

BENEATHA. And where does it end?

ASAGAI. End? Who ever spoke of an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA. An end to misery! To stupidity! Don't you see there isn't any real progress, Asagai, there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around, each of us with our own little picture in front of us—our own little mirage that we think is the future.

ASAGAI. That is the mistake.

BENEATHA. What?

ASAGAI. What you just said—about the circle. It isn't a circle. (*His gestures paint the picture as he talks.*) It is simply a long line—as in geometry, you know—one that *curves* into infinity. And because we cannot see the end, we also cannot see how it—changes. And it is very odd, but those who *see* the changes—who dream, who will not give up—are called idealists. . . and those who *see only* the circle—(*ironically*) they call each other the “realists”!

BENEATHA. Asagai, while I was sleeping in that bed in there, people went out and took the future right out of my hands! Nobody asked me—they just went out and changed my life!

ASAGAI. Was it your money?

BENEATHA. What?

ASAGAI. Was it your money he gave away?

BENEATHA. It belonged to all of us.

ASAGAI. But did you earn it? Would you have had it at all if your father had not died?

BENEATHA. No.

ASAGAI. Then isn't there something wrong in a house—in a world—where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man? I never thought to see *you* like this, Alaiyo. *You*. Your brother made a mistake and you are grateful to him so that now you can give up the ailing human race on

account of it! You talk about what good is struggle, what good is anything! Where are we all going and why are we bothering!

BENEATHA. AND YOU CANNOT ANSWER IT!

ASAGAI. (*Shouting over her.*) I LIVE THE ANSWER! (*Long pause as he crosses to her and marshalls the words to truly reach her.*) In my village at home it is the exceptional man who can even read a newspaper—or who ever *sees* a book at all. (*crosses r. in to her*) I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village—But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem that nothing changes at all—and then again—the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression, even. Guns, murder, revolution. And I even will have moments when I wonder if the quiet was not better than all that death and hatred. But I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long. And perhaps—perhaps I will be a great man—(*She looks at him oddly, turns away.*) I mean perhaps I will hold onto the substance of truth—and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire—

~~BENEATHA. THE MARTYR!~~

ASAGAI. (*He smiles, softening.*) Or perhaps I shall live to be a very old man, respected and esteemed in my new nation—And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and outmoded, and I will do terrible things to have things my way or merely to keep my power. Don't you see there will be young men and women, not British soldiers, but my own black countrymen—to step out of the shadows

start

some night and slit my then useless throat? Don't you see, they have always been there—that they always will be? And that such a thing as my own death will be an advance—actually replenishing all that I was. ← end

BENEATHA. Oh, Asagai, I know all that. (*crosses away*)

ASAGAI. Good! Then stop moaning and groaning and tell me what you plan to do.

BENEATHA. (*turning*) Do?

ASAGAI. I have a bit of a suggestion.

BENEATHA. What?

ASAGAI. (*rather quietly for him*) That when it is all over—that you come home with me—

BENEATHA. (*slapping herself on the forehead with exasperation and crossing away*) Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI. (*quickly understanding the misunderstanding and crossing after her*) My dear, young creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean: home—to Africa.

BENEATHA. (*slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured amazement*) [To Africa?

ASAGAI. Yes! (*Smiling and lifting his arms playfully.*) Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the sea and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come—

BENEATHA. (*unable to play*)] To—to Nigeria—?

ASAGAI. Nigeria. Home. (*Drawing close beside her and guiding her eyes upward and out, he raises one hand to reveal the vista that awaits them. With genuine romantic flippancy:*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—

and in time—we will pretend that—(*very softly*) you have only been away for a day. Say that you'll come. (*He turns her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion.*)

BENEATHA. (*pulling away suddenly*) You're getting me all mixed up—

ASAGAI. Why—?

BENEATHA. Too many things—too much has happened today. I don't know what I feel about anything. I'm just going to sit down and think. (*crosses D.C., sits on sofa and props her head on her hand*)

ASAGAI. All right, I shall leave you. (*Crosses to c. above table. BENEATHA starts to rise.*) No—don't get up. Just sit a while and think—Never be afraid to sit a while and think. (*goes to the c. door and turns*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought—" (*He exits.*)

(*BENEATHA sits on alone. Presently WALTER enters from his room and starts to rummage through things, feverishly looking for something. She looks up and turns in her seat.*)

BENEATHA. (*hissingly, punctuating each word*) Yes—just look at what the "New World Hath Wrought!" Just look! (*She gestures with bitter disgust. Business of WALTER searching for LINDNER's card.*) There he is! *Monsieur le petit bourgeois noir* himself! There he is—Symbol of a Rising Class! Entrepreneur! Titan of the system! (*WALTER ignores her completely and picks up his coat from chair D.R., frantically looking and hurling things to the floor and tearing things out*)