

## A JOB

"We gotta go down to niggertown,  
fix a water heater,"  
Ray says, "Come on."  
We get into National City, find the place,  
replace the copper tubing,  
safety valve, roughen the insides  
of the elbow joints  
so they'll seal,  
then solder it together.  
The black man comes out to the garage  
while we're working,  
talks about his job, his daughter  
in high school, says,  
"Come on in now and have some lunch."  
We go inside  
and the woman grills cheese sandwiches,  
pours coffee,  
then a piece of cake.  
We're sitting in the chairs, talking  
about this and that,  
the pepper tree blowing in the window.

Back at the shop, Bill says:  
"You get enough of them niggers today?"  
But before I can speak  
Ray answers, "Bill, you shut your goddamn mouth!"

## MANPOWER

"No, I'm not married," he answered.  
We sat in the workshed smoking cigarettes,  
the rain steady on the roof.  
Our shovels, caked with mud,  
stood outside the door.  
Then, the second day:  
"Yes, I'm married.  
Married and have two kids.  
But I don't tell most people cause  
they ask, 'How can you support a family  
working for Manpower?'"

"Christ, I get tired of telling them I can't."