

**SYNOPSIS OF BLACK BOY**

Richard was a black boy who lived with his parents and a brother in Mississippi, a small town in South of America. One day they move to Memphis, a town bigger than Mississippi. In this town, the life was begun for him. Meaning that he began to understand what is life in reality. From the very first time he's able to communicate with other people, he felt that it is no love and warmth in his family. Especially his father who was always shouted at him and never took attention to him. Until one day his father left his family, and married another woman.

Knowing this, hopelessly, his mother tried to look for a job to support the family. She taught Richard how to fight for survive. He was six years old at that time and recognized saloon's life, fight, reading and the relation between black and white. Then his mother prosecute the support for the family from his father who was abandoned them. But he refused to give it and the court was on his side.

Richard mother's health was getting bad. Because of that she brought Richard and his brother to the orphan home. They always lived in hunger. His mother then, decided to go to Arkansas. Richard hates these

situation; always move, and never settle in one place, beside, they always lived in fears under pressure of the white people.

They didn't live long there, soon they moved to Jackson, in his grandmother's home. There, Richard was acquainted with Ella, a colored young woman school teacher, who was fond of reading. Richard's curiosity was growing wide, but his grandmother got so angry and didn't hesitate to slap him everytime she knew he read Ella's books. Actually, those books thought him something new about life.

A year after, they went to Arkansas again. In the railroad station, Richard noticed that there were two lines of people at the ticket window; a white line and a black line. In the train it was also separated in seating. This view he'd never forgotten. He asked about this, but his mother never gave him a fair answer, and slapped him till crying.

In Arkansas they lived with aunt Maggie, one of his mother's sister. It was enough food, for aunt Maggie's husband was having a saloon provided for Negroes working in sawmills. One day Uncle Hoskins had not come home from the saloon. Later, it was proved that he had been shot by a white man.

Then, all the family decided to leave the house. They left in fear to white people. Richard was 9 years

old at that time, and they decided to go back to Granny's home. Richard was never study till finished, because they were always moving.

They moved again to West Helena, because his mother was too tired of the strict religious routine of Granny's home. In West Helena, they lived in a double corner house. The environment was so crowded. Many kind of people lived there with their variety of jobs. It was a slum, narrow alleys. One thing he found there, is for the first time he knew "hooker". He snooped them, and his curiosity made the landlady dragged them.

They moved again to another frame house. Then, aunt Maggie got a new husband who was, again, chased by the white people, for he was a member of a secret movement party. The dread of white, which existed in Richard's feeling made him become a sensitive boy, especially the conflicts between the races. Nothing challenged the totality of his personality so much as the pressure of hate and threat that came from the whites. He used to hear the rude and crucial treatment of the whites to the blacks.

Richard's mother got a job. So he was able to go to school. At that time, the world war II was over. Christmas came. They still stayed hungry. Richard was growing older. The hatred to the white people growing

deeper, spontaneously. The relationship with the boys in the same age getting tighter.

Richard began to look for a job, when his mother's health decrease. Jobs like carrying lunches to the men worked in roundhouse, carrying woods in his arms to keep the big stove in a cafe blushing, etc.

Meanwhile, they move and move again to many different places for the inability to pay rent. His mother's health failing rapidly. Richard was so worry of loosing her. She suffered stroke of paralysis. though he is still a child, Richard forced by the situation to take responsible for such bad situation. He wrote letters to his uncles, aunts, and grandmother. His mother was brought to a big hospital in Jackson.

From the discussion among them, it is decided to separate Richard and his brother. Aunt Maggie took Richard's brother, while Richard chooses Uncle Clark who was lived in Greenwood. Richard was not long stayed there for he didn't like the formal and quiet situation there. Finally he went back to Jackson. His mother was badly sick and taken by uncle Edward to Clarksdale for the operation. She was in bed for almost 10 years. Richard was 12 years old.

The hard times began. The bigot of his grandmother was the main hindrance for him. Richard was always suffer for hunger for his grandmother never

gave him good food. It was a sin to prepare meat as a dish, because it made the body harm. They just ate mush and sauce from powder. Church orientation was the fundamental of home's life. Richard was forced to enter church life. Richard refused and according to his grandmother, Richard's mother illness was the result of his faithlessness to God.

One of Richard's aunt, Aunt Addie, was so strict in religion. She was never liked Richard for he always defied what she said. When Richard entered Jim Hill public school, his family didn't care of him, for they preferred Richard to enter church school. As a result, when he needed books and trousers, his grandmother refused to buy for him. In fact, Richard was a smart boy. It was proved when he passed his fifth grade within just 2 weeks, then he was promoted to the sixth grade. But no compliment came from his family.

To support his study, he thought working was the best way, but again his grandmother forbade him, for on Saturday was the holy day to pray. Once he worked as a papers seller and magazines which were published in Chicago, then he quit because he found out that those papers supported Ku Klux Klan's anti-Negro organization. He got another job, which was accompanying an insurance agent who was illiteracy, Brother Mance. He got 5

dollars/week. They made a lot of trip and got a lot of money from that job. For a while, his grandmother and aunt treated him kindly. But when Brother Mance died, he didn't work anymore.

School opened, he began the seventh grade. In the same time, his grandfather was sick. He was depressed because the Government refused to give him the pension of the Union Army. The Government said it was because he was mispronounce his own name in the application letter for the pension. Not long after that, he died.

In Richard's house, the situation was so stiff. His grandmother and Aunt Addie truly tense, dead and silent to him. Only his mother the one who was always smile and kissed him when he told her everything in his heart. After that, Richard got many kinds of jobs. His mother began a rapid recovery. She hoped someday soon she and Richard might had a home of their own.

One important moment in Richard's life was that he was baptized in church. He was willing to do that just to be a part of the association with people.

Due to Granny and aunt Addie need money to pay the rent of the house. So, they asked Uncle Tom, another grandmother's son, to stay there to pay rent together. But again, it mean that Richard got one more enemy. In Uncle Tom's opinion, it was something wrong

with Richard's life, and Richard should behave himself and if he didn't capable to do this, Uncle Tom will do it for him. Richard ignored him, for in his opinion, he earn money by himself, bought everything by himself, he was even able to give grandmother although just a few pennies, and didn't like to be ordered by a "strange uncle".

Summer came in 1924, Richard's life was not so bright. Hunger still came over him. Richard got many jobs in that summer. When school opened, he worked in the morning and evening. He grew silent and reserved because of the world surrounding him was so plain, he felt his future was bleak. He was now in the 8th grade. To be a writer arose in his mind, and he wrote story, a horror story. His friends thought he was alien because of writing a story never been taught in school; while his grandmother thought it meant that he insulted God, it was considered devil's work. ( the title is The Voodoo of Hell's Half Acre ).

Richard was in the fifteenth year. His want to leave South became settle, but he decided to wait until the ninth grade term ended. It was 1925. Richard was 17 years old. The school term ended. He got a job as a porter in a clothing store which was selling cheap goods to Negroes on credit. Here he saw a brutal and unmoral

treatment of the owner of the store to the black people. But he couldn't do anything. Then he was hired in a trade company. The boss was kind, but he had to resigned because the two white men of the employees didn't like him to join the company.

The autumn came. He worked as a bellboy in a hotel where all the employers are blacks, but they were controlled totally by the white people. It was not long he worked there. Then he worked as a boy to take tickets at a theater. He cooperated with the other workers to cheat the rule and got more money. He did it on purpose, to keep more money to leave South to go to North.

One night, he felt he was ready to leave. He bought clothes, shoe, a suitcase and pack his things. No one in his house knew his leaving, just his mother gave bless to him. He leave Jackson by train.

He arrived in Memphis on one winter morning. It was in 1925. He rent a house which was owned by Mrs.Moss and her daughter, Bess. They were so kind to him. They treated him like their own family. Richard felt so touched for in his own family, he never got such warmth and affection. Bess was falling in love with him, but Richard couldn't just accept it.

There Richard tried to look for a job. First job was as a dish washer in a cafe. Then he moved to an



optical company. He felt something different in this town, it seemed easier to make a relationship with white people there, although still he had to act and say carefully. Here also his fond of reading getting stronger. He began to know Harper's Magazine, the Atlantic Monthly, the American Mercury, and before worked, he would read the Memphis Commercial Appeal.

At the first time, he saw an article of H.L. Mencken who was white man, the editor of the American Mercury. The article was about the denunciation of Mencken who was criticized the South. It dug Richard's curiosity. By lending a library card of Mr. Falk, an Irish Catholicman, Richard got what he wanted. He knew then that Mencken was a critics to the sick condition of the society in South. He was almost nineteenth at that time. Gradually he knew Thomas Hardy, Sinclair Lewis, Tolstoy, Mark Twain, and many great writers.

He hungered for books after that. It made him knew a new ways of looking and seeing things in his society. He learned much from those books.

In that winter, his mother and brother came to see him. His beloved aunt, Aunt Maggie, came too. He was so happy that they could gathered there in Memphis. Together, the four of them made a plan, to save money

and went to North. Finally, it was decided that Aunt Maggie and Richard went first to prepare a place for Richard's mother and brother in Chicago, North America.

His dream was fulfilled. This was because his dreaming for many years, and by working hard he was finally could make it. His leaving South was not for forget it, but merely to learn and might understand what living in the South had meant.