The Prologue

to
Crescent Holy

Burnt Offering

a novel by
James Baldwin

(Final)
2— and damned himself for suggesting that

D. meet him here.

7— atmosphere a la Balme—

3— The desire to look up was burning.
First Sacrifice

by James Baldwin

Oh, wretched men that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

St. Paul

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.
Were anarchy is loosed upon the world.

W.B. Butler Yeats

VERIFIED.
I. Chapter.

Line 2 - suspended with the darkness. Then
Line 4 - the room settled.
Line 5 - the window reflected
Line 6 - divided from the building
Line 7 - the tinge, and the wind
Line 8 - shrouded by the night
Line 10 - it was quiet despite
Line 11 - struck in anger
Line 11 - possibly a blow which, in that
Line 13 - lonely
Line 14 - more strange, groping for
Line 15 - the light - awareness of some
Line 16 - dinning, cold & the darkness - (dumped out of sack?)

17 - he surrendered in a double robin
18 - porter... for it we & the wine
19 - barrier
When he awoke the room was dark. He lay on the bed for a moment, surprised at the darkness. Then he rose and went to the window and pulled up the shade.

The room was on a desolate section of Charles Street. The window faced the back of a deserted factory, divided from the building he was in by a small, dirty courtyard. By daylight the grimy, rust-red walls rose bleakly, shutting out the world. At night the factory was a huge, black wall, and the courtyard still and sullen, its hideousness covered by the night. It was quiet except for an occasional voice raised in anger, a laugh perhaps, or a curse, which, in that lonely place, split the air like lightning.

He switched on the light and blinked at the small clock on the mantel. It was nearly ten o'clock. He turned and entered the bathroom and began to wash. He had a date at eleven which he wished to keep.

He lived in a double room with a private bath. This, and an enormous double bed were the room's only assets, for it was otherwise bare; and of that peculiar, impersonal, and ancient ugliness achieved only by rooming houses. It cost seven dollars a week and he shared it with another boy by the name of Bill. Or rather Bill shared it with him; even in a section as decrepit as this it would have been almost impossible for him to have lived alone. Bill had rented the room stating only that he would be joined by a friend. When the landlady had seen Johnnie she had grown purple in the face and protested that she could not let Negroes live in her house; she would lose money, the tenants would object. She would be forced to call the police unless she
He stumbled out of bed and groped along blindly along the wall, seeking the light switch. Sweeping up, we had a momentary sensation of being dumped like a cat out of a burlap bag into the center of the room.

The clock's twisted face expressed itself in portentous terms by 10 P.M.

Fighting through the remaining haze of sleepless, he impelled himself into the bathroom to urinate impatiently. Waiting quickly or not too carefully he remembered the reason for this sudden haste at eleven which he wished to keep.
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was perfectly willing to go to court. Half the world, he told her, was engaged in a struggle ostensibly to prove that all men were equal.

"Besides..." Bill tapping the door-frame, malice mingling with rage. "there is no law in New York which states that A Negro may not live with the master race. A cat can look at a king and a king can have a cat if he wants one."

The landlady retreated, half-shamed, half-belligerent; in one breath denying that there was a prejudiced bone in her body and in the other vowing immediate vengeance.

It was good that she knew nothing about them. They could be thrown into jail tomorrow if she knew. Johnnie smiled wryly to himself, brushing his hair before the mirror. But Bill wasn’t obvious; he looked the most thoroughly masculine man on earth.

Himself, now. He was dark brown with a hint of copper shadowing faintly beneath the skin. His eyes were large and of a peculiar brown, at times seeming soft, almost translucent, and of incredible depth; at other times flat, hard, and nearly black. His hair, too, was black and kinky, rising in a widows peak from a high, spare forehead. The face was plain, there was something spinsterish and stiff-necked about it. Though he hardly looked more than his twenty one years, the face was indefinably worn. There were small lines—weariness—laughter—around the large, sensitive mouth. The eyes stared sombrely on a world of which he was at once weary, hopeful, and afraid.

He came back into the room and began to dress. He was thin, narrow-shouldered, slightly bow-legged. His body was comparatively short and looked as though it had been built to carry more weight. He should have been stocky with bones like that.

He was not in good health however, he had lost a great deal of weight in the preceding year.
"I look like a goddamn skeleton", he raged, struggling into his pants.
Dressed, he stared into the mirror. He decided to put on a different shirt and selected from the bureau drawer Bill's grey broadcloth. Grey shirt, maroon tie, blue suit. The suit needed cleaning, but the hell with that.

There was a square piece of paper pinned to the cloth on the top of the bureau. He stared at it in surprise, then picked it up. He read in Bill's angular, backhand script:

"Sir J. Crimes------

Didn't have the heart to wake you. You sleep so beautifully sprawled in sixteen different directions. I let you lay.

I am off to Chicago to swindle all the editors and my esteemed parents out of some cash. You don't catch me sleeping my life away.

I've paid the landlady already. If she raises any hell, just insist that you are my guest and can prove it. Keep your nose clean. I'll see you in a week.

Bill

P.S. Get a job, you lazy son of a bitch.

He put the note down, half smiling. Dammit, he'd better get a job, and soon. This living from hand to mouth was nowhere.

He surveyed himself once more, switched off the light, and left.

-2-

"I'm waiting for a friend," he told the waiter at Peters' Tavern. He sat in a booth at the back and spoke to the waiter with a wholly unreasonable annoyance devised to cover his self-consciousness.

The waiter left. He lit a cigarette and stared glumly into space. He was a damn fool to suggest meeting David here.
The tavern, one of the most popular night spots in the Village, had not yet hit its' Sunday night stride. In about an hour it would be packed to the doors. Now there were a few people standing at the bar, two or three couples seated quietly at tables. The lighting was dim (atmosphere) but that was just as well for Peters' Tavern undoubtedly had the most bilius night club murals in New York. He had met the man who conceived them---- a slightly mad, frustrated youth with curly hair, not without some suggestion of bilious sweetness.

The clock said ten minutes to eleven. He regretted again making this a meeting place and hoped that David would not be late. Across the room a sailor was staring at him and he hastily averted his eyes and took a deep, furious drag on his cigarette. That was the worst of coming into Peters' alone. They always thought..... he stole a quick glance at the sailor. The sailor was bending over his drink, but as though Johnnie's eyes were twin flashlights trained on his face, he looked up and their eyes met and held for the merest flicker of time. Then Johnnie looked away raging, his pounding chest encircled with white-hot steel. Goddamn.

He crushed out his cigarette and stared at the cheap oilcloth on the table. This is a dump, he thought. He wanted to look up but he was afraid of the sailor's eyes. Why was it two inverts almost immediately knew each other merely by the brief and most temulous contact afforded by the eyes? (Invert? Am I really an invert? he wondered; and laughed harshly, emptily; for of course he was.) There was nothing outwardly (often) to distinguish them from other men and women and most people were blind in that regard until the obvious was brought to their attention. He looked up (on a subway, in a store, on the street, here,) into the eyes of the football player, or the eyes of a businessman or the eyes of a schoolboy..... and his heart trembled, the world lurched. The eyes were stricken, were the eyes of a desperately wounded animal. Whether they assumed a mask of derision, or of hope, or of naiveté, or of ingenuousness; or whether they were black, blue,
stole a brief glance at the sailor. The sailor was bending over his drink, but as though Johnnie's eyes were twin flashlights trained on his face, he looked up and their eyes met and held for the merest flicker of time. Then Johnnie looked away raging, his pounding chest encircled with white-hot steel. Goddamn.

He crushed out his cigarette and stared at the cheap oilcloth on the table. This is a dump, he thought. The desire to look up was brain-splitting, but he was afraid of the sailors eyes. Why was it two inverts almost immediately knew each other merely by the brief and most tenuous contact afforded by the eyes? (Invert? Am I truly an invert? he wondered; and laughed harshly; for of course he was) There was nothing outwardly (often) to distinguish an invert from other men and women and most people were complacently unconscious until the obvious forced itself to their horrified, curious, or indignant attention. He looked up (on a subway, in a store, on the street, here,) into the eyes of the football player, or the eyes of a businessman, or the eyes of a schoolboy.... and his heart thundered, the world lurched. The eyes w
grey, green, or brown; even the hardest eyes, the most insensitive, the least perceptive, were the eyes of men who had watched their blood run out of them.

Oh, Christ, this was nowhere. If only... he buried his face in his hands, looked up, lit a cigarette. He was aware of the sailor, still watching. Oh my God, why? He was a handsome boy, too, blonde, well-built. Oh Christ. If the sailor came over... and if David didn't hurry, he would.

He was being stupid. He was acting like a goddamn fool. What was all this fuss about? They were two people and they wanted each other, and why the hell not? He wasn't so irresistible that he could start a morality swindle now. If he didn't pick up on this now somebody else would and soon too and it would serve him damn well right.

Still, though the air between the sailor and himself seemed shot with fire, he gave no sign. Soon, he knew, David would walk in (shouldn't he have told him to meet me here...?) and the sailor would be forced to cruise something else. Then (as he chatted merrily with David) he would see out of the corner of his eye the sailor and someone else and after awhile a test-a-tete at the sailors table. He'd leave the sailor there, or the sailor would leave first, and he'd say good-bye to David at the subway station and go home alone.

At that, he was luckier now than he had been. Now, at least there was Bill... and Bill was a handsome fellow. Tall, dark-haired, and gray-eyed with heavy eyebrows, straight mouth and cleft chin. A wag referred to him once, unjustly, as the 'hoboes Cary Grant.' But Bill was not at home often, he was either away ad nauseam, or he went off with someone else. It was all very high-minded and very free and he knew that Bill was as fond of him as he was of anyone; it was ridiculous for him to even think of trying to curtail Bill's freedom... ("Being your slave what should I do but tend Upon the times and hours of your desire.") he smiled sourly at the quotation.
But what did he want? He was small, scrawny, plain, and worn. No face, no body. ("Johnnie's gonna be a smart boy when he grows up," his mother used to say...... defensively?

"Ugliest chile I ever did see! I bet that's the ugliest ol' boy in the world," his father had laughed.)

He laughed too... a short, hard laugh that was more like a cry. He lit another cigarette.

Twenty-one. Free(Nah!| Black (in love, yes!) and twenty-one.

He looked up and saw David coming towards him.

-D-

"David!" he cried.

The sailor looked up briefly, looked away. Johnnie stretched out his hand.

"Jesus Christ, boy, I'm glad to see you! Well, you're a corporal, now..." Suddenly he was very happy. As he grasped his friend's hand he made a pretense of being about to swoon at the sight of so much glory.

"Sit down-- gee! Oh David, I'm so glad you're here! How've you been? Do you like it at all? Here, give me your cap. My God, your head is as small as a peanut." He tried on the cap and laughed.

David watched him. He had in his manner a suggestion of a father watching the reaction of a delightfully unpredictable child to a new and complex toy.

He was a Negro of a richer, darker coloring than Johnnie, and with a long, thin body; sturdy, however, and well-built. His face was thin with large, mouth and wide lips. His nose, long and straight, with straight flaring nostrils was oddly fascinating in so dark a face, giving it a look of arrogant, deadly hauteur. He had the face of an ancient king. He could have been a Pharaoh, a carnal and lustful King Solomon, a beautiful, proud King David. His eyes were tar-black and brilliant as were the eyebrows arching above them and the hair
trained back from the high, narrow forehead. The eyes seemed always either amused or disinterested; not an affectation either. Johnnie was aware of this and this peculiarity had always fascinated him. And there had been a time when he had tried to emulate David in regard to his eyes.

"Christ, it's good to see you!" David said.

"It's good to see you." They stared at each other, grinned.

David said: "It's been a long time."

"Nearly four years," Johnnie said.

The waiter approached them. David looked up.

"I'm having Scotch with a beer chaser, you, Johnnie?"

"Make it two," Johnnie said.

The waiter left. Johnnie saw the sailor finish his drink, motion to the waiter for another. He turned to David.

"So you've taken up Scotch?" he said. "The army's really done things for you."

"Aw, man," David said with a grin, "I'm just startin' to have some fun."

Johnnie's smile faded slowly. "That's a good idea," he said, not sounding as though he meant it.

The waiter brought their order. Johnnie stared at the beer and whiskey.

"It took us four years," he said, "to get around to drinkin' together. You know that's a damn shame? What a lot of time we wasted."

"Let's make up for it," David said. He raised his glass. "Here's to you, you no good bastard."

Johnnie bowed. "To you," he said. They drank.

Now his heart was light with happiness and he forgot about every thing but David. He stared at him across the table and laughed out of the sheer joy of seeing his long absent comrade once more. He leaned over and took his hand.
"Jesus Christ, David, you don't know how glad I am to see you."

David looked slightly embarrassed, grinned back at his friend. By

They gripped hands hard.

(The sailor was looking around the room. He told himself he didn't care.
Be had to get out of this anyway, find a woman somehow. If David had any idea--)

"Tell me about yourself," he said. "Tell me everything that's happened to you."

"Oh it's not much to tell," David said. "You know the army."

"Do you like it?" Johnnie asked.

David looked at him scornfully out of the side of his eyes, made

a rude, spitting sound.

"I didn't think so," Johnnie said. "Where are you stationed now?"

"Little hell-hole down in Mississippi. Man, the south ain't no place for a nigger."

"Anything happen to you?"

"No... Just a couple word fights with some of them damn

crackers," David grinned. "We almost had a riot once. It must be a visit."

Johnnie said.

"What happened?"

"Oh, some guy from Georgia started shootin' his mouth off.

you know that ol' joke about the ofay who comes to a northern restaurant an' asks for the head nigger? Well, he started that routine so one of our boys knocked him on his ass. Damn cracker tried to get some of his friends to jump the guy but we heard about it an' we were ready. " He laughed. "Man, if those white mother-lovers woulda tried anything there'd a been a lot of dead crackers in Mississippi."

"A lot of dead niggers, too," Johnnie said.

"Yeah, man, but you might as well be dead as take that crap

they try to hand you down there. Tell you Johnnie I ain't gonna let no man walk over me." He finished his beer. "'Sall no."

Johnnie stared into his glass, looked idly around the room. It
was filling up. The sailor got up, went to the mens room. Johnnie fidgeted. The place was close.

David thought: Christ, the kid doesn't look well. He's lost weight, he thought, I wonder when he ate last? Living down here like this must be pretty tough. He stared at Johnnie's face, filled in this dim light, with heavy shadows. I gotta give him some money before I go, he decided. Can't let my boy starve.

"How's your folks, Johnnie?" he asked.

Johnnie looked up, smiling. "Oh, they're fine," he said. He paused. "I haven't seen much of them," he said. "My father isn't very well."

"No? I thought your dad was built to last forever. What's the matter?"

Johnnie smiled again, a hard, deliberate, spiteful smile. He offered David a cigarette, lit it, lit his own, and blew a cloud of smoke through his nostrils.

"I don't know," he said. His voice was strangely triumphant, and pulsed with bitterness. "I guess the Lord is gonna take him home to his eternal rest. It'll be good to think of my dad in heaven.... as long as I make sure to stay out of the blessed place."

David frowned. "Is he home, or in the hospital?"


David reached over and took his hand. "Take it easy, ol' man," he said. "He can't hurt you anymore."

Johnnie stared at him for a moment, wide-eyed, open mouthed. Then he began to laugh, a rasping almost hysterical sound that splintered the air like points of cracking ice. "Can't hurt me anymore!" he gasped. The sailor came out of the mens room, glanced briefly in his direction, walked, with a slow, rolling gait to his table and sat down. Johnnie strangled the last sound of laughter in his throat, rub bad his hand across his forehead, a habit of his
"Let's have another drink," he said to David.

"Right," David said quickly. He looked around for the waiter. "He'll be here in a second," he said. "How's Roy?"

"Oh, Roy's fine," Johnnie said. "He's in New Jersey, working for a contractor who's building a Quartermaster Depot."

"Two more of the same," David told the waiter. He turned back to Johnnie. "How's he doin' out there? Does he like it?"

"He seems to," Johnnie said. "From what he writes me he hardly does anything. He's living in some fantastic house near Princeton with a lot of other people."

"Do you see him often?"

"I saw him about three weeks ago. I might go out there. It'd be one way of bein' deferred. I may be if we get into this mess an' they start draftin' the young guys."

"Think we'll get into this mess?" David asked.

"Sure we'll be in it," Johnnie said. "It may take a while, but we'll hit it. We're bound to."

"Well," David said, "it ain't reached America yet."

"No, but it will," Johnnie said soberly. "There's gonna be the Devil to pay."

The waiter brought the drinks. David stared into his glass.

"Seems like every nation in the world is out for the other guys' skin," he said. "Everybody, everywhere. Today you win, tomorrow I win... hell, the worlds so big. Seems like people ought to be able to get along in it."

"People are afraid of each other," Johnnie said. "You can't get along with people you're afraid of."

David continued, frowning. "Man, I just enlisted in the army to get away from all that crap in the church. If I'd thought about it..." He broke off, playing with the still untouched drink. He raised his glass. "To you," he said.
They touched glasses. "To you," Johnnie said. They drank.

"How's Sylvia?" David asked abruptly.

"She's still away," Johnnie said. "I wondered when you were gonna ask that.

"No better?" David asked.

"Hell, no," Johnnie said. They sat in silence for awhile.

"You know that's a goddamn shame," David said. "A goddamn shame. I was really in love with that girl." He stared down at the table, playing with the empty whiskey glass.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciple," Johnnie quoted wryly.

"We put iron bands around our souls," David said slowly.

"Damn if we didn't," Johnnie said.

They were both silent, each thinking the same thing. Four years, they were thinking: four years out of our lives. Four long, praying, mourning years. And the years before that had made those years possible... am I really out of it? Is it really over? Each wondered, each feared. Iron bands around our souls, David had said. Had the bands been broken? Were they free?

"Every time I go uptown," Johnnie said suddenly, "'an' pass one of those churches, an' hear the singing.... the tambourine ah' the piano, you know.... a high time in Zion as we used to say .... man, I wanna go inside so bad. Just to belong and to feel safe again. It was so safe there, David. No matter what happened the Lord was on your side.... you know what I mean? Nothin' could go wrong. You just prayed ah' kept right on prayin', an' if you didn't have a penny in your pocket you got up feelin' like.... like you owned the world. You know?" He laughed, looked down at the table. David nodded gravely.

"Yet even when I wanna go inside most, I know I can't. I know it's over and I can't go back. " His voice throbbed; there was in it a helpless, bewildered, groping quality; and yet an undertone of mocking resentment and bitterness. His eyes searched David's face.
"I know," David said helplessly. "Be damned if I haven't felt it too."

"I feel so alone. Even if I go back I know I can't stay. There's no possible reconciliation between what's in my brain and what's in my heart. And it's cowardice, too. The world is more than I expected and I'm afraid. And yet...." He broke off.

"You know," he said finally, "living down here is fine except I keep wishing.... well, that I could see you or someone like you." He looked up and laughed. "Hell, someone black. All my friends are fine," he added, "I couldn't ask for better friends. Still when my Jewish friends get together and talk about bar mitzvah and the high holidays... there's nonne I can talk to about the church and the songs we sang.... not that it's really important," he added more rationally. "It doesn't really matter. Just that I'm out of Harlem and out of the groove I was brought up in. There's no one who remembers the things I remember. And I can't go back. Really don't want to go back, I guess." He smiled at David. "That's one of the reasons it's so good to see you."

David frowned. "You can't keep livin' in the past," he said. "What's big as a mountain today you can't even see tomorrow. I know how you feel," he said. "I feel the same thing. You probably feel the same thing more, because you think more about it." He grinned. "I'm just an average guy. I want a wife and kids someday. You...."

"You think I don't want a wife an' kids?" Johnnie asked. "He stared at him. "I want everything you want," he said.

"I know," David said. "What I mean is, you're gonna see so much more than me. You're gonna live so much more alone. Not many people have any respect for a guy who just wants to be left alone with his paper or his ink." He shrugged, "You know," he said slowly, "I guess the difference between us and other minor ities is..... well, take a Jew now, his background, his culture, is so much broader, so much stronger, that in itself, it'd a threat to the guys on top. But a nigger..... hell, as long as a nigger stays on his knees, stays in the church, the big boys got nothin' against him. He's safe. He's a good nigger. That's why some black men gotta leave the churches and that's why it's
hard on him if he does. I don't mean our particular church alone. The whole God-ridden morality of the race."

"It's just an extension of the false morality of our time," Johnnie said. "The whole swindle of a personal, vengeful God and a national honor..... national honor, as though honor could be limited to a nation and leading, if you watch it in operation, to the most awful dishonor; look at the history of the British Empire for example. And all the private and personal perversions which are begotten in a sense by this corruption in high places. The whole disgusting dishonesty about sex...." He tapped his glass on the table cloth. "All of mankind is split with fear," he said haltingly, with the air of one who suddenly realizes that he has spoken at length and not badly, and fears to seem dogmatic. "The pity is... there's nothing to be afraid of."

He stopped completely and dropped his eyes; idly made circles on the table cloth.

(Nothing to be afraid of! Grimes, the lion-hearted. My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart .......
Nothing to be afraid of .......
I'm not afraid. I swear I'm not afraid-!
Ha! He says he's not afraid!

Sissey!
Speak up boy. You're not afraid of me, are you?
No sir.
Are you?
Just a big, buck-eyed coward, that's all.
Speak up! You're not afraid of me, are you?
No sir.
Speak up!
No sir.....
You're not afraid.....
SPEAK UP.
No sir.
Sissy! Sissy! Sissy!
The voices of his childhood, leaping at him, stinging him, retreating into outer darkness, screaming. (laughing)
(Sissy!
Ho, ho! He says he's not afraid!)
The tavern swooped, screamed back into focus.
The sailor's eyes were watching someone else.
"Let's get out of here," he said to David.
"Yeah, I'm hungry," David said.
They paid the bill and tipped the waiter and left.

"Any ol' chicks down here?" David asked later.
"Oh sure," Johnnie said brightly.
"I'd like to find me a mellow, white chick," David said. He grinned.
Johnnie winked lewdly. "See what I can do," he said.
"How do you make out?" David asked.
"Oh... alright. I lived with a white girl for about a year."
"Yeah? Well, what do you know, man? Still see her?"
"No," Johnnie said.
I haven't seen her in nearly eight months.
I'm sorry, Johnnie. It's all over.
I never did mean much to you, did I? You just wanted to see what a black man was like.
Johnnie please....
Get out, get out, you fuckin' whore....!
"Think you could introduce me to something?" David asked.
"I'll try," Johnnie said. "Tonight?"
"No, I gotta go home tonight. I'll see you next week before I go."
"O.K." Johnnie said.

Home alone that night he dreamed about his father.

He was running down one-hundred and thirty-fourth street, the block on which he had been living the time he and Roy had run away. The street was covered with snow. He was frightened and almost crying. He passed the garage on the block and an enormous truck rolled out just as he passed nearly knocking him down.

Although he knew it was himself, he looked different. He was white, white with the whiteness of flour and water, and curly-haired. He was dragged in rags and was very cold.

A long subway train came rolling down the street towards him and Roy stuck his head out of the window and the air was filled with Roy whispering, "Come on, he can't hurt you...." The wind took up the sound and echoed it.

He screamed and kept on running. The buildings (the brownstone mansions of his childhood) rose into the air and closed out the sky. He was lost in a deep valley of high buildings. They wavered and grew and reared; they leaned as if to crush him. The sky was black; (what he could see of it beyond the highest building) there was thunder without a sound, lightning without sight. His body ran with sweat, a thousand drums pounded in his head, a thousand tambourines cried triumph, ten thousand voices cried, hosannas to the King. "Holy!" they cried, "Holy! Hosanna to the the Lord God Almighty!"

This he knew but could not hear. They were within his narrow body, churning his blood, straining his eyes to the brilliance of mazda lamps. Sister Gaddy cried, "Save him! Save him, Lord!

A thousand fingers pointed at him, the
fingers of the church. David grovelled on his knees before a golden calf. His face was green-grey; he wept and howled, "Oh Lord, my God, oh Lord." Roy stood over him, bent double with laughter. "Children," their mother said in a worried tone, "now children...." Lois danced naked before the King, holding a tambourine high above her head. She turned, one leg bent at the knee, and screamed at him, "Unclean! Unclean!" The others took up the cry, "Unclean! Infidel! Heretic! Let him be crucified," they cried. His father, though he did not see his father, clapped his hands and cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" A tall, thin man threw something at him; it hit his head and he fell to the ground, sobbing. "Get up," the man whispered, "get up!" There were three bright coins lying beneath his eyes. He put his hand out for them. He picked up a quarter and two dimes. The man started laughing and Johnnie (not Johnnie) tried to throw away the coins but they stuck and melted and dripped. He tried to rub them off, in desperation he rubbed his hands over his body, and they laughed: "Unclean! Unclean!" David's face, enormous, a close-up in a movie, came up to him, laughing. "Don't you miss sittin' down?" He picked up an icepick and struck at the face. The icepick sank into the eye. Laughing the face fell back, David's face no longer, the eyes of a sailor with blond hair under his white cap. The sailor lay at his feet covered with blood.

He saw suddenly that he was alone. He looked about him for escape but the buildings seemed to be drawing closer together. He stared paralyzed into eyes from a bedroom window which said, "Come on, he can't hurt you...." He started to run, and suddenly there was a sound, louder than any sound had ever been before, of a door-lock snapping open. He turned and faced his father. His father said: "What's the matter, boy?"

He stared into his father's face. His father beckoned him to come. "I won't hurt you," he said. Johnnie turned back to the eyes which said, "Come on, he can't hurt you...." He began to run, to run from his father, and his father shouted after him, and once again the air was filled with whispers, the
sky buildings rose and watched, and the sky was black and there were footsteps heavy behind him. The buildings were forming an ever narrowing cage, but he had to escape, he had to, he cried out to the wind for deliverance, but there were only the whispers, he could no longer understand what the whispers portended. He ran with his father behind him. ("Daddy, daddy, please daddy!") He could not see the waverings buildings for his tears, and the footsteps were heavy, and close, close, closer yet behind him.

He awoke with his bedclothes wringing wet and twisted round his body and saw the morning bravely attempting entrance into his room at the back of Charles Street.