

SIDNEY: Hey, Alton--can you *believe* it?

"I said to him, We did it! We did it--" In a million years I didn't believe--(*noticing his expression at last*) Say, were you pulling for the other side or something? What's with you, man? You don't show up at the polls--you skip the victory rally--

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ALTON: Is it true, Sid?

SIDNEY: (*knowing at once*) Is what true--?

ALTON: C'mon, Sid, we've hung out a long time, don't crap around. Is it *true*? Is it true she's a hooker? (*they stare at each other a long moment, then:*) And you were going to let me marry her...? Why didn't you tell me?

SIDNEY: It wasn't my place. It was for Gloria to tell you. She loves you, Alt. (*ALTON bursts into laughter.*) Look, I thought you'd be man enough to help Gloria--like you want to help the rest of the world--

ALTON: Talk to me man to man today, Sidney: would you marry her?

SIDNEY: Alton, for Christ's sake! You call yourself a revolutionary! Doesn't that stand for anything anymore!

ALTON: Would you marry her?

SIDNEY: (*shouting*) Is it one thing to take bread to the Bowery and another to eat it with them?

ALTON: *Would you marry her?*

SIDNEY: If I loved her...If you love a woman, Alton...Look, don't do it, man. Not today. Just don't make me sick today. Just don't act like a fraternity boy meeting his own girl under the lamppost.

ALTON: When you go to the mines, Sid, you get coal in your skin. If you're a fisherman, you reek of fish. She doesn't *know* how to love anymore. It's all a performance!

SIDNEY: You're wrong, Alt, she--

ALTON: Don't you know some of the things these girls have to do!

SIDNEY: All right, I know. I know. You are afire with all the images: every faceless man in the universe has become--

ALTON: Someone who has coupled with my love...used her...like a thing, man...an instrument...a commodity...

SIDNEY: People change, Alt. She'll change. She needs someone. Everyone needs someone...

ALTON: *THE WHITE MAN DONE WRAPPED HIS TRASH IN TINSEL AND GIVE IT TO THE NIGGER AGAIN, HUH, SIDNEY?!...Don't you understand, man? Like I am SPAWNED from commodities--and their purchasers! Don't you know this? How do you think I got the color I am? I got this color from my grandmother being used as a commodity, man! The buying and the selling in this country began with me, Jesus, help me!*

SIDNEY: All right.

ALTON: You don't understand...My father, you know, he was a railroad porter...who wiped up spit and semen, carried drinks and white man's secrets for

thirty years. When the bell rang in the night he put on that white coat and his smile and went shuffling through the corridors with his tray and his whisk broom, his paper bags and his smile...to was a domestic. She always had, Mama did, bits of this and bits of that from the pantry of "Miss Lady," you know. Some given, some stolen...And she would always bring this booty home and sit it all out on the kitchen table...so's we could all look at it. And my father--all the time he would stand there and look at it and walk away. And then one night he had some kind of fit, and he just reached out and knocked all that stuff--the jelly and the piece of ham, the broken lamp and the sweater for me--he just knocked it all on the floor and stood there screaming with the tears running down his face: "I ain't going to have the white man's leavings in my house, no mo'! I AIN'T GOING TO HAVE HIS *THROWAWAY*...NO MO'!"...And Mama, she just stood there with her lips pursed together, and when he went to bed she just picked it all up, whatever hadn't been ruined or smashed, and washed it off and brushed it off and put it in the closet...and we *ate* it and we *used* it because we had to *survive*, and she didn't have room for my father's pride... (*a beat*) I don't want white man's leavings, Sidney. Not now. Not ever. (***ALTON takes out an envelope***) I wrote her a note. (***he hands the note to SIDNEY who does not take it***)

SIDNEY: Aren't you even going to see her? (*ALTON shakes his head quickly.*) Are you afraid you'd forgive her? (***ALTON drops the note on the table and starts out.***) At least you'd see her...

ALTON: *You* see her--!

SIDNEY: That's *racism*, Alt!

ALTON: Don't give me that shit! Oppression is not equal and you know it!

SIDNEY: I know that Gloria is no more a commodity than your grandmother--she's a human being, Alt! A *victim*!

ALTON: (*evenly*) Yeah, well, like, my grandmother *never* had her options! (*He starts to cross out*)

SIDNEY: And what about *you*? No choices for you either--is that what it comes to, Alt? At least *see* her, man. Give her that much.

ALTON: I can't, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Why not?

ALTON: Because--Oh, man, like I know it all here--(*touches his forehead*) but...

SIDNEY: (*ironically*) --but this is not the hour, is it? "A star has risen over Africa--"

ALTON: (*vehemently*) Yes!

SIDNEY: Over Harlem...

ALTON: Right!

SIDNEY: Over the Southside...

ALTON: You got it!

SIDNEY: The New Zionism is raging. A flame consuming the soul! And nothing is larger--not love, not compassion...Nothing???

ALTON: If that's the way you read it, baby--*noth*-ing! (*He exits. SIDNEY stands looking at the envelope.*)