

remember that Tee Bob ever come near me and didn't speak. But I didn't speak to him either. I didn't like it him coming here like that, but who was I to tell Tee Bob where he could go on this place.

The first time he knocked on the door it was so weak I could hardly hear it myself. He knocked again. He had to knock three times before he made it loud enough. I heard the girl unlatching the door. When she saw Tee Bob she said, "Yes?" and I could tell from the way she said it she wanted to hurry up and get to New Orleans. Tee Bob told her he wanted to speak to her. She asked him couldn't it wait till Monday. He said no. She said in that case they ought to talk in my side; she didn't think it was right for them to be in her side alone. Tee Bob said he wanted to be alone with her, just to talk to her a few minutes.

Mary Agnes moved back from the door and let him in, and I went back to the firehalf. I wasn't interested in hearing what Tee Bob had come there to say, but there wasn't any heat in the kitchen, and I didn't see any sense sitting back there in the cold.

Not just one time, two or three times she had to ask him why he had come there, what he wanted.

Then he told her: "I love you, Mary Agnes. I want us to run away from here."

"You ought to leave now," she said.

"I wasn't fooling you, Mary Agnes," he told her. "I'll do anything you want me to do, if we run away from here together."

"You been very good to me all the time I been here, and I respect you for that," she said. "But you ought to leave now."

"I don't want your respect and don't get your love," he told her. "I want you to love me just a little bit. And you can have the name of Samson."

"I wouldn't take the name of Samson even if you could give it to me," she said. "And you shouldn't talk like that. Do you know what they would do to me if they heard you talking like that?"

"I don't care who hear me," he said. "I'll say it to the world."

"And what'll happen to me?" she asked him.

"Nothing," he said. "Not if we leave from round here. We can leave now. I have the car out there."

"And the children?" she said.

"They can get another teacher."

"I love them children," she said.

"And I love you," he said. "I have plenty money, Mary Agnes. All the money you can ever spend."

"I don't want money," she said. "All I want do is teach the children."

"I'll make sure they get another teacher," he said.

"But I want to teach them," she said.

"And I want you," he told her. "We don't even have to stay in this country, we can go to Europe. You can be a European. Them Europeans don't care who people is, where they come from."

"I want to teach the children," she said. "I don't want Europe."

"I'm offering you the world," he said.

"This the only world I want--teaching the children," she said. "Teaching the children to keep their bodies clean; teaching them how to write their names. That's all the world I want," she said.

"You want me to beg you?" he asked her.

"I just want you to leave because I have to catch the bus," she said.

"I'm not leaving till I get your answer," he said.

"I already gived you my answer," she said. "I can't do what you want me to do."

"You trying to say I'm not good enough for you?" he asked her.

"I'm not saying that at all," she said. "I'm just saying I want teach the children."

Now he screamed at her and used a dirty word about little niggers. "You a white woman," he said. "You don't have to throw yourself away on a pack of niggers."

"I'm Black as any of them down there," she said.

He slapped her--hard and loud. Then he said: "You White, you White. I don't want hear you saying you Black round me no more."

"I'm Black," she said. "I'm black as pitch."

"You White," he said.

"I'm Black."

He slapped her again. Hard and loud.

"I'm Black," she said.

He saw beating her wasn't going to change anything. (Oh, Tee Bob, Tee Bob, Tee Bob.) Then he said: "You trying to say I'm not good enough for you? That's what you trying to say-- a Samson not good enough for you? A Samson?"

"You good enough for any woman," she told him.

"Long's it ain't you," he said.

"All I want do is tesch the children," she said.

"You don't want teach that bad," he told her. "You think you better, that's what you think, don't you?"

"You know better than that," she told him. "Why don't you leave--like a gentleman."

He used a very foul word about all gentlemans and said: "You don't tell me to leave out my own house. This is mine, and I'm asking you to take it. That's asking you too much?"

"All I want do is tesch the children," she said.

"That's not what you want," he told her. "No, that's not what you want at all. You want me to do what Jimmy Caya

told me to do. That's what you want. Just what Jimmy Caya told me--that's what all y'all want. That's what you want--not teach the children."

Mary Agnes told him go home because he had been drinking and didn't know what he was saying. He said yes he had been drinking because he didn't have the courage to come here sober. Well, he had the courage now, and he was there, and he wasn't leaving.

"Then I'll leave," she said. "I'm catching that bus."

"You leave when I tell you leave," he said. "You no better than I am."

"I never said I was," she said.

Then he changed. Just like that he changed. (Oh, Tee Bob, Tee Bob, Tee Bob.) "Yes, you better," he said. "You better than any woman I know. More beautiful than any woman I know--more quality. ^{They} ~~kkk~~ want me to marry her and she can't hold a candle up to you." (Judy Major.) "I'm going to tell her that," he said. "I'm going to tell the whole world just like I told it to Jimmy Caya."

"Go home, Mr. Samson," Mary Agnes said.

He screamed at her. "Don't call me that. You know my name. My name is Robert."

"Go home, Robert," she said.

"I'm not going nowehre," he said.

"Then I'm leaving," she said.

I heard her going for the door, then I heard Tee Bob going after her. I heard her saying: "Don't do that. I don't have to stand for that."

"You not leaving me," he said. "I don't want nothing else in this world, and you not leaving me."

"Take your hands off me," she said.

"Then get in that car," he said.

"Not me," she said. "I'm not one of your plantation--" she used a bad word.

They started fussling round there, and I went to the wall and beat on it with my fist, but they didn't hear me. I put my mouth ~~in~~ to a crack and hollered at Tee Bob to go home, but he didn't hear me.

"Get in that car," he kept saying to her. "Get in there. I mean get in there."

Then he called her a nigger. She said he was right, she was nothing but a nigger, but she wasn't a nigger--that word agsin. Now, he said he didn't mean what he said. (Oh, Tee Bob, Tee Bob, Tee Bob.) He said she knowed he didn't mean what he said. All he wanted was for her to get in that car.

"I'm on my knees, now," he said. "You see where I'm at?"

I was beating on the wall and hollering at Tee Bob and trying to look through the crack all at the same time. Sometimes I could see them a second, but the next second they had moved to another part of the room. Then the door opened and

slammed back. The suitcase went flying cross the room. When it hit the wall it busted open and clothes was all over the place.

He was saying: "Y'all want us to be dogs. All right. All right. All right. All right."

He was throwing her against the wall now. I could hear her hitting one wall, then the other wall. Then I heard them fall on the floor. I heard her struggling and screaming, and I know that sound; it is the same sound all women make of all nations. I ran out on the gallery and tried to open the door, but the door was locked. I ran to the end of the gallery and screamed toward the house, but the house was too far away, and on a day with the weather like this, nobody was on the gallery or in the yard. I ran and jacked on that door again, then I ran through the house and jacked on the back door. She had locked the back door when she was getting ready for New Orleans. I ran back to the front and jacked on that front door again, then I ran out in the road. I started down the quarters screaming and screaming, but not a sould heard me. Every door was latched against that weather. Before I got down to Joe Simon, I turned around and headed back. I saw Tee Bob coming out the yard. He looked like a drunk man trying to run. He slipped and fell twice, one right after the other. When he got up he went by the car like the car wasn't even there.

I started to go after Tee Bôb, but I saw the door wide open, and I went in to look after the girl. She was laying on

the floor. Her clothes torn from her body. Her face to the wall. She was so quiet I thought she was dead. But when I leaned over her I saw water running from her eyes. Not a sound--just quiet to herself.

A Note before Dying

Ethel said they didn't hear the car come in the yard, so they didn't know he was back till he came in the house soaking wet. Before anybody could ask him where he had been he had gone and locked himself in the library. Miss Amade started toward the door and came back. The people just went on talking, making 'tend nothing strange was going on in the house that day. Ethel said while she was serving them they talked about everything except Tee Bob. Even Judy Major: walking cross the room every now and then, going: "Hello, Uncle Joe. How is you?" "Mr. Elliot, you look so well today. How's your lovely family? I'm sure they's fine." "And, Miss Jude, you look so well in that lovely pea-green."

After Tee Bob had been in the library a while, Miss Amade went to the door and knocked and asked him if anything was the matter. When he didn't answer she came back where ~~kk~~ everybody else was. Ethel said she heard Robert saying, "If he want make a fool of himself, let him." But Robert didn't say fool. My manners just don't allow me to use words that Robert Samson use in public or out.

me. to show her she wasn't, I committed the foulest crime a man can commit."

She was quiet a second, then she went on: "'I'm nothing but a freak here on y'all earth, Ma-ma. Even the niggers in the quarters laugh at Tee Bob. Everybody wish I was more like my daddy--more rugged, more tough, more man. The ones you'll be in reading this letter to don't love daddy, but they respect him. They know they better respect him. But me--no. They don't love me and they don't respect me living or dead. They think I'm a freak and they pity me. Look at my name, Ma-ma. I'm going to always be little in their eyes. If I say this is wrong and that is wrong, they say I say these things because I'm not grown up yet. When I told Jimmy Caya how much I loved her he laughed at me. But when he saw I meant it with all my soul he said I ought to be in Jackson. Even Jimmy, my best friend, thinks I'm crazy or a freak of nature. And me I think love is the most natural feeling on this God earth. I saw a beautiful woman--her skin white as any snow--and I fell in love with her. What is more natural than that, Ma-ma? Daddy married you, knowing all the time that your people was Yankees. But he loved you. Did anybody call him a freak?'"

That mob was quiet, waiting. Me and the girl sat on the bed in the dark listening. At first she wouldn't listen to a word, but now she was listening to everything.

"He told me he was brave at the end," Miss Amade said. "'I feel braver now than I ever did in my life,' he said. 'I

feel braver now than I did when I went down to see her. Now, I won't ever see her again. Never hear her sweet voice again. I used to go by that church just to get a glimpse of her. Just to hear her voice if it was no more than scolding the children. But now, no more voices for Tee Bob. No more quarters. No more black faces peeping from doors. No more black children running to the gate asking for nickels when Tee Bob and Chestnut go by. No more field, and no more cane, and no more laughing, and no more singing. I ~~knocked~~ fouled her body, Ma-ma. All the riches in the world can't buy my conscience!"

She was quiet again, and we listened in the dark, and that mob listened in the rain.

Tee Bob said in his letter. "'I love you and daddy much as a son can love his parents, Ma-ma. I love Jimmy Caya, and God knows I love my native South. But I would have gived it all up for her. I begged her, Ma-ma; I begged her on my knees. I slapped her, I beat her, I slammed her against the wall. But I'm sure none of this hurt her much as I hurt myself fouling her body.'" "

He wrote to his mama. "'My sweet, little ma-ma. I can remember sitting in your lap when I was a little boy. I can remember your sweet hand on my face. I remember your perfume. I remember how I used to tell you I love you. I remember your lovely face smiling down at me.

"I know this will cause you pain, Ma-ma. I know what they will say about Samson now. I know the letters you will receive. I know the telephone calls. I can only ask you to be brave and hold your head high. And remember that the last moment I spent on this earth was thinking about you."

When she finished, everybody but Jimmy Gava turned and went back to their cars. He screamed at them and called them all a pack of nigger-lovers. When he saw he was the only one left, he started toward the gallery. Robert met him at the bottom step and hit him so hard he fell out of the yard and went slamming against the car that Tee Bob had left parked before the house. Robert might have stomped him out there if Miss Amade and old man Raynard hadn't pulled him off.

But I was scared he might 'rouse those men up again, and I got Charlie Hebert and Hawk Brown to take the girl to her friends in New Orleans. She caught a train later that week and went North. I got letters from her a while, I still get Christmas cards from her every year. She told me she got married and she was trying to be a good wife and a good teacher. She wanted to come back here, though, because she felt that's where she belong. I told her it was best to make a life for herself and her family up there. These people here won't forget her long as they remembered what happened up there that night. And they'll remember that long as Samson stands. And even if they changed the name of the place to something else, there'll always be somebody round here to talk about it.