

NARRATOR: Welcome to By Mouth...bringing classic plays to sonic life...in their essence.

By Mouth presents: The Emperor Jones by author Eugene O'Neill.

The year: 1900.

The setting: A remote island in the West Indies.

On high ground in front of a vista of distant hills--their summits crowned with giant palms--sits a palace.

Inside, is a spacious, high-ceilinged room with white-washed walls and a floor of sparkling white tiles.

The room is bare except for a huge wooden throne painted red standing at the center. On the seat is a brilliant orange cushion--below it, a matching footstool.

A train of orange matting leads from the throne left to a wide archway opening out onto a portico with white pillars--and right to a smaller arched doorway leading to the living quarters of the palace.

A barefooted, old native woman, a cloth bundle over her shoulder, sneaks in cautiously from the living quarters. Hesitating beside the doorway, she peers back as if in extreme dread of being discovered. Then, moving noiselessly, a step at a time, she's about to make her exit through the wide archway when SMITHERS appears from behind a pillar.

SMITHERS [Tightening his grasp--roughly]: Easy now! None o' vat, me birdie. You can't wriggle out now. I got me 'ooks on yer.

NARRATOR: A small Cockney man with a huge bald head like an egg, he's dressed in a dirty white riding suit with spurs--and a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is around his waist.

OLD WOMAN [Seeing the uselessness of struggling, gives way to frantic terror, and sinks to the ground, embracing his knees]: Please no tell him! No tell him, Mister!

SMITHERS [With great curiosity]: Tell 'im? [Then scornfully.] Ow, you mean 'is bloomin' Majesty. [Pause] What's the gaime, any 'ow? What are you sneakin' away

39 for? Been stealin' a bit, I s'pose. [He taps her bundle
40 with his riding whip.]

41 OLD WOMAN: No, me no steal.

42 SMITHERS: Bloody liar! There's somethin' funny goin' on.
43 I smelled it the first thing I got up this mornin'. You
44 blacks are up to some devilment. This palace of 'is is
45 like a bleedin' tomb. Where's all the 'ands? [The woman
46 keeps sullenly silent.] Ow, yer won't, won't yer? I'll
47 show yer what's what.

48 OLD WOMAN [Coweringly]: I tell, Mister--you no hit.
49 They go--all go. To the hills.

50 SMITHERS: Run away--to the 'ills?

51 OLD WOMAN: Yes, Mister. Him Emperor--Great Father.
52 Him sleep after eat. Then they go--all go. Me old woman.
53 Me left only. Now me go too.

54 SMITHERS [astonishment giving way to an immense, mean
55 satisfaction]: Ow! So vat's the ticket! Well, I know
56 bloody well wot's in the air--when they runs orf to the
57 'ills. The tom-tom 'll be thumping out there bloomin'
58 soon. [With extreme vindictiveness.] And I'm bloody glad
59 of it, for one! Serves 'im right! Puttin' on airs, the
60 bloody dorkie! 'Is Majesty! Gawd blimey! I only 'opes
61 I'm there when they takes 'im out to shoot 'im.
62 [Suddenly.] 'E's still 'ere all right, ain't 'e?

63 OLD WOMAN: Yes. Him sleep.

64 SMITHERS: 'E's bound to find out soon as 'e wakes up.
65 'E's cunning enough to know when 'is time's come.
66 [He whistles shrilly--fingers in his mouth.]

67 NARRATOR: The old woman springs to her feet and bolts
68 for the exit. Smithers goes after her, reaching for his
69 revolver.

70 SMITHERS: Stop or I'll shoot! [Then stopping--
71 indifferently.] Ok, pop orf then, if yer like, yer
72 black cow.

73 NARRATOR: BRUTUS JONES enters from the right. He's a
74 tall, powerfully-built, black man of middle age. His
75 eyes are alive with a keen intelligence. He wears a
76 light blue uniform coat with brass buttons, heavy gold
77 chevrons on his shoulders, gold braid on the collar and
78 cuffs--and his pants are bright red with a light blue

79 stripe down the side. Patent-leather laced boots with
80 brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-
81 handled revolver in a holster complete his make-up.

82 On not seeing anyone, Jones--who blinks sleepily--grows
83 greatly irritated.

84 JONES [shouts]: Who dare whistle that way in my palace?
85 Who dare wake up the Emperor? I'll have the hide fraveled
86 off some o' you niggahs!

87 SMITHERS [Showing himself--in a manner half-afraid and
88 half-defiant]: It was me whistled to yer.

89 JONES [grunts angrily]: Huh.

90 SMITHERS: I got news for yer.

91 JONES [Putting on his suavest manner, which fails to
92 cover up his contempt for the white man]: Oh, it's you,
93 Smithers. [He sits down on his throne with easy
94 dignity.] What news've you got to tell me?

95 SMITHERS [Coming close to enjoy Jones discomfiture]:
96 Don't yer notice nothin' funny today?

97 JONES [Coldly]: Funny? No. I ain't noticed nothin' o'
98 the kind!

99 SMITHERS: Then yer ain't so foxy as I thought yer was.
100 Where's all your court? [Sarcastically.] The Generals
101 and the Cabinet Ministers and all?

102 JONES [Imperturbably]: Where they always runs the minute
103 I close my eyes--drinkin' rum and talkin' big down in
104 the town. [Sarcastically.] How come you don't know that?
105 Ain't you down there sousin' with 'em almost every day?

106 SMITHERS [Stung but feigning indifference with a wink]:
107 That's part of me day's work. I gottter--ain't I--
108 in my business?

109 JONES [Contemptuously]: Your business!

110 SMITHERS [Imprudently enraged]: Gawd blimey, you was
111 glad enough for me ter take yer in on it when ya firs'
112 landed here. You didn' 'ave no 'igh and mighty airs in
113 them days!

114 JONES [His hand going to his revolver like a flash--
115 menacingly]: Talk polite, white man! Talk polite, you
116 hear? I'm boss here now, don't you go forgettin'?

SMITHERS [About to challenge this last statement with the facts]: Are ya... [But then thinks better of it--in a cowardly whine] I mean--no 'arm meant, old top.

JONES [Condescendingly]: I accept your apology. [Lets his hand fall from his revolver.] No use rakin' up ole times. What I was then is one thing. What I is now's another. You didn't let me in on your crooked work out o' kind feelin's. I done yer dirty work for ya--and most o' the brain work, too, for that matter--and I was worth money to ya, that's the reason.

SMITHERS: Well, blimey, I give yer a start, didn't I--when no one else would. I wasn't afraid to 'ire you like the rest were--'count of the story about your breakin' jail back in the States.

JONES: No, you didn't have no s'cuse to look down on me for that. You been in jail yourself more than once.

SMITHERS [Furiously]: 'At's a lie! [Then trying to pass it off with scorn.] Garn! Who told yer vat fairy tail?

JONES: There are some things I ain't got to be told. I can see 'em in folk's eyes. [Then after a pause--meditatively.] Yes, you ga'me a start alright. But it didn't take me long to get these fool woods' niggahs right where I wanted 'em. [With pride.] From stowaway to Emperor in two years! That's goin' somewheres!

SMITHERS [With curiosity]: And I bet you got yer pile o' money 'id safe some place.

JONES [With satisfaction]: I sure do! And it's in a foreign bank where no person will ever get it out but me. You don't s'pose I been holdin' down this Emperor job for the glory of it, do ya? Sure, the fuss and glory part of it, that's only to turn the heads o' the low-flung, bush niggahs 'round here. They want a big circus show for their money. I give it to 'em--an' I get the money. [With a grin.] The long green, that's me every time! [Then rebukingly.] But you ain't got no kick against me, Smithers. I've paid you back all you done for me many times. Ain't I protected you and winked at all the crooked tradin' you been doin' right out in broad daylight? Sure I have and me makin' laws to stop it at the same time! [He chuckles.]

SMITHERS [Grinning]: But, meanin' no 'arm, you been grabbin' right and left yerself, ain't yer? Look at the taxes you've put on 'em! Blimey! You've squeezed 'em dry!

JONES [Chuckling]: No, they ain't all dry yet. I'm still here, ain't I?

SMITHERS [A smiling, whispered aside]: They're dry al'right, you'll find out. [Changing the subject abruptly.] And as for me breakin' laws, you've broke 'em all yerself just as fast as yer made 'em.

JONES: Ain't I the Emperor? The laws don't apply to me. [Judicially.] You hear what I'm telling you, Smithers. There's little stealin' like you do, and there's big stealin' like I do. For the little stealin' they puts you in jail sooner or later. For the big stealin' they make you Emperor and put you in the Hall o' Fame when you croak. [Reminiscently.] If there's one thing I learned in ten years on the Pullman cars listenin' to white men talk, it's that's very fact. And when I got a chance to use it, I wind up Emperor in two years.

SMITHERS [with genuine admiration for the small fry]: Yes, yer turned the bleedin' trick, all right. Blimey, I never seen a bloke 'as 'ad the bloomin' luck you 'as.

JONES [Severely]: Luck? What do you mean luck?

SMITHERS: I s'pose you'll say vat business about the silver bullet ain't luck--and vat was what first got the fool blacks on yer side the time o' the revolution, weren't it?

JONES [With a laugh]: Oh, that silver bullet! Sure, that was luck! But I made that luck, you hear? I loaded the dice! Yes sir! When that murderin' niggah Lem hired to kill me takes aim ten feet away and his gun misfires and I shoot him dead, what did you hear me say?

SMITHERS: You said yer'd got a charm so's no lead bullet'd kill yer. You was so strong only a silver bullet could kill yer, you told 'em. Blimey, wasn't that swank for yer--an' plain, fat--headed luck?

JONES [Proudly]: I got brains and I used 'em quick. That ain't luck.

SMITHERS: Yer know they wasn't 'ardly liable to get no silver bullets. And it was luck 'e didn't 'it you that time.

JONES [Laughing]: And there all o' them fool, bush niggahs was kneelin' down and bumpin' their heads on the ground like I was a miracle out o' the Bible. Oh Lord, from that time on I had 'em all eatin' out of my hand. I cracked the whip and they jumped through.

SMITHERS [With a sniff]: Yankee bluff done it.

JONES: Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big-- long as he makes folks believe it. Sure, I talked big when I didn't have nothin' to back it up, but I weren't talkin' wild just the same. I knew I could fool 'em-- I knew it--and that's backin enough for my game. And didn't I learn their lingo and teach some o' them English so I could talk to 'em? Ain't that work? You ain't never learned a word of it, Smithers, in the ten years you been here, even though you know it's money in your pocket tradin' with 'em if you do. But you're too shiftless to take the trouble.

SMITHERS [Flushing with anger]: Never mind about me. What's this I've 'eard about yer really 'avin' a silver bullet moulded for yourself?

JONES: It's playin' out my bluff. I had the silver bullet molded and I told 'em: when the time comes, I'll kill myself with it. I told 'em that 'cause I'm the only man in the world big enough to get me. No use in their tryin'. And falling down and bumping their heads. [He laughs.] I did that so's I can take a walk in peace without no jealous niggah gunnin' at me from behind the trees.

SMITHERS [Astonished]: Then you 'ad it made--'onest?

JONES: Sure I did. I've got 'er right here.

NARRATOR: He takes out his revolver, breaks it, and takes the silver bullet out of one chamber.

JONES: Five lead ones an' this silver baby for the last. Don't she shine pretty?

SMITHERS: Let me see.

JONES [Harshly]: Keep your hands where they belong, white man.

NARRATOR: He replaces the bullet in the chamber and puts the revolver back on his hip.

SMITHERS [Snarling]: Gawd blimey! Think I'm a bleedin' thief, do yer?

JONES: No, it ain't that. I know you're too scared to steal from me. Only I ain't allowin' nobody to touch this baby. She's my rabbit's foot.

SMITHERS [Sneering]: A bloomin' charm, wot? [Venomously.] Well, you'll need all the bloody charms you 'as before long, s' 'elp me!

JONES [Judicially]: Oh, I'm good for six months yet before they get sick o' my game. Then, when I see trouble comin'...

SMITHERS: You got it all planned--ain't yer?

JONES: I ain't no fool. I know this Emperor's time is short. That's why I make hay when the sun shines. Were you thinkin' I was aimin' to hold down this job for life? No, sir! What good is gettin' money if you stay in this raggedy country? I want action when I spend it. And when I see these niggahs gettin' up their nerve to turn me out, and I've got all the money in sight, I'll resign on the spot and beat it--quick.

SMITHERS: Where to?

JONES: None o' your business.

SMITHERS: Not back to the bloody States, I'll lay me bet.

JONES [Suspiciously]: Why don't I? [Then with an easy laugh.] You mean on account of that story 'bout me breakin' from jail back there? That's all talk.

SMITHERS [Skeptically]: Ho, yes!

JONES [Sharply]: You ain't insinuatin' I'm a liar, are ya?

SMITHERS [Hastily]: No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States.

JONES [Angered]: How come they're lies?

SMITHERS: You'd 'a' been in jail if you 'ad, wouldn't yer then? [With venom.] And from what I've 'eard,

it ain't 'ealthy for a black to kill a white man in the States. They burns 'em in oil, don't they?

JONES [With cool deadliness]: You think lynchin' 'd scare me? Well, I tell ya, Smithers, maybe I did kill one white man back there. Maybe I did. And maybe I'll kill another right here before long if he don't look out.

SMITHERS [Trying to force a laugh]: I was on'y spoofin' yer. Can't yer take a joke? You was just sayin' you'd never been in jail.

JONES [In the same tone--slightly boastful]: Maybe they jailed me for gettin' in an argument with razors over a crap game. Maybe they give me twenty years when that colored man died. Maybe I got into another argument with the prison guard who was over us when we're workin' the roads. Maybe he hits me with a whip and I split his head with a shovel and run away and file the chain off my leg and get away safe. Maybe I did all that. An' maybe I didn't. It's a story I tell you so you know I'm the kind of man that if you ever repeat one word of it, I will end your stealin' on this earth mighty damn quick!

SMITHERS [Terrified]: Think I'd peach on yer? Not me! Ain't I always been yer friend?

JONES [Suddenly relaxing]: Sure you have--and you better be.

SMITHERS [Recovering his composure--and with it his malice]: And just to show yer I'm yer friend, I'll tell yer that bit o' news I was goin' to.

JONES : Go ahead! Shoot. Must be bad news from the happy way you look.

SMITHERS [Warningly]: Maybe it's gettin' time for you to resign--with that bloomin' silver bullet, wot?

JONES [Puzzled]: What's that you say? Talk plain.

SMITHERS: Ain't noticed any of the guards or servants about the place today, I 'aven't.

JONES [Carelessly]: They're all out in the garden--sleepin' under the trees. When I sleep, they sneak a sleep, too, and I pretend I don't notice. All I got to do is to ring the bell and they all come flyin', makin' as if they was workin' all the time.

SMITHERS [In the same mocking tone]: Ring the bell now
an' you'll bloody well see what I means.

JONES [Startled to alertness, but preserving the same
careless tone]: Sure I'll ring.

NARRATOR: He reaches below the throne and pulls out a
big, common dinner bell, which he proceeds to ring
vigorously.

Then he goes to both doors, rings again, and listens.

SMITHERS [With salicious satisfaction, after a pause--
mockingly]: The bloody ship is sinkin' an' the bleedin'
rats 'as slung their 'ooks.

NARRATOR: In a sudden fit of anger, Jones flings the
bell clattering into a corner.

JONES Low-flung, woods' niggahs! [Then catching
Smithers' eye on him, he controls himself and suddenly
bursts into a low chuckling laugh.] Reckon I overplayed
my hand this once! A man can't take the pot on a
bob-tailed flush all the time. Did I say I'd stick
around six months more? Well, I've changed my mind then.
I'm cashin' in and resignin' the job of the Emperor this
minute.

SMITHERS [With real admiration]: Blimey, you're a
cool bird, an' no mistake.

JONES: No use 'n fussin'. When I know the game's up,
I kiss it goodbye without as much as a second look.
[Concerned] They've all run off to the hills, did they?

SMITHERS: Yees--every bleedin' one of 'em.

JONES: Then the revolution is at hand. And the Emperor
better get his feet smokin' up the trail.

NARRATOR: He makes for the archway leading outside.

SMITHERS: Goin' out to look for your 'orse? Yer won't
find any. They steals the 'orses firs' fing. Mine was
gone when I went for 'im this mornin'. That's wot firs'
give me a suspicion of wot was up.

JONES [Alarmed]: What? [Then philosophically]: Well,
then I'll hoof it.

NARRATOR: He pulls out a gold watch and looks at it.

JONES: Three-thirty. Sundown's at six-thirty or thereabouts.

NARRATOR: He puts his watch back--with cool confidence.

JONES: I got plenty o' time to make it easy.

SMITHERS: Don't be so bloomin' sure of it. They'll be after you 'ot and 'eavy. Ole Lem is at the bottom o' this business an' 'e 'ates you like 'ell. 'E'd rather do for you than eat 'is dinner, 'e would--and 'e ain't 'xactly a skinny one!

JONES [Scornfully]: That fool no-account niggah! Ya think I'm scared o' him? I stood him on his thick head once before, and I'll do it again if he gets in my way... [Fiercely.] And this time I'll leave him a dead niggah!

SMITHERS: You'll 'ave to cut froug the big forest--an' these blacks 'ere can sniff an' folla a trail in the dark like 'ounds. You'd 'ave to 'ustle to get froug vat forest in twelve hours even if you knew all the bloomin' trails like a na'ive.

JONES [With indignant scorn]: Look here, white man! Ya think I'm a natural born fool? Give me credit for havin' some sense, for heaven's sake! Don't you s'pose I've looked ahead and made sure of all my chances? I've gone out in that big forest, pretendin' to hunt, so many times I know it high an' low like a book. I could pilot those trails with my eyes shut. [With great contempt.] Think these ignorant bush niggahs that ain't got brains enough to know their own names can catch Brutus Jones? Not on your life! Why, the white man went after me with bloodhounds where I come from--an' I laughed at 'em. It's a shame to fool these bush niggahs 'round here, they're so easy. You watch me! I'll make 'em look sick. I'll be crossin' the plain to the edge of the forest by the time it's dark. Once I'm in the woods at night, they got a swell chance o' findin' this baby! Dawn tomorrow I'll be out at the other side and on the coast where that French gunboat is stayin'. She'll take me to Martinique, and there I'll be safe with a mighty big bankroll in my pocket. It's as easy as rollin' off a log.

SMITHERS [Maliciously]: But s'pose somethin' 'appens wrong an' they do nab yer?

394 JONES [Decisively]: They won't.

395 SMITHERS: Yeah, but, just for argyment's sake what'll
396 you do?

397 JONES [Frowning]: I've got five lead bullets in this
398 gun good enough for common bush niggahs--and after that
399 I got the silver bullet left to cheat 'em out o'
400 gettin' me.

401 SMITHERS [Jeeringly]: Ho, I was fergettin' that silver
402 bullet. You'll bump yourself orf in style, won't yer?
403 Blimey!

404 JONES [Gloomily]: You can bet your whole roll on one
405 thing, white man. This baby plays out his string to the
406 end and when he quits, he quits with a bang the way he
407 ought to. A silver bullet ain't none too good for me
408 when I goes, that's a fact. [Shaking off his
409 nervousness--with a confident laugh.] What am I talkin'
410 about? Ain't come to that yet and it never will--not
411 with trash niggahs like these here. [Boastfully.]
412 The silver bullet'll bring me luck anyway. I can
413 outguess, outrun, outfight, an' outplay the whole lot o'
414 'em all over the board any time o' day or night!
415 You watch me!

416 [From the distant hills comes the faint, steady thump of
417 a tom-tom, low and vibrating, starting at a normal pulse
418 beat--72 to the minute--and continues at a gradually
419 accelerating rate from this point uninterruptedly to the
420 end of the play.]

421 NARRATOR: Jones starts at the sound. A strange look of
422 apprehension creeps into his face for a moment as he
423 listens.

424 JONES [attempting to regain his most casual manner.]
425 What's that drum beatin' for?

426 SMITHERS [With a mean grin]: Fer you. Vat means the
427 bleedin' ceremony 'as start-ed. I've 'eard it before an'
428 I knows.

429 JONES: Ceremony? What ceremony?

430 SMITHERS: The nay-ives is 'oldin' a bloody meetin',
431 'avin' a war dance, gettin' their courage worked up
432 'fore they starts after you.

JONES [A tiny bit awed and shaken in spite of himself]:
Huh! Takes more'n that to scare this chicken!

SMITHERS [Scenting the other's feeling--maliciously]:
Ternight when it's pitch black in the forest, they'll
'ave their pet devils and ghosts, 'oundin' after you.
You 'll find yer bloody 'air 'll be standin' on end
before termorrow mornin'. [Seriously.] It's a bleedin'
queer place, that stinkin' forest, even in daylight.
Yer don't know what might 'appen in there, it sends the
cold shivers down my back the minute I gets in it.

JONES [With a contemptuous sniff]: I ain't no
chicken-liver like you. Trees an' me, we're friends, and
there's a full moon to bring me light. And let them poor
niggahs make all the fool spells they've a mind to. You
think I'm silly enough to believe in ghosts an' haunts
an' all that ole woman's talk? Go along, white man!
You ain't talkin' to me. [With a chuckle.] Don't you
know they've got to deal with a member in good standin'
o' the Baptist Church? I was that when I was porter on
the Pullmans, before I got into my little trouble.
Let 'em try their heathen tricks. The Baptist Church
will protect me and land them all in hell. [Then with
more confident satisfaction.] And I've got a little
silver bullet o' my own, don't forget.

SMITHERS: Ho! You 'aven't give much 'eed to your Baptist
Church since you been down 'ere. I've 'eard meself you
'ad turned yer coat an' was takin' up with their
blarsted witch-doctors, or whatever the 'ell yer calls
the swine.

JONES [Vehemently]: I pretended to! That's right.
That's part o' my game--from the first. If I find out
those niggahs believe that black is white, then I
yell it out louder than the loudest. It don't get me
nothin' to do missionary work for the Baptist Church.
I'm after the coin, an' I put my Jesus on the shelf for
the time bein'.

NARRATOR: He stops abruptly to look at his watch.

JONES: But I ain't got the time to waste no more
fool talk with you. I've gotta get away from here
this second.

NARRATOR: He grabs the cork helmut from Smither's head
and places it on his.

475 JONES: So long, white man! [With a grin.] See you in
476 jail sometime, maybe!

477 SMITHERS: Not me, you won't. Well, I wouldn't be in yer
478 bloody boots for no bloomin' money, but 'ere's wishin'
479 yer luck just the same. [After a pause, calling out
480 curiously.] 'Ey--ain't yer takin' no luggage with yer?

481 JONES: I travel light when I need to move fast. And I
482 got tinned grub buried on the edge o' the forest.

483 SMITHERS: Say! Look 'ere, you ain't goin' out that way,
484 are yer?

485 JONES: Do you think I'd slink out the back door like a
486 common niggah? I'm the Emperor yet, ain't I? And the
487 Emperor Jones leaves the way he comes, and that black
488 trash don't dare stop him--not yet, anyways.

489 NARRATOR: He stops for a moment in the doorway and
490 listens.

491 JONES: Listen to that roll-call, will ya? Must be a
492 mighty big drum to carry that far. [Then with a laugh.]
493 Well, if there ain't a whole brass band to see me off,
494 they sure got the drum part covered. So long, white man.

495 NARRATOR: He puts his hands in his pockets--and with
496 studied carelessness, saunters out of the building.

497 SMITHERS [With puzzled admiration]: 'E's got 'is
498 bloomin' nerve with 'im, s'elp me! [Then angrily.]
499 Ho--the bleedin' darkie--puttin' on 'is bloody airs!
500 I 'opes they nabs 'im an' gives 'im what's what!
501 [Then putting business before pleasure.] A bloke ought
502 to find a 'ole lot in this palace that'd go for a bit of
503 cash. Let's take a look, 'Arry , me lad.

504 NARRATOR: He darts for the doorway on the right.

505 Later, at nightfall, at the end of the plain where the
506 Great Forest begins, Jones enters from the left, walking
507 rapidly.

508 Stopping as he nears the edge of the forest, he glances
509 around quickly then peers into the dark as if searching
510 for some familiar landmark. Then, satisfied that he is
511 where he ought to be, he throws himself on the ground,
512 dog-tired.

513 JONES: Well, here I am. In the nick o' time, too!
514 A little more an' it'd be blacker'n the ace of
515 spades hereabouts.

516 NARRATOR: He pulls a bandana handkerchief from his
517 hip pocket and mops off his perspiring face.

518 JONES: Whew! Gimme air! I'm tuckered out. That soft
519 Emperor job ain't no trainin' for a long hike over the
520 plain in the heat of the sun. [Then with a chuckle.]
521 Cheer up, niggah, the worst is yet to come.

522 NARRATOR: He lifts his head and stares into the forest.

523 JONES [Chuckle petering out abruptly--in tone of awe.]
524 My goodness, look at them woods, will ya? That
525 no-account Smithers said they'd be black an' he sure as
526 hell called it.

527 NARRATOR: Turning away from the forest quickly and
528 looking down at his feet, he jumps at the chance to
529 change the subject.

530 JONES: Feet, you are holdin' up your end fine an' I
531 certainly hope you ain't blisterin' none. It's time you
532 get a rest.

533 NARRATOR: Taking off his shoes, his eyes studiously
534 avoiding the forest, he rubs the soles of his feet
535 gingerly.

536 JONES: You're still in the pink--only a mite feverish.
537 Cool yourselves. Remember you got a long journey ahead
538 of ya.

539 NARRATOR: He sits in a weary attitude, listening to the
540 rhythmic beating of the tom-tom.

541 To cover up his growing uneasiness...

542 JONES: Bush niggahs! Wonder they wouldn't get sick o'
543 beatin' that drum. Sounds louder, seems like. I wonder
544 if they're startin' after me?

545 NARRATOR: He scrambles to his feet, looking back across
546 the plain.

547 JONES: Couldn't see them now, no how, if they was a
548 hundred feet away.

549 NARRATOR: He then shakes himself like a wet dog to get
550 rid of depressing thoughts.

JONES: They're miles an' miles behhind. Whatcha gettin' fidgety about?

NARRATOR: He sits down and, in great haste, begins to lace up his shoes

JONES [mutters reassuringly]: You know what? Your belly is empty, that's what's the matter with you. It's time to eat! With nothin' but wind in your stomach, of course you feels jiggedy. Well, we'll eat right here as soon as I get these pesky shoes laced up! [He finishes lacing up his shoes.] There! Now let's see.

NARRATOR: Getting on his hands and knees, he searches the ground around him with his eyes.

JONES: White stone, white stone, where are you?

NARRATOR: He sees the first white stone and crawls to it with satisfaction.

JONES: Here you are! I knew this was the right place. Box of grub, come to me.

NARRATOR: He turns over the stone and feels under it.

JONES [in a tone of dismay]: Ain't here! Lord, am I in the right place or aren't I? There's another stone. Guess that's it.

NARRATOR: He scrambles to the next stone and turns it over.

JONES: Ain't here, neither! Grub, where are you? Ain't here. Lord, have I got to go hungry into them woods--all night long?

NARRATOR: As he talks, he scrambles from one stone to another, turning them over frantically. Finally, he jumps to his feet.

JONES [excitedly]: Have I lost the place? Must have! But how did that happen when I was followin' the trail across the plain in broad daylight? [Almost plaintive.] I am hungry! I gotta get me some food. Where's my strength gonna come from if I don't? Lord, I gotta find that grub high an' low somehow! Why did it come dark so quick like that? Can't see nothin'. [He scratches a match on his trousers and peers about him. The rate of the beat of the far-off tom-tom increases perceptibly as he does so. He mutters in a bewildered voice.]

590 How come all these white stones are here when I only
591 remember one?
592 [A sudden frightened gasp.]

593 NARRATOR: He flings the match on the ground and stamps
594 on it.

595 JONES: Niggah, have you gone crazy?? You are lightin'
596 matches to show them where you are! For heaven's sake,
597 use your head. You've got to be careful!

598 NARRATOR: He stares at the plain behind him anxiously,
599 his hand on his revolver.

600 JONES: But how come all o' these white stones? And
601 where's that tin box o' grub I had all wrapped up in
602 oil cloth?

603 NARRATOR: While his back is turned, the LITTLE FORMLESS
604 FEARS creep out from the deeper blackness of the forest.
605 They are black, shapeless, only their glittering little
606 eyes can be seen. About the size of a creeping child,
607 they move noiselessly, but with deliberate, painful
608 effort, striving to raise themselves, then failing and
609 sinking prone again.

610 Turning to face the forest, Jones stares up at the tops
611 of the trees, seeking vainly to discover his whereabouts
612 by their pattern.

613 JONES: Can't tell nothin' from these trees! Lord,
614 nothin' 'round here looks like I ever saw it before.
615 I've lost the place sure enough! [With mournful
616 foreboding.] It's mighty strange! It's mighty strange!
617 [With sudden forced defiance—in an angry tone.] Woods,
618 are you tryin' to put somethin' over on me?

619 NARRATOR: From the formless creatures on the ground in
620 front of him comes...

621 [...a tiny gale of low mocking laughter like a rustling
622 of leaves.]

623 NARRATOR: The formless creatures squirm upward toward
624 him in twisted attitudes. Jones looks down then leaps
625 backward...

626 JONES [with a yell of terror]:

627 NARRATOR: ...and yanks out his revolver as he does.

628 JONES [in a quavering voice]: What's that? Who's there?
629 What are you? Get away from me before I shoot--all of
630 you! You--don't...

631 [He fires a shot. The silence is broken only by the
632 quickened throb of the tom-toms.]

633 NARRATOR: The formless creatures have scurried back into
634 the forest. But Jones remains in the same position,
635 listening intently. The sound of the shot, the
636 reassuring feel of the revolver in his hand, have
637 restored his shaken nerve somewhat.

638 JONES [with renewed confidence]: They're gone. That shot
639 fixed 'em. They were only little animals--little wild
640 pigs, I reckon. They maybe rooted out the grub an' ate
641 it. Sure, you fool niggah, what you think they are--
642 ghosts? [Intensely.] Lord, you give the game away when
643 you fire that shot. Them niggahs heard that for certain!
644 Time you beat it into the woods.

645 NARRATOR: He starts for the forest.

646 But then hesitates before the plunge.

647 JONES [with manly resolution]: Get in, niggah! [Pause]
648 What you scared of? Ain't nothin' there but trees!
649 Get in!

650 NARRATOR: He plunges boldly into the forest.

651 It is now nine o'clock at night. The moon has just
652 risen. Its beams, drifting through the canopy of leaves,
653 make a barely perceptible, eerie glow.

654 A low wall of underbrush and creepers fences in a small
655 triangular clearing. Beyond this the massed blackness of
656 the forest is a formidable barrier. Faint paths can be
657 seen leading down and away from the clearing, in all
658 directions. A haze permeates everything.

659 [The clicking of a pair dice being shaken a human hand
660 can be heard.]

661 NARRATOR: Gradually the figure of JEFF, a thin, middle-
662 aged, black man dressed in a Pullman porter's uniform
663 and cap, can be heard throwing a pair of dice on the
664 ground before him--picking them up, then shaking them
665 and casting them out again. The heavy, plodding
666 footsteps of someone approaching along the trail from
667 the left can be heard.

JONES [voice pitched in a slightly higher key and strained in a cheering effort to overcome its own tremors] The moon's risen. Do you hear that, niggah? You'll get more light now. No more buttin' your fool head against tree trunks an' scratchin' the hide off your legs in the bushes. Now you can see where you're goin'. So cheer up! From now on it'll be a snap.

NARRATOR: He steps just to the rear of the clearing and mops off his face on his sleeve. Having lost his cork helmet, his face is scratched, and his formerly brilliant uniform has several large tears.

JONES: What time is it, I wonder? I don't dare light a match to find out. Phoo'. It's warm an' that's a fact! [Wearily.] How long've I been makin' tracks in these woods? Must be hours an' hours. Seems like forever! Yet it can't be, when the moon's just risen. [Pause] This is a long night for you, your Majesty! [With a mournful chuckle.] Majesty! There ain't much majesty 'bout this baby now. [With attempted cheerfulness.] Never mind. It's all part o' the game. This night will come to an end like everything else. And when I get there safe and have that bankroll in my hands, I'll laugh at all o' this.

[He starts to whistle but checks himself abruptly.]

JONES: What you whistlin' for, you dope! Want all the world to hear ya?

NARRATOR: He stops--and listens intently.

JONES: Hear that ole drum? She's getting nearer and nearer. They're packin' it along with 'em. Time for me to move.

NARRATOR: He starts away, then...

[Sound of dice clacking together intensifies.]

NARRATOR: He stops.

JONES What's that clickety sound? There it is! Sounds close! Sounds like--sounds like for God sakes, sounds like some niggah was shootin' craps! [Frightened.] I better beat it quick when I get these notions.

NARRATOR: He walks quickly into the clearing--then stands transfixed as he sees Jeff.

JONES [in a terrified gasp.] Who's there? Who's that?
Is that you, Jeff?

NARRATOR: He moves towards him with happy relief.

JONES: Jeff! I'm mighty glad to see ya! They told me
ya died from that razor cut I gave ya.

NARRATOR: He stops suddenly, a look of bewilderment on
his face.

JONES: But how'd ya come to be here, niggah?

NARRATOR: He stares fascinated at Jeff, who continues
his mechanical rolling of the dice. Jones' eyes go wild.

JONES [stuttering]: A-Ain't you gonna look up--can't you
speak to me? A-Are you--are you-a ghost?

NARRATOR: He jerks out his revolver in a frenzy of
terrified rage.

JONES: Niggah, I killed you once. Do I have to kill you
again? Ah! You take it then.

[He fires a shot.]

NARRATOR: When the smoke clears, Jeff has disappeared.
Jones stands trembling. Then...

JONES [with a certain reassurance]: He's gone, anyway.
Ghost or no ghost, that shot fixed him.

[The beat of the far-off tom-tom grows perceptibly
louder and more rapid.]

NARRATOR: With a start, Jones looks back over his
shoulder.

JONES: They're gettin' nearer! There comin' fast! And
here I am shootin' shots to let 'em know just where I
am. Oh, Lord, I've got to run.

NARRATOR: Abandoning the path, he plunges wildly into
the underbrush and disappears into the shadows.

[Passing of time SFX.]

NARRATOR: In the forest, it is now eleven o'clock at
night.

A wide dirt road runs diagonally, walled in on
both sides by the forest. The moon is now fully up.
Under its light the road glimmers ghastly and unreal.

It is as if the forest had stood aside momentarily to let the road pass through and accomplish its veiled purpose.

Jones stumbles in from the forest on the right. His uniform is ragged and torn. He looks about him with numbed surprise, his eyes blinking in the bright moonlight. When he sees the road, he flops down exhausted.

JONES [Pants heavily for a while--then with sudden anger]: I'm melting from this heat! Runnin' an' runnin' an' runnin'! Damn this coat! Like a strait-jacket!

NARRATOR: He tears it off and flings it away from him, leaving him stripped to the waist.

JONES: There! That's better! Now I can breathe!

NARRATOR: Looking down at his feet, the spurs catch his eye.

JONES: And to hell with these high-fangled things. They're what's been trippin' me up an' breakin' my neck.

NARRATOR: Unstrapping them, he flings them away in disgust.

JONES: There! Now I'm rid of those frippety Emperor trappings, I can travel lighter. Lord! I'm tired!

[After a pause, in which the insistent beat of the tom-tom grows louder...]

JONES: I must of put some distance between myself an' them--runnin' like that--and yet--that damn drum sound is just the same--nearer, even. Well, I guess I did keep my lead anyhow. They won't ever catch up. [With a sigh.] If only my fool legs hold up. Oh, I'm sorry I ever went in for this. That Emperor job is sure hard to shake.

NARRATOR: He looks around him suspiciously.

JONES: How'd this road even get here, eh? Good level road, too. I never remember seein' it before. [Shaking his head apprehensively.] These woods are sure full o' the strangest things at night. [With a sudden terror.] Lord God, don't let me see any more ghosts! They get to me! [Then trying to talk himself into confidence.] Ghosts! You fool niggah, there ain't no such thing! Didn't the pastor tell you that many times? Are you

civilized, or are you like these ignorant niggahs here?
That was all in your own head. Wasn't nothin' there.
Wasn't no Jeff! You're just seein' them things 'cause
your belly's empty. That affects your head and your
eyes. Any fool knows that. [Then pleading fervently] But
bless God, I don't come across no more o' 'em--whatever
they are! [Then cautiously.] Rest! Don't talk! Rest!
You need it. Then you'll get on your way again. [Looking
at the moon.] Night's half gone almost. You'll hit the
coast in the morning! Then you'll be safe.

NARRATOR: From the right, a small gang of black convicts
enter. They are dressed in striped suits, their heads
shaved, legs dragging limpingly, each shackled to a
heavy ball and chain. Some carry picks, others shovels.
They are followed by a white man dressed in the uniform
of a prison guard. A Winchester rifle is slung across
his shoulders and he carries a heavy whip. At a signal
from the guard, the convicts stop on the road opposite
where Jones is sitting. Jones, who has been staring up
at the sky, unmindful of their approach, suddenly looks
down and sees them. His eyes go wide, he tries to get to
his feet and fly, but sinks back, too numbed by fright
to move.

JONES [Voice catching in a choking prayer.] Lord Jesus!

NARRATOR: The guard cracks his whip and the convicts
start to work on the road. They swing their picks,
dig with their shovels.

The guard points sternly at Jones with his whip,
motioning him to take his place among the shovelers.
Jones gets to his feet in a hypnotized stupor.

JONES [mumbling subserviently]: Yes, sir! Yes, sir!
I'm comin'.

NARRATOR: As he shuffles, he drags one foot at a time
over to his place in line.

JONES [cursing under his breath with rage and hatred]:
God damn your soul, I'll get even with you yet,
sometime.

NARRATOR: As if there were a shovel in his hands, he
goes through weary, mechanical gestures of digging up
dirt, and throwing it to the roadside. Suddenly the
guard approaches him threateningly, raises his whip
and lashes Jones viciously across the shoulders.

Jones winces and cowers miserably. The guard turns his back on him and walks away contemptuously. Instantly, Jones straightens up. With arms upraised as if his shovel were a club, he springs murderously at the unsuspecting guard. In the act of crashing down his shovel on the white man's skull, Jones suddenly becomes aware that his hands are empty.

JONES [cries despairingly]: Where's my shovel? Gimme my shovel so I can split his damn head! [Appealing to his fellow convicts.] Gimme a shovel, one o' you, for God's sake!

NARRATOR: But the convicts stand motionless, their eyes on the ground. The guard waits expectantly, his back turned to Jones. Jones tugs frantically at his revolver.

JONES [bellows with baffled, terrified rage]: I'll kill you, you white devil, if it's the last thing I do! Ghost or devil, I'll kill you again!

NARRATOR: He frees the revolver and fires point-blank at the guard's back. Instantly, the walls of the forest close in from both sides and the road and the figures of the convict gang disappear in an enshrouding darkness.

There's crashing in the underbrush as Jones leaps away in mad flight.

[We hear the throbbing of the tom-tom, still far away, but increased in volume of sound and rapidity of beat.]

NARRATOR: It is now one o'clock in the morning.

We're in a large circular clearing, enclosed by the gigantic trunks of tall trees.

In the center is a huge dead stump. The moon floods the clearing with a clear light. Jones forces his way in through the forest, looking wildly about the clearing with hunted, fearful glances. His pants are in tatters, his shoes cut and misshapen, flapping about his feet.

He slinks cautiously to the stump and sits down in a tense position, ready for flight. Then he holds his head in his hands and rocks back and forth.

JONES [moaning to himself miserably]: Oh Lord, Lord! Oh Lord, Lord!

NARRATOR: Suddenly he throws himself on his knees and raises his clasped hands to the sky.

JONES [in a voice of agonized pleading]: Lord Jesus, hear my prayer! I'm a poor sinner, a poor sinner! I know I've done wrong, I know it! When I caught Jeff cheatin' with loaded dice my anger overcame me and I killed him-- I did! Lord, I done wrong! When that guard hit me with the whip, my anger overcame me, and I killed him dead. Lord, I done wrong! And down here where these fool bush niggahs raised me up to the seat o' the mighty, I stole all I could grab. Lord, I done wrong! I know it! I'm sorry! Forgive me, Lord! Forgive this poor sinner! [Then beseeching terrifiedly.] And keep them away, Lord! Keep them away from me! And stop that drum soundin' in my ears! Please, Lord, hear my prayer!

NARRATOR: He gets to his feet, slightly reassured by his praying.

JONES: The Lord'll preserve me from ghosts after this. [Sits down on the stump again.] I ain't scared o' real men. Let 'em come. But them others...

NARRATOR: He shudders then looks down at his feet, working his toes inside his shoes.

JONES [with a groan]: Oh, my poor feet! These shoes ain't no use no more accept to hurt. I'm better off without 'em.

NARRATOR: Unlacing them and pulling them off, he holds the wrecks of the shoes in his hands and regards them mournfully.

JONES: Real, A-one, patent leather, too. Look at you now. Emperor, you're gettin' mighty low!

NARRATOR: He sits dejectedly with bowed shoulders, staring down at the shoes in his hand as if reluctant to throw them away.

While his attention is thus occupied, a crowd of figures silently enter the clearing from all sides. All are white and dressed in Southern outfits from the 1850's. Many are well-to-do planters. Smithers is there, too-- he's the auctioneer--and there's a crowd of curious spectators, chiefly young belles and dandies who have come to the market for diversion. All exchange courtly greetings and group themselves about the stump.

Finally, a batch of black slaves are led in from the left --three men and two women, one with a baby in her arms, nursing. They are placed to the left of the stump, beside Jones. The white planters look them over appraisingly as if they were cattle and the dandies point with their fingers and the belles titter bewitchingly.

Taking his place at the stump, Smithers holds up his hand and touches Jones on the shoulder, motioning for him to stand on the stump--the auction block.

Jones looks up, sees the figures on all sides, looks wildly for some opening to escape, sees none, screams and leaps madly to the top of the stump to get as far away from them as possible. He stands there, cowering, paralyzed with horror.

SMITHERS: See fer yourselves, gent-elman. 'Ere is a good field 'and, sound in wind and limb as you can see. Very strong still in spite o' 'is bein' middle-aged. Lookit vat back. Lookit vose shoulders. Lookit the muscles in 'is arms and 'is sturdy legs. Capable of iny amount o' 'ard labor. Moreovah, of a good disposition, intelligent and pliable. Will any gent-elman start the biddin'?

NARRATOR: The planters raise their fingers and make their bids. All are eager to possess Jones.

Meanwhile, Jones has been seized by the courage of desperation. He dares to look down and around him. On his face, abject terror gives way to mystification, then a gradual realization.

JONES [stutteringly]: What you all doin', white folks? What's all this? What you all lookin' at me for? What are you doin' with me, anyhow?

NARRATOR: Suddenly convulsed with raging hatred and fear...

JONES: Is this an auction? Are you sellin' me like they used to before the war?

NARRATOR: Smithers knocks Jones off the stump to the planter who has purchased him.

JONES: And you buy me and sell me, really? I'll show you I'm a free niggah, damn your souls!

943 [He fires two shots in rapid succession.]

944 NARRATOR: As if this were a signal, everything goes dark
945 and Jones rushes off...

946 JONES [crying with fear]:

947 [Pursued by the quickened, ever louder beat of the
948 tom-tom.]

949 NARRATOR: It is now three o'clock in the morning.

950 Over a clear space in the forest, the limbs of trees
951 form a low ceiling about five feet from the ground.
952 Interlocked ropes of creepers reaching upward entwine
953 the tree trunks and enclose the space like the dark,
954 hold of some ancient vessel.

955 The moonlight is almost completely shut out and only a
956 weak patch of light filters through.

957 Stumbling and crawling through the undergrowth,
958 Jones approaches from the left.

959 JONES [between chattering moans]: Oh, Lord, what am I
960 gonna do now? Ain't got no bullets left, only the
961 silver one. If more o' them ghosts come, how am I gonna
962 scare 'em away? Oh, Lord, only the silver one's left--
963 an' I gotta save that for luck. If I shoot that one,
964 I'm a goner for sure! Lord, it's black here! Where's the
965 moon? Oh, Lord, won't this night ever come to an end?

966 NARRATOR: He feels his way cautiously forward through
967 the brush.

968 JONES: There! This feels like a clear space. I gotta
969 lie down an' rest. I don't care if them niggahs
970 do catch me. I gotta rest.

971 NARRATOR: He flings himself full length, face downward
972 on the dark ground.

973 JONES [panting with exhaustion]:

974 NARRATOR: Gradually it grows lighter in the enclosed
975 space and two rows of seated figures in loin cloths can
976 be seen behind Jones.

977 They are sitting in crumpled, despairing attitudes,
978 hunched, their backs touching the forest walls as if
979 they were shackled to them. All are black men. At first,
980 they're silent and motionless. Then they begin to sway

slowly back and forth in unison, as if they were letting themselves follow the long roll of a ship at sea.

[A low, melancholy murmur rises among them, increasing gradually by rhythmic degrees which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance, to a long, tremulous wail of despair that reaches a certain pitch, unbearably acute, then falls by slow gradations of tone into silence and is taken up again.]

NARRATOR: Jones starts, looks up, sees the figures, and throws himself down again to shut out the sight. A shudder of terror shakes his whole body.

Jones' voice rises to join the others.

JONES [prolonged wailing building to the highest pitch of sorrow, of desolation]:

NARRATOR: In the darkness. Jones can be heard scrambling to his feet and running off.

JONES [Wailing sinks down the scale and recedes as he moves farther and farther away in the forest]:

[The tom-tom beats louder, quicker, with a more insistent, triumphant pulsation.]

NARRATOR: It is now five o'clock in the morning.

By the foot of a gigantic tree by the edge of a great river, sits a rough structure of boulders, like an altar. Beyond, the surface of the river spreads out, brilliant and unruffled in the moonlight.

As Jones approaches the tree, his eyes project an obsessive glare, like that of a sleepwalker or one in a trance. He looks around at the tree, the stone altar, the moonlit surface of the river beyond, and passes his hand over his head with a gesture of puzzled bewilderment. Then, as if in obedience to some obscure impulse, he kneels down before the altar. Coming to himself, with an uncertain realization of what he's doing, he suddenly straightens up and stares about him in horror.

JONES [in an incoherent mumble]: What--what am I doing? What is--this place? Seems like--seems like I know that tree--an' those stones--an' that river. I remember--seems like I've been here before. [Tremblingly.]

1021 Oh, Lord, I'm scared of this place! I'm scared!
 1022 Oh, Lord, protect this sinner!

1023 NARRATOR: Crawling away from the altar, he cowers close
 1024 to the ground, his face hidden, his shoulders heaving
 1025 with sobs of hysterical fright.

1026 From behind the trunk of the tree, as if he had sprung
 1027 out of it, the figure of a CONGO WITCH-DOCTOR appears.
 1028 He is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some
 1029 small animal tied about his waist. His body is stained
 1030 all over a bright red. Antelope horns are on each side
 1031 of his head, branching upward. In one hand he carries a
 1032 bone rattle, in the other a charm stick with a bunch of
 1033 white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. A great number
 1034 of glass beads and bone ornaments hang about his person.
 1035 He struts with a strange prancing step to a position
 1036 between Jones and the altar. Then, with a stamp of his
 1037 foot on the earth, he begins to dance and to chant.

1038 Jones looks up, springs to his feet, reaches a
 1039 half-kneeling, half-squatting position and remains
 1040 fixed there, paralyzed with awe by this new apparition.

1041 The witch-doctor's dance is a summons to a deity
 1042 demanding sacrifice. He flees, he's pursued by devils,
 1043 he hides, he flees again. Ever wilder and wilder becomes
 1044 his flight, nearer and nearer draws the pursuing devils,
 1045 more and more the spirit of terror gains possession of
 1046 Jones. He's become completely hypnotized--beating time
 1047 with his hands and swaying his body to and fro from the
 1048 waist. The whole spirit and meaning of the dance has
 1049 entered into Jones and become one with his spirit.

1050 But the gods demand sacrifice--they must be appeased.
 1051 The witch-doctor points with his stick to the sacred
 1052 tree, to the river, to the altar, and finally to Jones
 1053 with a ferocious command.

1054 Jones senses his meaning immediately. It is he who must
 1055 offer himself for sacrifice. He kneels and brings his
 1056 forehead close to the ground.

1057 JONES: Mercy, Oh Lord! Mercy! Mercy on this poor sinner.

1058 NARRATOR: The witch-doctor springs to the river-bank,
 1059 stretching out his arms and calling to a god within its
 1060 depths. Then he moves backwards slowly, his arms out.

1061 The huge head of a crocodile appears over the bank
1062 and its eyes, glittering greenly, fasten upon Jones.
1063 He stares into them with fascination. The witch-doctor
1064 prances up to Jones, touches him with his stick,
1065 motions him toward the waiting monster. Jones squirms on
1066 his belly, nearer and nearer...

1067 JONES [moaning continually]: Mercy, Lord! Mercy!

1068 NARRATOR: The crocodile heaves his enormous bulk onto
1069 land. Jones squirms towards him.

1070 [The witch-doctor's voice shrills out in jubilation.]

1071 JONES [in a fierce, spasm of anguished pleading]:
1072 Lord, save me! Lord Jesus, hear my prayer!

1073 NARRATOR: Immediately, in answer to his prayer, comes
1074 the thought of the one bullet left him. He snatches at
1075 his hip, shouting defiantly.

1076 JONES: The silver bullet! You don't get me yet!

1077 NARRATOR: He fires at the green eyes in front of him.
1078 The head of the crocodile sinks back beneath the river
1079 bank, the witch-doctor springs behind the sacred tree
1080 then disappears and Jones lies with his face to the
1081 ground, his arms outstretched, whimpering with fear.

1082 It is now Dawn.

1083 We are back where we started: at the dividing line of
1084 the forest and plain.

1085 The nearest tree trunks are dimly revealed but the
1086 forest behind them is still a mass of glooming shadows.

1087 LEM, a heavy-set African male near fifty, dressed in a
1088 loin cloth, enters from the left--closely followed by a
1089 small squad of palm-leaf-hatted soldiers, each with a
1090 rifle, and by Smithers, a revolver and cartridge belt
1091 about his waist.

1092 One of the soldiers, a tracker, peers about keenly on
1093 the ground. He grunts and points to the spot where
1094 Jones entered the forest. Lem and Smithers come to look.

1095 SMITHERS [After a glance, turns away in disgust]:
1096 Vat's where 'e went in right enuf. Much good it'll do
1097 yer. 'E's miles orf by vis time an' safe to the Coast,
1098 damn 'is 'ide! I tole yer yer'd lose 'im, didn't I?--

1099 wastin' the 'ole bloomin' night beatin' yer bloody drum
1100 an' castin' yer silly spells! Gawd blimey, wot a pack!

1101 LEM [Gutturally]: We cotch him. You see.

1102 NARRATOR: Lem motions to his soldiers and they squat
1103 down on their haunches in a semicircle.

1104 SMITHERS [Exasperatedly]: Well, ain't ye gonna 'unt 'im
1105 in the woods? What the 'ell's the good of waitin'?

1106 NARRATOR: Lem sits down on the ground unperturbed.

1107 LEM: We cotch him.

1108 SMITHERS [Turning away from him contemptuously]:
1109 Aw! Garn! 'E's a bett-er man than the lot o' you
1110 put together. I 'ates the sight o' 'im but I'll say that
1111 for 'im.

1112 [The sound of snapping twigs comes from the forest.]

1113 NARRATOR: The soldiers jump to their feet, cocking their
1114 rifles.

1115 Lem remains seated, but listens intently.

1116 [The sound from the woods is repeated.]

1117 NARRATOR: At a hand signal from Lem, the soldiers creep
1118 quickly but noiselessly into the forest, scattering so
1119 that each enters at a different spot.

1120 SMITHERS [After a pause--in a contemptuous whisper]:
1121 You ain't finkin' vat would be 'im, I 'ope?

1122 LEM [Calmly]: We cotch him.

1123 SMITHERS: Blarsted fat 'eads! [Then after a second's
1124 thought--wonderingly] Still an' all, it might 'appen.
1125 If 'e lost 'is bloody way in these stinkin' woods 'e'd
1126 likely turn in a circle without 'is knowin' it.

1127 LEM [Peremptorily]: Sssh!

1128 [Two shots sound from the forest. These are followed a
1129 second later by savage, exultant yells. The beating of
1130 the tom-tom abruptly STOPS.]

1131 NARRATOR: Lem looks at Smithers with a grin of
1132 satisfaction.

1133 Lem: We cotch him. Him dead.

1134 SMITHERS [With a snarl]: 'Ow d'yer know it's 'im an' 'ow
1135 d'yer know 'e's dead?

1136 LEM: My mens--dey got silver bullets. Dey kill him.
1137 Dead.

1138 SMITHERS [Astonished]: Vey got silver bullets?

1139 LEM: Lead bullet no kill him. He got strong charm.
1140 I take coins, make silver bullet. Make strong charm,
1141 too.

1142 NARRATOR: Daylight breaks slowly on Smithers's face.

1143 SMITHERS: So vat's wot you was up to all night, wot?
1144 You was scared to go after 'im till you'd moulded silver
1145 bullets, eh?

1146 LEM [Simply stating a fact]: Yes. Him got strong charm.
1147 Lead no good.

1148 SMITHERS [Slapping his thigh and guffawing]: Haw-haw!
1149 If yer don't beat all 'ell! [Then recovering himself--
1150 scornfully.] I'll bet yer it ain't 'im they shot at all,
1151 yer bleedin' looney!

1152 LEM [Calmly]: Dey bring him now.

1153 NARRATOR: The soldiers emerge from the forest carrying
1154 Jones's limp body. There is a little reddish-purple hole
1155 under his left breast. He is dead. They carry him to
1156 Lem, who examines his body with great satisfaction.
1157 Smithers leans in over his shoulder.

1158 SMITHERS [in a tone of frightened awe]: Well, they did
1159 for yer right enough, Jonsey, me lad! Dead as a 'erring!
1160 [Mockingly.] Where's yer 'igh an' migh'y airs now, yer
1161 bloomin' Majesty? [Then with a grin.] Silver bullets!
1162 Gawd blimey, but yer died in the 'eight o' style,
1163 di'nt ya!

1164 NARRATOR: Lem makes a motion and the soldiers carry the
1165 body of Jones off left.

1166 SMITHERS [sneeringly]: And I s'pose you think it's yer
1167 bleedin' charms and yer silly beatin' the drum that made
1168 'im run in a circle when 'e'd lost 'imself, don't yer?

1169 NARRATOR: But Lem does not seem to hear the question.
1170 Leaving Smithers standing alone, he walks out after
1171 his men.

1172 After a moment, Smithers follows.

1173 SMITHERS [with contemptuous but good natured scorn]:

1174 Stupid as 'ogs, thl' lot of' em! Stupid as blarsted

1175 'ogs...

1176 THE END