

they said he was the worst scoundrel that ever lived and I'd find out someday to my regret. I was amused to hear them protest so much. Roy Johnson rose to the defense of the ladies and said he knew Dean better than anybody, and all Dean was, was just a very interesting and even amusing con-man. I went out to find Dean and we had a brief talk about it. "Ah, man, don't worry, everything is perfect and fine." He was rubbing his belly and licking his lips.

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The girls came down and we started out on our big night, once more pushing the car down the street. "Wheoo!! let's go!" cried Dean, and we jumped in the back seat and clanked to the little Harlem on Folsom Street.

Out we jumped in the warm, mad night, hearing a wild tenorman bawling horn across the way, going "EE-YAH EE-YAH! EE-YAH!" and hands clapping to the beat and folks yelling, "Go, go, go!" Dean was already racing across the street with his thumb in the air, yelling, "Blow, man, blow!" A bunch of colored men in Saturday-night suits were whooping it up in front. It was a sawdust saloon with a small bandstand on which the fellows huddled with their hats on, blowing over people's heads, a crazy place; crazy floppy women wandered around sometimes in their bathrobes, bottles clanked in alleys. In back of the joint in a dark corridor beyond the splattered toilets scores of men and women stood against the wall drinking wine-spodioidi and spitting at the stars—wine and whisky. The behatted tenorman was blowing at the peak of a wonderfully satisfactory free idea, a rising and falling riff that went from "EE-yah!" to a crazier "EE-de-lee-yah!" and blasted along to the rolling crash of butt-scarred drums hammered by a big brutal Negro with a bull-neck who didn't give a damn about anything but punishing his busted tubs, crash, rattle-ti-boom, crash. Uproars of music and the tenorman *had it* and everybody knew he had it. Dean was clutching his head in the crowd, and it was a mad crowd. They were all urging that tenorman to hold it and keep it with cries and wild eyes, and he was raising himself from a crouch and going down again with his horn, looping it up in a clear cry above the furor. A six-foot skinny Negro woman was rolling her bones at the man's hornbell, and he just jabbed it at her, "Ee! ee! ee!"

Everybody was rocking and roaring. Galatea and Marie

with beer in their hands were standing on their chairs, shaking and jumping. Groups of colored guys stumbled in from the street, falling over one another to get there. "Stay with it, man!" roared a man with a foghorn voice, and let out a big groan that must have been heard clear out in Sacramento, ah-haa! "Whoo!" said Dean. He was rubbing his chest, his belly; the sweat splashed from his face. Boom, kick, that drummer was kicking his drums down the cellar and rolling the beat upstairs with his murderous sticks, rattlety-boom! A big fat man was jumping on the platform, making it sag and creak. "Yool!" The pianist was only pounding the keys with spread-eagled fingers, chords, at intervals when the great tenorman was drawing breath for another blast—Chinese chords, shuddering the piano in every timber, chink, and wire, boing! The tenorman jumped down from the platform and stood in the crowd, blowing around; his hat was over his eyes; somebody pushed it back for him. He just hauled back and stamped his foot and blew down a hoarse, bawling blast, and drew breath, and raised the horn and blew high, wide, and screaming in the air. Dean was directly in front of him with his face lowered to the bell of the horn, clapping his hands, pouring sweat on the man's keys, and the man noticed and laughed in his horn a long quivering crazy laugh, and everybody else laughed and they rocked and rocked; and finally the tenorman decided to blow his top and crouched down and held a note in high C for a long time as everything else crashed along and the cries increased and I thought the cops would come swarming from the nearest precinct. Dean was in a trance. The tenorman's eyes were fixed straight on him; he had a madman who not only understood but cared and wanted to understand more and much more than there was, and they began dueling for this; everything came out of the horn, no more phrases, just cries, cries, "Baugh" and down to "Beep!" and up to "EEEE!" and down to clinkers and over to sideways-echoing horn-sounds. He tried everything, up, down, sideways, upside down, horizontal, thirty degrees, forty degrees, and finally he fell back in somebody's arms and gave up and everybody pushed around and yelled, "Yes! Yes! He blowed that one!" Dean wiped himself with his handkerchief.

Then up stepped the tenorman on the bandstand and asked for a slow beat and looked sadly out the open door over people's heads and began singing "Close Your Eyes." Things quieted down a minute. The tenorman wore a tattered suede jacket, a purple shirt, cracked shoes, and zoot

pants without press; he didn't care. He looked like a Negro Hassel. His big brown eyes were concerned with sadness, and the singing of songs slowly and with long, thoughtful pauses. But in the second chorus he got excited and grabbed the mike and jumped down from the bandstand and bent to it. To sing a note he had to touch his shoetops and pull it all up to blow, and he blew so much he staggered from the effect, and only recovered himself in time for the next long slow note. "Mu-u-usic pla-a-a-a-a-ay!" He leaned back with his face to the ceiling, mike held below. He shook, he swayed. Then he leaned in, almost falling with his face against the mike. "Ma-a-a-ake it dream-y for dan-cing"—and he looked at the street outside with his lips curled in scorn, Billie Holiday's hip sneer—"while we go ro-man-n-n-cing"—he staggered sideways—"Lo-o-o-ove's holid-a-a-ay"—he shook his head with disgust and weariness at the whole world—"Will make it seem"—what would it make it seem? everybody waited; he mourned—"Okay." The piano hit a chord. "So baby come on just clo-o-o-ose your pretty little ey-y-y-y-yes"—his mouth quivered, he looked at us, Dean and me, with an expression that seemed to say, Hey now, what's this thing we're all doing in this sad brown world?—and then he came to the end of his song, and for this there had to be elaborate preparations, during which time you could send all the messages to Garcia around the world twelve times and what difference did it make to anybody? because here we were dealing with the pit and prunejuice of poor beat life itself in the god-awful streets of man, so he said it and sang it, "Close—your—" and blew it way up to the ceiling and through to the stars and on out—"Ey-y-y-y-y-es"—and staggered off the platform to brood. He sat in the corner with a bunch of boys and paid no attention to them. He looked down and wept. He was the greatest.

Dean and I went over to talk to him. We invited him out to the car. In the car he suddenly yelled, "Yes! ain't nothin I like better than good kicks! Where do we go?" Dean jumped up and down in the seat, giggling maniacally. "Later! later!" said the tenorman. "I'll get my boy to drive us down to Jamson's Nook, I got to sing. Man, I live to sing. Been singin 'Close Your Eyes' for two weeks—I don't want to sing nothin else. What are you boys up to?" We told him we were going to New York in two days. "Lord, I ain't never been there and they tell me it's a real jumpin town but I ain't got no cause complain where I am. I'm married, you know."

"Oh yes?" said Dean, lighting up. "And where is the darling tonight?"

"What do you mean?" said the tenorman, looking at him out of the corner of his eye. "I tole you I was married to her, didn't I?"

"Oh yes, oh yes" said Dean. "I was just asking. Maybe she has friends? or sisters? A ball, you know, I'm just looking for a ball."

"Yah, what good's a ball, life's too sad to be ballin all the time," said the tenorman, lowering his eye to the street. "Shh-eee-it!" he said. "I ain't got no money and I don't care to-night."

We went back in for more. The girls were so disgusted with Dean and me for gunning off and jumping around that they had left and gone to Jamson's Nook on foot; the car wouldn't run anyway. We saw a horrible sight in the bar: a white hipster fairy had come in wearing a Hawaiian shirt and was asking the big drummer if he could sit in. The musicians looked at him suspiciously. "Do you blow?" He said he did, mincing. They looked at one another and said, "Yeah, yeah, that's what the man does, shhh-ee-it!" So the fairy sat down at the tubs and they started the beat of a jump number and he began stroking the snares with soft goofy bop brushes, swaying his neck with that complacent Reichianalyzed ecstasy that doesn't mean anything except too much tea and soft foods and goofy kicks on the cool order. But he didn't care. He smiled joyously into space and kept the beat, though softly, with bop subtleties, a giggling, rippling background for big solid foghorn blues the boys were blowing, unaware of him. The big Negro bullneck drummer sat waiting for his turn. "What that man doing?" he said. "Play the music!" he said. "What in hell!" he said. "Shh-ee-eet!" and looked away, disgusted.

The tenorman's boy showed up; he was a little taut Negro with a great big Cadillac. We all jumped in. He hunched over the wheel and blew the car clear across Frisco without stopping once, seventy miles an hour, right through traffic and nobody even noticed him, he was so good. Dean was in ecstasies. "Dig this guy, man! dig the way he sits there and don't move a bone and just balls that jack and can talk all night while he's doing it, only thing is he doesn't bother with talking, ah, man, the things, the things I could—I wish—oh, yes. Let's go, let's not stop—go now! Yes!" And the boy wound around a corner and bowled us right in front of Jamson's Nook and was parked. A cab pulled up; out of it jumped a skinny, withered little Negro preacherman who threw a dollar at the cabby and yelled, "Blow!" and ran into the club and dashed right through the downstairs bar, yelling, "Blowblowblow!"