

"And suppose he ask you if you believe, then what?"

"I hope he doesn't, Reverend."

"Suppose he do?"

"I hope he doesn't."

"You couldn't say yes?"

"No, Reverend, I couldn't say yes. I couldn't lie to him at this moment. Not this moment, I couldn't lie. I will never tell him another lie no matter what."

"Not for her sake?"

"No, sir."

The minister nodded his head and grunted to himself. His dark brown eyes in that tired tired face continued to stare back at me.

"You think you educated, but you not. You think you the only person ever had to lie? You think I never had to lie?"

"I don't know that, Reverend."

"Yes, you know. You know. You know, all right. That's why you look down on me, because you know I lie. At wakes, at funerals, at weddings--yes, I lie. I lie at wakes and funerals to relieve pain. At weddings when I know it can't work--yes, I have to say it will. 'Cause reading, writing and rithmetic is not enough--you have to lie sometime. You think that's all they sent you to school for, for reading, writing and 'rithmetic? They sent you to school to relieve pain, hurt--and if you have to lie to do it, then you lie. You lie and lie and lie. Just as she had to lie to raise you after the others had gone. When you tell

yourself you feeling good when you sick, you lying. When you tell other people you feeling well when you feeling sick, you lying. You tell them that 'cause you know they got much pain as you have, and you don't want to add more--and you lie. She been lying every day of her life. That's how you got through that university--cheating herself here, cheating herself there--but always telling you she's all right, but crying on her knees on that church up there. I've seen her hands bleed from picking cotton. I've seen the blisters from the hoe and the cane knife. And I've seen the scabs on her knees. But whenever you come home from the university she was always feeling good--doing nothing but lying. That's my education, boy. I know my people. Know what they done gone through. Know that they done cheated themselves, lied to themselves--hoping one can come back and help the others. Yes, yes, yes, boy, we all lie--to relieve pain."