

*The Ninth
Acolyte Reader*



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Pond

by Frederic Trainor

I stood there by it.

That murky, kidney-shaped pool of brackish, brown, putrid water, swatting relentless insects absently as the woods around me chirped and hissed and crackled with the sounds of spring.

The glare of the late morning sun reflected off the water in bright, jagged ripples. It wasn't even noon yet and already I was wiping beads of sweat from the back of my neck and forehead. The nervous flutters in my belly didn't help much either.

He'd come. He promised.

Or was I just crazy? Drunk from the toxic vapors of Daddy Mo's corn mash whiskey and my own buck-wild imagination? You crazy, Bobby, the chiding voice scolded in my head. Believin' in spooks and haints and mystery promises; in pop-go-the-weasel niggah boys who rise up unannounced from Jesus knows where, quiet and sure and more than a little bit...

"Scared you came?"

I jumped, my head whipping around as if snatched. His bewitching, lazy brown eyes hooked mine for a second, then swung out across the pond in awkward silence. He'd kept his promise.

"No," I answered, lying. "W...wouldn't be here if I wuz." He said nothing, stooping down in one fluid movement to pick up a rock, tossing it with practiced ease across the pond. Three skips and it was gone, leaving a trail of shimmering ripples in its wake. Still crouched, he gave me a strange, sidelong glance over his shoulder, one that made me feel like he knew something I didn't and had no intention on sharing it.

"Promises made to be kep'," he said in that Mississippi Delta Negro drawl that conjured lost and brutal eras of American history in my tender, twelve-year-old mind.

Antebellum spirituals and lively banjo strumming.

Smoldering hatreds and blood-fueled passions.

Opulent wealth and dismal poverty.

He turned slightly and the oil in his short, nappy hair made it glisten and shine as if his dark scalp was saturated with tiny, sparkling diamonds, each move of his head producing a lustrous shimmer.

He was taller than me by three or four inches, his T-shirt sleeveless and torn, coarse sackcloth trousers cut off at the knees with sloppy thread tendrils hanging raggedly. I had guessed his age as about fifteen. He had a track-runner's body, lean and greyhoundish, his skin the golden brown color of peanut butter. The ugly criss-cross scars on his chocolate thighs and neck disturbed me, but I hadn't the courage to inquire. Something about those eyes restrained me.

Eyes of mint-green, boot-black and scarlet-red.

The colors of Mother Africa.

Not actually, but *beneath*.

"What day dis be?" he queried as we moved up toward the trees out of direct, relentless sunlight.

I looked at him, confused. "Don't you know?"

He stared back, almost like a startled person would, blinking twice to clear his vision of its cobwebs. Then his expression seemed to waver between embarrassment and irritation. "Jus... jus' tell me what day dis be, lil' niggah."

"Tuesday." My answer only irritated him more, slipping underneath his skin like the heat and anxiety of the moment. He fidgeted as if about to pee on himself, shook his head from side to side in a quick, definitive way, then blurted out, "Don't mean *dat*. Ah mean, what year?"

I started to burst out laughing, but wisely checked myself when some inner warning told me he wasn't playing games. He really, truly was ignorant of what he claimed. When I told him the year was nineteen ninety-three, a vague shadow, a *pall*, seemed to pass over his handsome face. He peered up toward the sky and sighed, a weary, overburdened sound, then closed his eyes as one would in prayer to the Lord, his full, slightly-chapped lips moving unintelligibly.

"Tis da devil done claimed mah soul," I heard him mumble as I unconsciously moved a few steps back into the shade of an overgrown, knotty pine tree. I didn't understand, and the fact that I didn't was beginning to nudge me on to a dull but sharpening fear.

There was a *wrongness* here.

Essentially out-of-whack but functioning anyway.

A paradox.

I thought of my sister, Rochelle, and her boyfriend, Dwayne, suddenly. Yo, Dwayne. What up, Dwayne. My sister, forever in love with love, worshiping the very ground on which the dude stepped, sporting his signet ring on her finger with cocky pride, her hot, vulgar mouth frothing over with over-blown platitudes and puppy-love

predictions of having a litter of Dwayne's babies someday. Silly assed girl.

She didn't know boys.

No more than I knew *this* one.

A chance meet a week before when I'd come to the pond to be alone, to escape Mama's shrill complaints and Daddy Mo's whiskey-breathed obscenities, the boy a wraith-gift from the archives of my bitter loneliness. I didn't even know his name.

"What you sayin'?" I asked.

"Don't matter none," he answered, then let loose with a self-satisfied chuckle-snicker, air whistling through his clenched teeth, shoulders jerking up and down rhythmically. The gesture reminded me of that snickering dog on the old Hanna-Barbara cartoons, Smudley or Snidely or whatever his name was. The image it conjured in my mind was absurd and made me laugh. After a moment we stopped laughing and looked at each other, unsure of what to say.

It was like this the last time....

That pivotal point between *deciding* to Do It and Doing It, both of us seeming to be waiting on the other to initiate. My twelve-year-old hormones and my conscience were busy waging quiet battle.

To mask my tension, I turned around and began picking strips of bark off the pine tree's trunk, absently humming the melody to some old soul song that had been running through my mind all morning, trying hard to ignore my bass drum heartbeat, the loud flutters in my belly.

"Caint go back," I heard him whisper. "Ain't nuttin' but death and mo' death back yonder."

Deeper mystery. "Huh?"

"Back yonder," he said behind me, crunching leaves underfoot. "Massah Dupree and dem white folks. Dey gots it in fo' me 'cause uh what I done to Massa' boy, Charles. He be yo' age, I reckon. Twelve, 'leven. Keeps him up in da big house 'round all dem high-class wimmen folk. Spoilt bad like rotted catfish." I started to turn around, having absolutely no idea what he was talking about, but he wasn't through. "Yeah," he went on in that low, reflective voice, its sound soothing, hypnotic. "Spoilt *dirty* bad. Boy come 'round by da slave shack when da moon done rose up. Massah don't know, right? Done been in da Missus' wimmen thangs, his eyes and lips all colored up, silk britches tight as sin 'round his fat backside, dark curls fallin' down 'round his perty face like his sister, Miss Audrey. White boy call fo' me, talkin' 'bout Massah Dupree send him to fetch me. I follows him out past da hoss stable. It be *real* hot dat night, right? Eyes barefoot, ain't got no

shirt on, wearin' deez heah britches.

"We gets out by da ol' shithouse in back uh da big house and Massah' boy say, 'I lied. Massah don't want you. But you tell, niggah, and I'll tell mah daddy you been eyeballin' mah sister, and he'll whip you somethin' good.' Den da boy tell me to lean 'gainst da shithouse. I do it and he reach down and start feelin' 'tween mah legs, rubbin mah thang, makin' it stand up hard in mah britches. I lets him undo mah britches and take it out, all black and long and hard like Mama's skillet handle, and he wiggle down his silk britches and tell me to rub my thang 'cross his booboo, up 'tween dem fat, white cheeks uh his, den I fucks him, wit' da moon shinin' bright and da hogs a gruntin' in da pens out yonder..."

I felt him directly behind me, peering over my shoulder. My body tensed even more. A light breeze whistled through the woods, rustling leaves and overhanging branches. I was overcome with a disorienting feeling that time had somehow played weird tricks with me, that I had stepped into somebody's movie script unwittingly, that someone would yell, "Cut!" soon and I'd be patted on the back for a scene well done. No chance.

"What choo doin', lil' niggah?" His voice was hushed, husky.

"Nuttin'." I answered. And then he was pressed up against me, palpable proof this was no dream, his groin snugly resting against my behind. Automatically I pushed back, rubbing my ass from side to side against his pants crotch, feeling the heat of his arousal spread like a fungus across the seat of my rear. He let out a deep moaning sound, one of his long arms encircling my waist while the other crept its way down to my groin.

I had a monstrous erection.

He deftly massaged it through my trousers, a thousand and one little explosions detonating inside my head.

"Da devil be damned, Bobby," he breathed lustfully, causing me to wonder if and when I had told him my name. "Yo' thang hard as mine."

Yo' thang. My thang.

You know: Weiner. Cock. Dick. Worm. Wee wee.

Dirty, vulgar words we learned when we were in grammar school, timeless and universal and naughty enough to get you a good ass-whipping if you used them around the wrong set of grown-ups.

That 'thang' you peed with.

And *his* 'thang'. It *was* as hard as mine.

I could feel it back there. It was like a warm length of lead pipe, trapped inside those ancient cut-offs, digging and rubbing into me, giving me that hot, twisted thrill I'd come to yearn for.

Yeah. I was a sissy. A faggot. A 'gump'.

I'd known I was since the third grade when me and this little high yellow niggah, Reginald Colfax, used to sneak off behind the tool shed in his backyard, drop our pants and rub our wee wees against each other's boodies. Reginald always greased his dookie hole and crack with Vaseline, ever ready for some lewd action.

Confess yo' sins unto da Lawwwd, bruthus and sistahs, and all thangs shall be fo'given.

So sayeth the Good Reverend James W. Reid at Sunday morning services. And I did confess unto Him, each and every night, but no sooner had the guilt retreated than the desire reasserted its prowess, proving to me its knowledge of those filthy secrets I was trying so desperately to hide from God and everybody....

"Bend over."

I hugged the tree trunk, my trousers and underwear pulled down, my breath escaping in labored spurts. My 'thang', chocolate-colored and stiff as a death sentence, swooped upward from my smooth crotch fork like a throbbing sword, pointing fearlessly toward the bright azure sky.

I was afraid to touch it.

I shut my eyes and purred as he slipped It between my buttocks, making them clench and squeeze around It possessively. I wanted It up my bootie and told him so.

That long, greasy, black mamba.

He didn't speak.

I heard knees pop and felt him slip away as he hunkered down. Strong hands gripped my thighs. His whole countenance pushed its way up into my ass. I groaned in alarm, trying to pull away. No one had ever done that to me. He held fast, pleading in a rushed whisper, "No, no. Lemme do dis. You'll like it. It feel good. Feel *real* good."

A buzzsaw noise close to my ear.

I swatted away its perpetrator, then clutched the tree tighter.

His efforts were crude and ardent, burrowing with a ravenous abandon, his hot tongue stabbing its way past my anus, up into that dark, unclean place.

The feeling was rudimental.

Animal nasty.

I let go and rode him, working my boodie around on his face in a lewd gyration, supplying him with all the access he needed to get to whatever it was he was after.

I could hear Rochelle's peasty, grating voice now if she was here: Oooooo, you *dirrrrrty*, Bobby. Lettin' that niggah lick all up in yo' booboo like that. His tongue all up in yo' dookie hole!

Yeah, man.

In my dookie hole.

Makin' sweet, obscene love to it with those wet, suction cup lips, my bubble-round, Hershey butt doing the mojo hump and roll in broad daylight, in the woods, my wee wee jumping up and down like a nervous spring lever.

Feel good. Feel *real* good.

In my dookie hole.

My pleasure increased, my hands reaching back to pull my rump cushions apart for him. Everything felt relaxed and nasty-slimy back there.

Ready.

A questioning caw, then another, resounding through the trees as he stopped and rose to his feet. His breath was ragged, urgent.

"Ah eats Massah' boy booboo real good 'fo ah fucks him," he revealed without shame, his hands gripping me firmly about the hips. "Dat's why dey hang me. Say a niggah burn in Hell fo' his sin."

Before my thoughts could organize themselves over what I'd just heard, make sense from the senseless, he pulled me back onto his petrified sex, nudging the head past my willing bull's eye. I grunted, gritted my teeth. "Oooo, *goddamn*," I gasped, reaching behind me to steer his hips. "Yo' dick *big*, man!"

"Yo' booboo tight, Bobby," he breathed excitedly, pushing more of himself up my back region. "Lawd have *mercy*, yo' booboo tight!" I grimaced from the pain, my stubborn sphincter refusing to yield easily, the wrath of da Lawd blocking the road to unholy sacrilege. But soon the sweet numbness took over, the road clearing, the path yielding. My eyes drooped shut as a whirlwind of memories which weren't my own elbowed their way to the surface of visceral awareness: the chattering of cicadas and nesting fowl interlaced with the amplified clomping of horse hooves and rickety carriages; rich, spirited harmonies sung in bassoon baritones and magnificent tenors about hope and liberation from the iron shackles of servitude; the sharp, merciless crack of whips across sweat-sleek, ebony skin; cruel, imperious laughter; soul-wrenching screams.

Ohhhh, fuck me.

Fuck that tight, licorice ass.

Make that sucker sing the St. Louis Blues in the key of B-flat, you bad motherfucker.

I bucked and jerked my hips with each ramming stroke, giving him all of what he wanted, taking all of what he gave. We took from each other,

two immoral black boys bridging the gap between dream and reality, need and escape, time Present and time Long Forgotten. Our pact was bonded, sealed, consummation with the eternal lust god, immersed in the musical choir and sights of Mother Nature.

A dozen plunges later up my back route love canal and I was groaning, clenching my buttocks and spurting all over the tree in front of me. "You doin' it, lil' niggah?" he asked me several times. "Huh? You doin' it?" The fact that I was seemed to fuel his ardor even more, causing his haunches to twitch and hunch with increasing speed until he was literally slamming his cock in and out of my ass, his hard pelvis slapping loudly against my boodie, my body shuddering from impact.

And then, before I knew it, he was pulling out entirely and splashing warm semen all over my ass, down the backs of my wobbly legs.

The fever cloud began to dissipate.

The gift was over.

Slowly, I bent down to pull up shorts and trousers, afraid to turn around, afraid to look into his eyes and see the same cesspool of spent emotion, dark satisfaction and confusion I was feeling reflected back at me. I was suddenly aware of the serenity of my surroundings once more.

The clattering of insects.

The garbling of birds.

The crackling, rustling leaves.

Nature's symphony blending unevenly with the rattling of his belt buckle, his hard cough, crude hack, spitting, the sounds of him buttoning up his fly.

I wanted badly to say something. Anything.

To let him know how much I enjoyed it, how thrilling it was... but the words eluded me, like the shadows of specters.

I just longed to close that chasm of alienation and mystery by talking, exchanging mutually understood words, thoughts, planning for our next tryst...

But when I turned around, the only things I saw were dead branches and pine cones that had been trampled where he'd been standing.

The gift was truly over.

Only myself, the woods, and the still, kidney-shaped pond remained, its murky, dark water a giant mirror for the hot, glaring sun above me....