business. I mean, it turned out that one pays in advance, so I paid.

I must add here that I did feel a bit uneasy carrying my money into that place at that time, because of the sort of neighborhood I was in, and all that. I mean, you never can tell. So many people lived in that neck of the woods who don't seem to want to go out in the world and get themselves a good job and advance themselves—and that sort of attitude is communistic and breeds crime. But she paid absolutely no attention to my money (which I carried bare in my trouser pocket, having had the good sense to leave my wallet back at the frat house in view of the type of neighborhood I was entering.) I mean, if somebody was going to rob me, they certainly wouldn't get my valuable papers.) So I concluded she was too distracted by some sort of personal problem to be concerned with my money. And as it turned out, this was the first of a series of miscalculations on my part, which later led to a larger misunderstanding.

But, like those clever cigarette advertisements again, I digress.

Eventually, during our little preliminary conversation (or *un* conversation) she became more friendly and began sounding not honestly insincere. I mean, she seemed to drop her false sincerity when I demonstrated that I wished to be anything but boorish, and became, well—her entire approach toward me changed.

I thought: After all, JC, you do have something about you which attracts the ladies. And even if she is a paid professional lady of ill repute, she, after all, is human. Mom says it's that you're a natural born salesman. Why fight it?

Then, the next second, the very next thing I knew —Bamb!

Gone. She was gone out the door, leaving me in that dismal cell by myself. Didn't say a word about where she was going or when she'd get back, simply went!

Well, I don't mind admitting at this point that I was just a little shaken. I didn't know whether to go after her or wait patiently for whatever might happen next. But I kept my head and waited. (Which, it seems, is accepted procedure.) And as it turned out, what happened next was not on the menu.

Here goes me, I come back. He tells me this other cat been in. I say, Who?

He say, He don' know who. He say, Firs' time in any cathouse, how he sposed t'know who's who.

~~I dam near believe it's his firs' time in any cathouse. I bout ready t'believe he fresh off some lo~~
boat someplace. I bout ready t'believe anythin this mothah wanna tell me.

He tell me this other cat wearin a blue dress. He say, *Cocktail* dress!

Yeah! He say that! Hee hee!

On'y one Jane in this cathouse got her a blue dress on, an tha's Francine. I tell him fergit it.

But I gotta laugh. Francine all cocktail set t'go up wiff this big fat ol wad o'jack. She think I
wanna go wiff her. Alla time he pick my lil ol blackass Pickaninny me. Yeah! He my trick. He gonr
like me. He gonna like me so much, he gonna ask me my phone!

Piss on Francine!

Nex—I been so all fuss up bout that sweat wad-I ain even seen he still dress'. He standin there wif
all them clothes on. How come he don't take 'em off so's when I git back we is all set?

She-it! This speed, he gonna be all night fer one lil ol haff an haff.

Jackie alla time sayin, Investment is give an git, give an git.

But Madam alla time sayin, You cats git an git. Git yer ass upstairs and git them tricks off an g
yer ass back downstairs. Don' be no mothahless whole night fer one dum five-bill College Joe. Sh
say, They ain got no loot worff worryin bout.

Yeah! Madam say that!

Kee-ryees! I got news fer Madam.

Sep, fore she git her news, I gotta do right so's he ask me my phone, so's I kin git me m
inveement. Oncet I git givin an gittin, an we goin along invessment-fine, then I kin tell Madam. Firs
fore I kin do nother blessed thing, I gotta College Joe undress' t'git.

I say, Sweet Baby, you ain undress'? How come?

He say, Huh?

Gee-zuz!

I say t'myseff, Girl he can' unnerstan what yer sayin, on'y one way t'do. Ack it out. So I do. I do th
right unner the light so's he kin look me over real good. He look. He lookin real hard. Then I'm stand
there waitin, an he is still lookin. He look dummer an dummer.

I say, Baby you wanna keep yer clothes on?

He say, No! He say, Course he don' wanna keep his clothes on.

Ooh-wee!

I say, Honey you don' wanna keep 'em on, thing t'do is take 'em off!

He say, Yeah sure yeah! An he start in.

An he got a long way t'go. Kee-ryess!

But I say t'myseff, I say. Hol' yer ass, Girl. This mothah kin be jes's dum's he wanna be, he got hi
that much mazoola.

He fold his clothes over the chair real careful. I ack like I'm daydreamin, he do that. He so dum, I
might git t'thinkin I wanna rob him. He ack a wee bit mistrussful anyhow. He ack that way, I ack lik
I'm the dummes' lil Pickaninny livin.

I gotta long wait till he finish undressin, he got so much on.

I wash him real nice an soff, counta him bein so awful tickledingus, and then I gits t'work. Time
start in, I got me so many worryful considerins t'do, I can' hardly pay no mind t'teckneek. Workin a
considerin, an wonnerin does this dum Whiteboy know what t'do wiff that thing fer the other haff o'h
haff and haff, I find I done me too dam much considerin.

Nex, I ain been at him a minit, an pop, off he go!

Kee-ryees!

An then—I git up an go on over t'the basin—this Whiteboy, he sit up like a mothahjumpin jac

ina-box an he start lookin at me like I done somethin wrong.

Gee-zuz! ~~All that Jack an I can' make nothin go right, he so fuggin dum. Come in here all loaded u~~
like that an I don' even git a chance t'show him how good I kin do. Naecher done mess me up at th
most baddest time.

An he still lookin, Gee-zuz!

Then he say, That all?

Yeah! He say that! He say that like he think I sposed t'do a lil dance fer him nex. Kee-ryees!

I say, Yeah Baby, tha's all. Dam shame, too.

He say, Yeah it's a shame. He say, One ain never enuff fer *him*!

I feel like sayin, Baby way you go off, you musta been savin that *one* fer a mothahlumpin lifetim
On'y you ask me my phone, I fix you up fer the rest o'yer lifetime, long's you want. You ask me m
phone, you ain never gonna go so long wiffout pussy you gits *that* trigger-happy agen.

But I don' say nothin and he don' ask me my phone. Can' blame him. I don' even git me a chan
t'show my stuff. *Poof!* Invesment gone.

I start in t'git dress' agen, feelin real blue, an he jes still layin there lookin real surprise, like I a
doin right.

I say, Come on, Baby, we gotta git outta here.

He say, Le's go nother one.

I say, Can'. Ain allowed, man. You gotta—

An then I cork ass an start in considerin all over agen. Hell! He done pay ten fer haff and haff a
don' even git him one haff. But Kee-ryees! We been up here so mothahfuggin long now, Madam gonr
send for the firetruck, we don' git ass back downstairs. I say t'myseff, Gee-zuz Girl! You jes can' g
breakin rules fer no trick too dum t'ask you yer phone an git him a lil o'yer ass on the side.

But I can' help tryin one more fishline. I say, Baby ain you got you no sweet lil chick fer that prit
cock?

An she-it! Seem like I jes can' say the right thing roun this dum mothah. He wrinkle up an he sta
in tryin t'tell me he got him plenty.

I bout t'give him up fer lost. I say t'myseff, This daddio so dum, he gonna end up comin backward
Yeah, he gonna end up backfirin. He soun like he is backfirin right now.

Then he quit jawin that crap an he say, Come on, le's go jes one more real quick.

Real quick, he say. Hee hee! His lil ol genrill still up an lookin peppy. Madam say, trick wanna g
agen, he pay up right now, else he start in from downstairs all over agen. But this poor mothah don
pay fer haff and haff and don' even git haff, and I is out one big fat invesment chance. Gee-zuz! Th
ain right!

So I say, Now?

He say, Yeah now. Real quick, real quick.

Las' trick say that make me break the rule too, an he pay agen an then he turn out so fuggin slow o
the secen', he dam near wear my ass clean out. Course, that weren't the same. That one, he don' gi
me no insprashun. This one, he the biggest invesment chance I ever seen in this cathouse. He dur
yeah! But crap, he can' help *that*!

I say t'myseff, I say, Ain no good leavin him go downstairs an pick him out some new cat an gi
her her chance t'make invesment when I got him up here wiff me right now.

Piss on Madam an her git and git!

I say, Baby you promise t'be real quick an don' never tell nobody I do it?

He say, Yeah yeah yeah!

I say, Sure you kin go agen so quick?

He say, Sure sure sure!

I tease a lil more. I say, An you ain gonna tell nobody?

He say, No no no, he ain gonna tell.

I say, But Sugar, I better not. I say, We been up here too long already. I say, Go on, git! Go git yo nother girl.

He look real sad, I say that. He look like he gonna go an find him nother girl. Fer real!

Gee-zuz! Ain nothin gonna go right fer me t'night?

I say—real fast—I say, Whoa Baby! I laugh. I say, I'm on'y teasin.

An I outta my clothes agen an on that bed so fast he don' know which end is up. I say, Shove over Lover. I say, Honeydripper, make room fer this Honeydripper!

He do.

Nex, he no sooner in the saddle an we is jes bout ready t'raise hell when—

Gee-zuz Kee-ryees! The godam Francine pop in. Yeah! Loud's a fart in a empty tincan.

She say, Kitten yer in my room.

I say, Francine godam yer crazy ass, git outta here!

I kin see my trick gittin all jittery all over agen.

Francine, she say, Don' you know by this time, this *my* room?

I kin feel his ol soljer jes a-wiltin an wiltin.

I say, Come on Baby, don' pay no nevermind t'her.

But he jes too fuss up. Counta Francine bein there.

I say, Francine up yers wiff a lawnmower, you git yer greezy hair the hell outta here.

An she say, Girl who you think yer talkin to?

An I say, You you cottinpickin crab nabber.

An she say, Don you talk t'me like that, you lil bitch, or I'll ruin you.

An I say, Francine can' you see I'm busy jes now? Now how come you don' git?

An she say, No. She say I gotta git, go find nother room.

I say, Francine yer flippin yer lid! You git right now or I'm gonna call fer Madam.

She say, like hell I'm gonna call fer Madam. She tell me *she* is gonna call fer Madam, I don' g She say, I goin right downstairs right now an tell Madam yer in my room an yer takin all fuggin nig for one lousy trick.

So I say, Okay Francine, go on, tell Madam.

She ain gonna tell Madam nothin. She do, Madam kick her ass right out! Francine, she don' belong in no cathouse nohow. She don' git along wiff nobody, hardly. She ack like hers don' stink. It do.

Time she git her crazy ass the hell outta there, my poor lil ol Joe College done wilt like somebod bust his balloon, an I gotta start in all the everlovin over agen. Kee-ryess!

I ain never been nobody fer fightin, but Gee-zuz! I fraid I was bigger, I'd lose my blacka Pickaninny head fer considerin an jes take an kick livin hell outta that Francine.

I gotta work real fast now. We was late fore she come in an we ain getting no sooner.

I start in playin nice's I kin unner the circumstances but I gotta start in from scratch. Kee-ryees! I talkin pritty's ever I kin, an playin nice's I know how, an he comin along okay.

An nex, Gee-zuz! I git me more trouble!

This muddlehead pull up an look down on me real sad—real real sad—an he start in talkin sad to Steada hoppin back in the saddle on goin, he is gonna try some make believe sweet talkin. He start ackin like he's playin him some dum movie scene. Yeah! He talk sad an then he look at me like I sposed t'talk sad back.

Ooh-wee! He lose me!

I don' know what t'do. I considerin that jack he got an I considerin how long we been up here an hearin more tricks jes a-streamin in that mothahless front door downstairs, an I jes *know* Mada

gonna wonner what the hell happen t'me.

I say, ~~Sweetheart Lover, we ain got *time* fer that *now*!~~ I say, You tol' me you gonna be quick. Her you go pissin roun like you think I got all fuggin night! I say, Gee-zuz Baby, Madam gonna think y eatin my ass, steada—

Now godam, come on, Baby. Giddy up!

I say all that nice's I kin at that time, an I make him smile. He do that, I hope t'toot an back he g the idea t'ask me my phone, but he don' git that idea a-tall! No!

Nex thing I know—jes bout the time we startin t'go good an I gits movin okay an I goin fine's ever do go, and I snappin the whip an punchin the apple, an I wonnerin is my investment ever gon come thru an ask me my phone—an I rollin ass eas' an rollin ass wes', an breakin my poor Pickaninny back fer this dum mothah—nex thing I know, he git him one more dee-diddly-dum ide an fore I know what he is tryin t'do, he got my ass hung up clear off that bed!

Yeah!

I say, Hol' it, Baby! What the fug you doin?

She-it! I open my big mouff and that son-a-bitch jes stop, plop, an lay deadweight. Seem ever cottinpickin thing I do jes backfire. I git me nothin but trouble trouble trouble.

He say, He don' know wha's the matter. He say, Seem like I is doin all the work!

Yeah! He say I is doin the work!

I bout flip my lid right here. I say, Gee-zuz, Sweetie! An I try best I kin t'talk nice. I say, Course is doin the work. What the hell you think? I say, I is the cat, you is the trick! Unnerstan? I say, No come on, Lover, giddy up oncet agen an le's git the hell outta here. I keep fryin t'tell you, we ain got n time right now—fer talkin.

I say—an alla time tryin t'soun nice—I say, Giddy the sweet everlovin horsey ass up oncet age please!

Well she-it! He start in goin, yeah! Sep, this time he got him nother fancy fug idea, an he start wham jammin me like he's choppin rock. Yeah! He jes agruntin an rammin away like he's mad at th whole mothahhumpin worl'.

Course, I know better'n t'open my big mouff this time. I keep tryin t'do my stuff best I kin un the new circumstances, but it ain easy.

Meantime, I'm thinkin we jes gotta make it this time an he can' git him nohow no more new du ideas—an he git him nother one. Yeah! He do!

Gee-zuz! I don' know how one dum Whiteboy kin behave so mean! This time, he curl my blacka right up double an he piledrive like he is tryin t'stan me on my poor ol Pickaninny head an bump n straight down t'hell!

Yeah! He do that! I don' know what he is tryin t'prove, but I ain bout t'ask no more queshuns.

On'y thing I try, I try a lil reverse English. I say, Tha's-a-way, Baby! Hit it, Sweetheart! Go go go!

He go! An he git him his dee-diddly-godam ten dollah gun. At las'!

I up outta that bed and doosh on the run an dress —right now! I even fergit all bout that investme idea, I so scared my ass gonna be mud, time I git back downstairs.

I say, Hey Lover, how come you wanna ack like that? You think pussy made o'steel?

I laugh when I say that. It ain easy, but I do.

He laugh too, dum she-it.

Good thing I laugh.

Even though I am trying to keep this on a high literary plain, I feel it is obligatory at this point th I go into the matter of my past experience with women. For reasons which will become clear to th intelligent reader, I'm sure.

As I formerly mentioned, there are these two unprofessional ladies of ill repute I happen to know

home. One is Marge and the other is Susie. Despite their already ruined reputations, I refuse to mention their last names. I'm not a cad, for gosh sakes! On the other hand, I'm not a prude either. What I mean to say is, I'm just a normal nineteen-year-old fellow, with normal appetites and all that, and these girls (at home) are always calling me up anyway. Don't get me wrong—I certainly don't go out with either one of them. As previously mentioned, Barbara is my girl, and she's a very high-minded girl too. I wouldn't touch Barbara. I'm not that type. As a matter of fact, we may marry some day. My marriage, for me, and also for Barbara, is in the future, so as I've already mentioned, there are the two girls at home, whom I occasionally date. I mean, go out with. I can't really consider them *dates* for gosh sakes!

What I'm driving at is this: Both of them consider me the best lover in town. I don't mean to brag, but they do. They're constantly telling me they do, and they've been telling me this for some time now. And I'm fully aware that the reason they feel this way—even though they run with any number of other fellows, being the sort they are—is that I'm far from unendowed physically. Also, I know how to handle myself in the backseat of our family Chevy. Though, again I must emphasize, I'm not trying to brag. I'm only stating the facts, the hard cold facts. And as for my being loose enough to run with these two, I must mention that I do not wish to enter wedlock, especially with such a fine girl as Barbara, completely naive about such important matters as the techniques of love-making.

Enough said. About that aspect, I mean. I do not wish to dwell on such matters incessantly. I point the above out only to emphasize the sort of fellow I am.

And as a preliminary to a comment on my ill-repute experience. Which is, namely: Much to my surprise, I found that in certain respects Hank was almost right. I mean, he doesn't really know it. He's half right without knowing it. He's right in that colored girls are not the same. That is, this colored girl I found myself with was not the same as either Marge or Susie. In several regards.

Not that I'm ready to concede to Hank's idea that Negro girls are somehow, in some mysterious way, superior (and I insist that, despite his denials, superior is what he means) to white girls. No, he's wrong about that, and I was forced to conclude I was even more right than I had realized.

But different—that's my point. For instance (and this will be difficult to tell without becoming obscene) this colored professional prostitute had the same inclination that Margie has, except she went about it . . . Well, she went about it more so than Margie ever did. I mean, she just acted as if it was quite natural, as I suppose, in view of her status, it was. Though I found her manner of approach more than slightly disquieting. I mean, it was so professional, so undramatic and lacking in the necessary preliminaries. It was startling, almost sickening, for gosh sakes!

I suppose, however, that never having been to a house of ill-repute, I had acquired certain misconceptions about how such women behaved—based on my natural, normal experiences. Experiences unpaid for, is what I mean.

In fact, I was so surprised by her manner of approach (and also by a couple of unlikely intrusions by some other paid professional colored girl, who kept opening our door and sticking her head inside first while mine was gone, and then later) that I reached my first (if you'll pardon the expression) climax a bit too hastily. (I should also add that the surroundings I found myself in had something to do with the above.)

I then learned that it's one climax per customer, for gosh sakes! One and you're out. Well, again I don't mean to brag, but when I go out with Margie or Susie, one is far from enough. For me, at any rate. So, when I learned I was considered finished by this colored girl after that one, I objected. She then told me that this was the rule and that I had to go.

But—unsatisfied with my unsatisfactory experience, and convinced that I had much to learn about this phase of life (paid prostitution) before I could consider myself really truly a man of the world, I turned on the old sales charm and convinced that professional she should break her rules, just that

once. Which she did, making it more evident that she found me to her liking.

And, at this point, I might add that, having the sort of analytical mind I have, I'm prone to vary my intellectual approach from time to time, and at times I think in representations. In fact, I began thinking in representations when this girl first approached in the hitherto described manner. I thought: Poor thing! Offspring of Southern slavery. And here she is (to my representation thinking) a slave once more. (I mean when she was going about it in the perverted way.) Here I am, the white master just laying back while she works with no compensation—much like some nasty white slaveholder might have sat on his veranda, sipping mint juleps, while a gang of slaves picked his cotton.

Then, that thinking was interrupted, and later, after I'd persuaded her to break that house rule, returned to thinking in representations, and I thought: From slave to employee! Now, at last emancipation! And she now works under me as part of an actively engaged company team—employee and employee. Compensation at last! But is her compensation adequate?

(And it is about right here that we were interrupted by this other prostitute, who stuck her head through the door—a most perturbing habit she had. There seemed to be absolutely no privacy in the place. And she and my girl got into an argument about whose room it was we were in, and both of them shouted the most vile profanities at each other, until the other one left, and I went back to thinking):

Is she adequately compensated? After all, she likes me, and after all, I'm here to find out, to learn about a phase of life I've never come into contact with. Why don't you, thought I, JC my friend, be a good employer and up her wages? (Representatively thinking, you understand.) Why don't you—One, show her you are far from a prejudiced white person, and Two, that you know how to handle yourself in bed with a woman, no matter what the color of her skin.

What I mean is, even though she was (to my representative thinking) at that time my employee, she was doing all the work. I thought: Good gracious, JC, this will never do. You, after all, are the one who should carry the old football, so to speak. You are the male component.

So I did. I mean, I went about showing her that I could, after all, handle myself with a woman. I thought: It's about time she found out that even though she's the employee (representatively thinking), I'll let her know I'm every bit as good at this sort of business as she is, and by letting her know, I'll increase her wages and decrease her working effort, causing a marked rise in plant efficiency.

I mean, ha ha, just a manner of thinking—in representations.

But, lo and behold, I had apparently broken some other house rule, for I learned she had not expected me to take the initiative in our—well, you know what I mean.

But, having broken one house rule to reach this stage, I decided to ignore that second house rule as well, and to proceed as per my original representation thinking, which I did. I let her have it. I mean, I showed manly initiative—the way I do especially with Susie—and showed that ill repute colored girl a thing or two. I mean, I let her know she had a man with her. I left her with no doubts about that!

Then . . .

But I've neglected to mention an important aspect. Another house rule, apparently, for she seemed in a terrific hurry to get back downstairs. I mean, it seems she was supposed to spend only so much time with each customer and then rush him out, and that she was already running overtime with me. (Ha ha.) So she rushed about and hopped back into her blouse and skirt (all she wore, for gosh sakes) and was hurrying out the door, when I conceived an idea I felt at the time was a brilliant one, but which later turned out to be the beginning of my misadventure proper, which, though it enriched me with experience, led to some rather startling digressions.

My thinking at this point was extremely involved, subtle, and also rapid. First, I was laughing myself at how startled Hank would be if he ever found out how I had impressed a paid professional colored prostitute, right in her own house of ill repute, for gosh sakes! Second, I was thinking that if

could persuade her to this point, with further objective planning and action, I might continue the trend and further my extra-curricular education somewhat. I might learn even more about paid professional colored ladies by persuading her to meet me at some other time and some other place.

I was laying there wondering just how I could go about this when my idea struck. And I mean *struck!* It came like a bolt from the devine blue—the way Prof. McGillicuty says highly intellectual poetical ideas come.

My idea was, namely, this: That, in view of-First, how unintelligent and uneducated she was, and Second, how profoundly impressed she was with yours truly, (ha ha) and Third, of how easily I had charmed her several moments ago, I decided—

To tell her I was a burglar and wanted by the police and desperate for a place to hide until the heat was off.

Fantastic, I know. But that was my idea. And, lo and behold, it worked. Honest! I told her that I had been burglarizing homes in the Mount Woodstock District, and that by tracing my fingerprints the police had found me out.

This had a remarkable effect on her. She not only believed me but apparently decided I was her kind—her own underworld kind. I mean, to her mind, now that she found I was an actual criminal, for gosh sakes, she considered me a sort of friend. Well, more than just a friend, as it turned out. She went to some lengths to make sure we would meet some place else, and meet soon, and also that I would have a place to hide out. She did, in fact, (and I know this will sound just too too fantastic, but it's hard cold fact nevertheless) give me the key to her apartment.

I tell him so long, an I'm on my blackass way flyin out the door, an he grab my arm!

Yeah! I dam near leave that mothahless arm behind fore I stop. Then I draw me one bigass breath and I bout t'let that dum daddio know jes wha's on my mind, as he up an say, Hol' it, hol' it jes a secret.

An then he babble him off some dum bullshe-it bout bein a burgler, fer Kee-ryees sake!

First, I say, Okay yer a burgler, I'm a bumblebee, but I ain got nothin fer you t'take jes now, mister burgler. I ain even got me no more fuggin time. No time a-tall!

But he still hangin on my arm an talkin an sayin he need him someplace t'hide. Yeah! He say that!

Gee-zuz! I bout t'tell him I is gonna need me someplace t'hide, he don' let go my arm. But I do need some o'the fastes considerin I ever in my whole poor ol Pickaninny life ever done, an I say, Man yo wanna hide?

An he say, Yeah! Tha's what he wanna do.

Considerin an considerin, I don' know why he jes don' ask me my phone, but he ain done that, an I ain bout to. On'y thing I know is he ain got him no *faith*. No faith a-tall! All that mothahless jack an no faith.

But ooh-wee! I gotta do somethin. Madam gonna kick my blackass over the moon, I don' git back downstairs right now!

I say t'myseff, I say, He wanna place t'hide, an he got what it take. Dum way a-goin bout linin up this weekend, but I ain never had me no weekend trick an he got enuff ses he kin be jes's dum's he want to be. Yeah! He got him at least one hunner, look like, an him an it ain strangers, and he ain got no faith! Long on loot, short on faith!

I say t'myseff, Girl fer that kinda jack you kin godam well believe anythin this dum Whiteboy, yo wanna tell you.

I say, Okay Burgler, down is up. Le's go t'the moon. You wanna place t'hide, you got it.

An I tell him where I live.

Kee-ryess! I say t'myseff, Girl you in such a bigass hurry over Madam git an git, you dam near run right past one Big Money Honey. Gee-zuz! Yer fourteen already, you gotta slow down an start in givin some.

He say he don' know where is that place I live. I tell him the number an say, Take a cab, man, take a cab. I see you in the mornin. Yeah! I see you all weekend. I say, I go back downstairs, an then I'm gonna mess roun some till you finish dressin an come on down, then I'm gonna come up t'you an I'm gonna have my partmin key in my hand. I do this, you mess roun an you jes perten like you is nuts, an that ain gonna be too hard! You come up t'me from behind, see, an start in nuzzlin me. You jes lean over an put yer arms roun me an then I kin slip you my key. Unnerstan? Okay? You dig?

He look a lil dum, but he say, Okay.

I take off, leave him t'git back in all them clothes.

Ooh-wee! This better'n waitin fer him t'call. I kin work this big Friday night now an go on home in the mornin an this Big Money Honey invessment gonna be there.

Invessment? She-it! I ain got me no invessment, I got me a whole crazy-ass bank! Yeah! No tellin where I go from here, everythin go right.

I git downstairs, the sittin room jes fulla tricks but I can' go up now. No!

I scoot like somebody lit my tail, right on back t'the dressin room, an make s'if I is gonna powder up some more. Madam see me go but she too busy t'do anythin right now. Tricks jes a-streamin in.

I git my key outta my purse an start peekin out thru the curtin, waitin fer my Big Money Honey. Fergin bout take all night.

But he make it. I see him standin there, lookin dum, an I scoot back out t'the sittin room an he cuss like I tol' him. He ack dum an start sayin he wanna go back upstairs wiff me an while we is funnin lil bit that, I slip him my key.

I say, Nex time, Lover.

He say, Okay, nex time.

An he take off out the door.

Phew! Invessment ain easy t'git.

Burgler? Kee-ryess!

Trouble! Gee-zuz! Course he got trouble. Wiff that wad, course he got nothin but trouble.

I on my swingin ass way back upstairs wiff another College Joe, I say t'myseff, Burgler you jes git on home t'my place an hide yerseff cozy. Don' you go nowhere else, man. I git home, we gonna take some real sweet weekend bizness t'begin wiff, then we gonna settle down t'invessment. An who know what that gonna lead to!

Kee-ryess! How come one cat git her ass so lucky so fast? Way he finger that wad, I know, I jus deediddly-dam well *know* this invessment gonna be long an happy.

Outside the ill repute house again, this time with her key in my pocket, I paused a moment for some hard, bold, analytical thinking. I thought: Good grief, JC! Have you by any chance, somewhere between nine o'clock and now, become guilty of rationalization?

But the answer, of course, was an emphatic No. After all, I honestly owed this little escapade to my education. I mean, a formal education is one thing, but there are, after all, a few things one does learn inside a classroom. And closely and objectively inspecting the environment and activity of our colored lady of ill repute (both professional) was something which would certainly stand me in good stead later on in life. Besides, I'm inclined to think that Dad must have had some similar experience when he was young, or else how could he be so sophisticated and well equipped for his outside job on the town obscenity board? (Outside office and hospital, that is.)

Added to that—the fact that she believed my fantastic burglar story and had slipped me the key to her apartment and wanted me to hide out there (no doubt in an illicit living arrangement with her) and that such circumstances do not present themselves often (ha ha), I felt practically obliged to follow through.

And find out what I could. Which, up to the present time, had been plenty. About such pa

professional ladies, I mean, and specifically in exactly which ways and by which methods they are different, and morally cancerous.

The big immediate danger being, of course, venereal disease. But even Dad has told me that professional prostitutes are very careful about disease, and Hank has constantly beaten on my ears about how the colored girls who work in houses of ill repute inspect each customer and wash his certain unprintable parts, and also see a doctor regularly. (I doubt Hank's word about them seeing a doctor regularly, for gosh sakes. I can't imagine a waiting room full of such ladies. But she did inspect me.) (Carefully.) So I decided to remain undaunted and carry on. After all, it isn't every day, as I've pointed out, that a student gets an opportunity outside the classroom to learn firsthand the real substandard side of life. (Though I'm fully aware, that in my case at least, it was less an opportunity than the result of my own quick thinking and natural endowments which had led me to my present pass.)

So, it was *Hup* two three four, *Hup* two three four, back up that dark street, meeting this virtuous mob of fellows climbing out of cars and walking, probably students, going in the opposite direction until I reemerged on the avenue. There to pause for one short moment—again teetering on the brink of indecision.

I thought: Should you, James Cartwright Holland, really actually *go* there? Or would it be better to toss this educational opportunity to the winds and return to the frat house?

Then a taxi came towards me and I hailed it, and I thought: No, you have nothing to do—absolute nothing—until Monday morning. Why miss a sociological opportunity which may leave you wiser every way? And, after all, you are a normal male human being with normal appetites, and it will be a long time before you go home again and can see Margie or Susie.

Also, I thought of my flunking grades—biology, psychology, French—and how angry Dad was going to be when he found out about them, and what a rough second half semester I was up against.

Good grief! I had really never stopped to consider the seriousness of the matter—flunking out, I mean. I thought: Imagine you, JC, flunked out—disowned by friends and family, a bum, an actual bum—an outcast, even, sneaking about in neighborhoods such as this one, picking food from garbage cans, ending by dying tragically in a gutter some place. Holy Christmas!

One big wild unlikely weekend (of field study, so to speak) (or, if you please, cultural exchange with a paid professional lady (colored), the it's back to the books, this time in earnest.

Well, anyway, the taxi stopped and I bounced in and gave him the address she had given me. On we went. And I'll certainly admit it—I was glad to be back inside a taxi and on my way out of the neighborhood. As we went past the Black-n-Tan, those Negro fellows were still standing there, doing nothing. Except that it seemed a couple of them were staring, for gosh sakes, at me. That bunch of loafers made me shudder. I don't mean that I'm prejudiced, but I don't understand how they can just stand and stand and do absolutely nothing for minute after minute, hour after hour. I suppose, though that it's racial. I mean, what other explanation could there be? And just the other day, one frat brother was talking about his army experience and he claims many Negroes make very poor soldiers—made a poor record in the Great War, don't follow orders well at all—so I suppose you just can't get away from it, it's racial. Them standing there doing nothing, I mean.

But I had happier thoughts to think, for the taxi was going in the general direction of the university—back to the only part of this god-forsaken town I know anything about. Not that I'm completely familiar with that section, but at least it's civilized. It may not be friendly, like my own hometown, but it's civilized. I'll say that for it. So the closer we got to it, the better I felt about the entire proposition. Until-Bamb!

We drove right smack dab into it! Then I began to get a little worried. I thought: Impossible! She can't live here, can she? In a dormitory, or something? (Ha ha.) Christmas!

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