

Muscled up perfect

Game to the heart

They don't come by ones

Outworked and outfought

Any man or two men

They don't come by twos

He spoke out of turn

At the commissary

They gave him a day

To git out the county.

He didn't take it.

He said 'Come and get me.'

They came and got him.

And they came by tens.

He stayed in the county -

He lays there dead.

They don't come by ones

They don't come by twos

But they come by tens.'

An old woman remembers

Her eyes were gentle; her voice was for soft singing
 In the stiff-backed pew, or on the porch when evening
 Comes slowly over Atlanta. But she remembered.
 She said: 'After they cleaned out the saloons and the dives
 The drunks and the loafers, they thought that they had better
 Clean out the rest of us. And it was awful.
 They snatched men off of street-cars, beat up women.
 Some of our men fought back, and killed too. Still
 It wasn't their habit. And then the orders came
 For the milishy, and the mob went home,

And dressed up in their soldiers' uniforms,

And rushed back shooting just as wild as ever.

Some leaders told us to keep faith in the law,

In the governor; some did not keep that faith,

Some never had it: he was white too, and the time

Was near election, and the rebs were mad.

He wasn't stopping hornets with his head bare.

The white folks at the big houses, some of them

Kept all their servants home under protection

But that was all the trouble they could stand.

And some were put out when their cooks and yard-boys

Were thrown from cars and beaten, and came late or not

at all.

And the police they helped the mob, and the milishy

They helped the police. And it got worse and worse.

'They broke into groceries, drug-stores, barber shops,

It made no difference whether white or black.

They beat a lame bootblack until he died,

They cut an old man open with jack-knives -

The newspapers named us black brutes and mad dogs,

So they used a gun butt on the president

Of our seminary where a lot of folks

Had sat up praying prayers the whole night through.

'And then,' she said, 'our folks got sick and tired

Of being chased and beaten and shot down.

All of a sudden, one day, they all got sick and tired.

The servants they put down their mops and pans,

And brooms and hoes and rakes and coachman whips,

Bad niggers stopped their drinking Dago red,

Good Negroes figured they had prayed enough,

All came back home - they'd been too long away -

A lot of visitors had been looking for them.

70 *Sterling Brown*

'They sat on their front stoops and in their yards,
Not talking much, but ready; their welcome ready:
Their shotguns oiled and loaded on their knees.

'And then
There wasn't any riot any more.'

Long gone

I laks yo' kin' of lovin',
Ain't never caught you wrong,
But it jes' ain' nachal
Fo' to stay here long;

It jes' ain' nachal
Fo' a railroad man,
With a itch fo' travelin'
He cain't understan' . . .

I look at de rails,
An' I looks at de ties,
An' I hears an ole freight
Puffin' up de rise,

An' at nights on my pallet,
When all is still,
I listens fo' de empties
Bumpin' up de hill;

When I oughta be quiet,
I is got a itch
Fo' to hear de whistle blow
Fo' de crossin' or de switch,

71 *Sterling Brown*

An' I knows de time's a-nearin'
When I got to ride,
Though it's homelike and happy
At yo' side.

You is done all you could do
To make me stay;
'Tain't no fault of yours Ise leavin' -
Ise jes dataway.

I is got to see some people
I ain't never seen,
Gotta highball thu some country
Whah I never been.

I don't know which way I'm travelin' -
Far or near,
All I knows fo' certain is
I cain't stay here.

Aii't no call at all, sweet woman,
Fo' to carry on -
Jes' my name and jes' my habit
To be Long Gone. . .