

TEACHING EQUALITY BLACK SCHOOLS IN THE AGE OF JIM CROW

Maybe the bright side was that the musician hadn't either wet his pants or taken a dump while in his death throes. Sometimes, during a comparatively slow death like strangulation, the victim lost control of all bodily functions. He'd read it in a novel, something from the Book-of-the-Month Club and therefore both life-enriching and reliable. Probably not Eudora Welty. Maybe Norman Mailer. Anyway, the men's room didn't smell as fresh as a flower shop, but it didn't reek, either..The door was falling shut. With no more sound than the day makes when it turns to night, the detective had gone..Agnes thought crazily of their early dates and the first years of their marriage. They had occasionally gone to the drive-in, sitting close..On the sofa, Celestina finally worked up the courage to dial her parents' number in Spruce Hills..ONWARD THROUGH THIS Monday, January 17, this momentous day, when the ending of one thing is the beginning of another..He was surprised they had come so soon, less than twenty-four hours after the tragedy. This was especially unusual, considering that a homicide detective was obsessed with the idea that rotting wood, alone, was not responsible for Naomi's death..The time had come for him to think more seriously about his situation and his future. Self-improvement remained a laudable goal, but his efforts needed to be more focused..Sitting forward in his armchair, Obadiah lowered his hands to his knees, and in thoughtful silence, he stared at them..And so Agnes went alone to her bedroom and there, as on so many nights, sought the solace of the rock who was also her lamp, of the lamp who was also her high fortress, of the fortress who was also her shepherd. She asked for mercy, and if mercy was not to be granted, she asked for the wisdom to understand the purpose of her sweet boy's suffering..When his stomach rolled uneasily and his scalp prickled, he was seized by panic, certain that he was going to suffer both violent nervous emesis and severe hives, breaking out and chugging up at the same time. He popped the capsules into his mouth but couldn't produce enough saliva to swallow them, so he turned on the faucet, filled his cupped hands with water, and drank, dribbling down the front of is jacket and sweater..He stepped into the house, quietly closed the front door, and examined the bottle. The glass was thick, especially at the base, where a large punt--a deep indentation--encouraged sediment to gather along the rim rather than across the entire bottom of the bottle. This design feature secondarily contributed to the strength of the container. Evidently he had hit her with the bottom third of the bottle, which could most easily withstand the blow..Industrial Woman, which he'd purchased for a little more than nine thousand dollars, less than eighteen months ago and at another gallery, would fetch at least thirty thousand in the current market, so rapidly had Bavol Poriferan's reputation risen..From serviceway to alley to serviceway to street, into the city and the fog and the night, Junior ran from the Cain past into the Pinchbeck future..Both angry and mortified, yet still fearful, a walking multimedia collage of emotions, Junior left the gallery..exercise. Although they expected him to be dizzy, he had no difficulty whatsoever with his balance, and in spite of feeling a little drained, he wasn't as weak as they thought he was. He could have toured the hospital unassisted, but he played to their expectations and used the wheeled walker..Shaking with a fear that had nothing to do with Junior Cain and flying bullets, or even with memories of Josef Krepp and his vile necklace, Tom Vanadium closed the sketch pad and put it on the window seat. He opened the window, and in rushed the susurrant of breeze-stirred oak leaves..By law, adoption records are sealed and so closely guarded that you'd have an easier time acquiring a complete roster of the CIA's deep cover agents worldwide than finding this one baby..Agnes found this turn of events amazing, amusing, ironic--and a little sad. She would have dearly loved to teach the boy to read and write, to see his knowledge and competence slowly flower under her care. Although she fully supported Barty's exploration of his gifts, and although she was proud of his astounding achievements, she felt that his swift advancement was robbing her of some of the shared joy of his childhood, even though he remained in so many ways a child..In a pocket of his smock was his letter to Reverend Harrison White. He hadn't sealed the envelope, because he intended to read to Perri, his wife, what he'd written, and include any corrections she suggested. In this, as in all things, Paul valued her opinion..Turning in Celestina's lap, Angel said, "Smell," and held the index finger of her right hand under her mother's nose..In her arms, little Barty burbled contentedly, unaware that his destiny supposedly included epic love, fabulous riches, and violence..Dessert was on the house. The waiter brought the four best items on the menu, to spare them the need to make two small decisions after having made such a big one..Agnes dropped to one knee before the boy and held him gently by the shoulders. "Let me look..""I can't sleep half the time," Deed said, twisting the baseball cap in his hands. "I've lost weight, and I'm so nervous, jumpy..""Too late. The parsonage was fully engulfed. With luck, they would save the church..This time he didn't flip the quarter straight into the air. He tipped his hand, and with his thumb, he shot the coin toward Agnes..The previous day, Jacob and Edom had driven back to Bright Beach, to prepare for Barty's arrival. Now they hurried down the back porch steps and across the lawn, as Maria followed the driveway past the house and parked near the detached garage at the rear of the deep property..Another small pane of glass burst. A dismaying crack of wood. His back to her, the maniac raged at the window with the snarling ferocity of a caged beast..""I'm not sure which is more unusual--the site of the eruption, the number of boils, or the size of them..""Skinny, pasty-faced, chattering sissy," he hissed, still so furious with Neddy that he wanted to jam the pianist's head in the toilet even though he was dead. Jam his head in and stomp on him. Stomp him into the bowl. Flush and flush, stomp and stomp..The report on the tower forced Junior to consider his mortality; fear, hurt, and self-pity roiled in him. His voice trembled with offense: "You do know, Mr. Magusson, what happened to my Naomi was an. Yet, uncaught, the quarter would have dropped to the floor. Junior would have heard it ring off the tiles. Which he hadn't..On the fourth floor, at Dr. Klerkle's suite, the hall door stood ajar. Past office hours, the small waiting room was deserted..Among these people was an old man whom they called, among themselves, the Changer. He showed Otter a few spells of illusion;

and when the boy was fifteen or so, the old man took him out into the fields by Serrenen to show him the one spell of true change he knew. "First let's see you turn that bush into the seeming of a tree," he said, and promptly Otter did so. Illusion came so easy to the boy that the old man took alarm. Otter had to beg and wheedle him for any further teaching and finally to promise him, swearing on his own true and secret name, that if he learned the Changer's great spell he would never use it but to save a life, his own or another's..Now that Tom knew what to look for, the gloom couldn't conceal the incredible truth..Obadiah tossed the pack of cards to Edom, startling him. "Son, you'll have to help me. My fingers have no finesse anymore."..Caution discarded, Junior went inside, for the same reason that a dedicated opera aesthete might once a decade attend a country-music concert: to confirm the superiority of his taste and to be amused by what passed for music among the great unwashed. Some might call it slumming..Junior felt unspeakably violated. This was outrageous: the inarguably personal, very private contents of his stomach, scooped into a plastic evidence bag, without his permission, without even his knowledge..Turning away from the window, Tom met her gaze. His smoke-gray eyes looked frosted, as though the fog ghosts had passed through the window and possessed him. But then the flame on the table candle flared in a draft; lambent light melted the chill from his eyes, and she saw again the warmth and the beautiful sorrow that had impressed her before..Unquestionably, if he hadn't killed Vanadium, the maniac cop would have blown him away. That was clearly an act of self-defense..Edom bit his lower lip, shook his head, and stubbornly clung to Barty's left foot.."The pepper tree had been whispering in the breeze, the roses nodding their bright heads. Now a stillness came into the cemetery, as if rising from beneath the grass, from out of that city of the lost.."All right. Well ... Jesuits are encouraged to pursue education in any subject that interests them, not theology alone. I was deeply interested in physics."..Maria arranged five place settings instead of four. The fifth--complete with silverware, waterglass, and wineglass--was at the head of the table, in memoriam of Joey..Ashamed and scared, she told no one. Although a victim, she blamed herself, and the prospect of being exposed to ridicule so horrified her that despair got the better of good judgment..He must begin by learning as much as possible about ghosts, hauntings, and the vengeance of the dead. During the remainder of 1966, only two apparently paranormal events occurred in Junior Cain's life, the first on Wednesday, October 5..Abruptly alert, sitting up on the edge of the bed, Celestina knew the caller could not be the comatose old woman, so she said angrily, "Who the hell is this?"..A quick tug on each pants cuff revealed no ankle holster, which was how many cops would choose to carry an off-duty piece..Returning to his apartment, Edom had to pass under the limbs of the majestically crowned oak that dominated the deep yard between the house and the garage..She worried that he would need to go to the bathroom during the night and that, half asleep, he might turn the wrong way, toward the stairs, and fall. Three times they paced off the route from the doorway of his room to the hall bath. She would have walked it a hundred times and still not been satisfied, but Barty said, "Okay, I've got it."..Evidently, last evening, prior to keeping a dinner date with Victoria, when the taunting detective had illegally entered Junior's house and placed another quarter on the nightstand, he had seen the directory open on the kitchen table. Deducing the meaning of the red check marks, he inserted this card and closed the book: another small assault in the psychological warfare that he'd been waging..gob of mucus in his throat. His face contorted with a misery that he did not have to fake, and he was astonished to feel tears spring to his eyes.."Search me. But I didn't tell him different. The less he knows, the better. I can't figure his motivation, but if you were tracking this guy by his spoor, you'd want to look for the imprint of cloven hooves."..The silence on the line was not merely that of a caller holding her tongue. It was abyssal and perfect, as no silence on a telephone ever can be, without the faintest hiss or crackle of static, no hint of breathing or..Tom Vanadium checked the small wastebasket next to the sink and discovered a wad of bloody Kleenex. The crumpled wrappers from two Band-Aids..In the tree, the girl grinned. "Even if he stays up there until dawn, he'll still be coming down in the dark, won't he. Oh, we'll be fine, Aunt Aggie..How ironic it would be if Celestina, the aunt of Seraphim's bastard boy, proved to be the heart mate for whom Junior had been longing through the past few years of unsatisfying relationships and casual sex. This seemed unlikely, considering the jejune quality of her paintings, but perhaps he could help her to grow and to evolve as an artist. He was an open-minded man, without prejudices, so anything could happen after the child was found and killed..Before he searched the bedroom, Vanadium walked quickly back through the rooms that he had already inspected, suddenly remembering the three bizarre paintings of which Nolly, Kathleen, and Sparky had spoken, and wondering how he could have overlooked them. They were not here. He was able to locate, however, the places on the walls where the art works had hung, because the nails still bristled from the pocket plaster, and picture hooks dangled from the nails..Had he ever thought he could get away with this? He must have been delusional, temporarily mad..His Country Squire laden with cookies, plum cakes, homemade caramel corn with almonds, and gifts, Edom drove directly home from Obadiah Sepharad's place, which had been their final stop. He roared away as if trying to outrun tornadoes and tidal waves..Waking from a bad dream, he sometimes thought he heard the ratcheting of gear-wheel feet. The scrape and creak of rusted iron joints. The clink of rake-tine fingers rattling against one another..With that thought, he made himself laugh. Unfortunately, his laughter was high-pitched and shaky, and it scared the hell out of him..He went directly to the kitchen and drew a glass of water at the sink faucet. He swallowed two antiemetic tablets that he had brought with him, to guard against vomiting..Celestina stared curiously at Tom Vanadium. She had witnessed the effect of vanishment, though she hadn't actually seen the coin disappear in midair. Yet she seemed to sense either that something more than sleight of hand had just transpired or that the trick had a meaning she'd missed..Before he taught himself to read books, he also taught himself numbers, and then how to read a clock. The significance of time had a more profound impact on him than Agnes could understand, perhaps because acquiring an awareness of the infinite nature of the universe and the finite nature of each human life-and fully understanding the implications of

this knowledge-takes most of us till early adulthood if not later, whereas for Barty, the vast glories of the universe and the comparatively humble nature of human existence were recognized, contemplated, and absorbed in a matter of weeks..During the following day, January 6, as Phimie was wheeled around the hospital for tests in various departments, Celestina remained in 724, working on her portfolio for a class in advanced portraiture. She was a Junior at the Academy of Art College..With the same surprising ease that she had gotten a plane out of San Francisco on a one-hour notice, Celestina booked two return seats on an early-evening flight from Oregon, as though she had a supernatural travel agent..Although he was a stranger, arriving unannounced, and something of an eccentric by anyone's definition, Paul was received by Grace and Harrison White with warmth and fellowship. At their doorstep, raising his voice to compete with the wailing weather, he hurriedly blurted out his mission, as if they might reel back from his wild windblown presence if he didn't talk quickly enough: "I've walked here from Bright Beach, California, to tell you about an exceptional woman whose life will echo through the lives of countless others long after she's gone. Her husband died the night their son was born, but not before naming the boy Bartholomew, because he'd been so impressed by 'This Momentous Day. And now the boy is blind, and I hope you'll be able and willing to give some comfort to his mother." The Whites failed to reel backward, didn't even flinch from his unfortunately explosive statement of purpose. Instead, they invited him into their home, later invited him to dinner, and later still asked him to stay the night in their guest room..That was the first-and until now the last-long walk he made with a purpose in mind. He went to see a hero..All these punctures in the wall. Gouges. Slashes. So much rage required to make them..He possessed vast files on tragic fires, and most of them were committed to memory. In Vienna's magnificent Ring Theater, December 8, a blaze claimed 850 lives. On May 25, 1887, 200 dead at the Opera Comique, Paris. November 28, 1942, in the Coconut Grove nightclub in Boston-when Jacob was only fourteen years old and already."Some Baptists are opposed to drink, Doctor, but we're the wicked variety. Though all we have is a warm bottle of Chardonnay." Indeed, as Celestina and the kid reached the foot of the steps to this second house, Bartholomew pointed, and the woman turned to look back. She appeared to stare straight at the Mercedes, though the fog made it impossible for Junior to be sure..It was hard for him to lie. He thought he was awkward at it because he had no practice. Hound knew better. He knew that magic itself resists untruth. Conjuring, sleight of hand, and false commerce with the dead are counterfeits of magic, glass to the diamond, brass to the gold. They are fraud, and lies flourish in that soil. But the art of magic, though it may be used for false ends, deals with what is real, and the words it works with are the true words. So true wizards find it hard to lie about their art. In their heart they know that their lie, spoken, may change the world..Edom's twin, Jacob, who had never held a job, lived in the second apartment. He'd been there since graduating from high school.."Then you only have to wait eighteen years," he said, opening the apartment door and stepping aside once more, allowing Celestina to precede him..Edom and Jacob arrived, dinner was served, and while the food was wonderful, the conversation was better-even though the twins occasionally shared their vast knowledge of train wrecks and deadly volcanic eruptions. Paul didn't contribute much to the talk, because he preferred to bask in it. If he hadn't known any of these people, if he had walked into the room while they were in the middle of dinner, he would have thought they were family, because the warmth and the intimacy-and in the twins' case, the eccentricity-of the conversation were not what he expected of such newly made friends. There was no pretense, no falsity, and no avoidance of any awkward subject, which meant there were sometimes tears, because the death of Reverend White was such a fresh wound in the hearts of those who loved him. But in the healing ways of women that remained mysterious to Paul even as he watched them do.The night that followed might as well have been a night in Hell, though a hell in which Satan provided an electrolytically balanced beverage..Gradually he grew calm. His great frosty exhalations diminished to a diaphanous dribble that evaporated two inches from his lips..Under other circumstances, Agnes might have blushed, but now her apparently irrational fear of too much life insurance had been vindicated..He had never associated Enoch Cain's dreaded Bartholomew with the disciple Bartholomew in Harrison White's sermon, which had been broadcast once in December '64, the month prior to Naomi's murder and again in January '65. Even now, with blood-scrawled-and-stabbed Bartholomew on the wall and with This Momentous Day before him in the brochure, Tom Vanadium couldn't quite make the connection. He strove to pull together the broken lengths in this chain of evidence, but they remained separated by one missing link..Posing as a counselor with Catholic Family Services, he phoned each listed Bartholomew, with a question related to his or her recent adoption. Those who expressed bafflement, and who claimed not to have adopted a child, were generally stricken from his list..Edom had turned away from the box of groceries that he was packing. Frowning at the pies, he said, "You don't think. . .Thus far, none of these women of mercy was as lovely as Victoria Bressler, the ice-serving nurse who was hot for him. Nevertheless, he kept looking and remained hopeful..As Lipscomb picked up the freshened baby, Grace said, "That was as effective as any minister's wife could've been with an impossible parishioner-and, oh, do I wish we could sometimes be that pointed." He had never expressed opposition to starting a family. She'd had no reason to fear telling him that she was carrying their child.."They've gone to bed. They're tired," Wally told her as he put the car in gear and released the hand brake. "Aren't you?" Surprisingly, he received a lot of gratification from voicing this insult, even though Vanadium was too dead to hear it..The popeyed little toad smirked over there on the far side of his pretentious desk.., Heart jumping like the heart of a fox-stalked rabbit, she ran from the driveway into the yard. She would have cried out if her throat hadn't seized up with terror at the sight of her boy at neck-breaking height. By the time she could speak, she realized that a shout, or even the unexpected sound of her plaintive voice, might unnerve him, cause him to misstep, and bring him caroming down, limb to limb, in a bone snapping plunge..Dropped cartridges gleamed on the carpet. Stoop to snatch them up? No. That was asking for a skull-cracking blow..Across the room, the girl on the window seat showed no awareness of his arrival. She sat sideways to him in

the niche, with her back against one wall, knees drawn up, a big sketch pad braced against her thighs, working intently with colored pencils. "It's a boy," Joey assured her, as though he had been given a vision. Thick blood sluiced across his lower lip, down his chin, bright arterial blood. "Baby, no," she pleaded. Friday morning, Junior resigned his position as a physical therapist at the rehabilitation hospital. He expected to be able to live well off interest and dividends for the rest of his life, because his tastes were modest. He was Father Tom again, having recommitted to his vows three years previous. At his request, the Church had assigned him as the chaplain of Pie Lady Services. Through the big window beyond her, the charry branches of the massive oak tree formed a black cat's cradle against the sky, leaves quivering slightly, as though nature herself trembled in trepidation of what Junior Cain might do. By the first of November, they moved his mother's bed into the living room, so she could be in the center of things, where always she had been, though they admitted no guests now, only members of their family with its many names. Onto its roof now, the Pontiac spun as it slid, grinding loudly against the blacktop, and regardless of how determinedly Agnes held on, she was being pulled out of her seat, toward the inverted ceiling and also backward. Her forehead knocked hard into the thin overhead padding, and her back wrenched against the headrest. But with the silencer attached, the pistol was useful only for close-up work. After passing through a sound-suppressor, the bullet would exit the muzzle at a lower than usual velocity, perhaps with an added wobble, and accuracy would drop drastically at a distance. "Nevertheless, even if Muffin assaulted you, she's otherwise such a sweet little thing. What would Maria think of you if you told her you'd smashed poor Muffin with a shovel?" The sign promised topless dancers. Although Junior had been in San Francisco for over a week, he had not yet sampled this avant-garde art form. The cop weighed too much to be carried any distance, the blanket proved effective, the decision to drag him was wise, and the whole process was value neutral.

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