



"TR to Stamp Paid"

No Known Copyright

Princeton University Library reasonably believes that the Item is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made.

You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use.

Princeton University Library Disclaimer

Princeton University Library claims no copyright governing this digital resource. It is provided for free, on a non-commercial, open-access basis, for fair-use academic and research purposes only. Anyone who claims copyright over any part of these resources and feels that they should not be presented in this manner is invited to contact Princeton University Library, who will in turn consider such concerns and make every effort to respond appropriately. We request that users reproducing this resource cite it according the guidelines described at <http://rbcs.princeton.edu/policies/forms-citation>.

Citation Information

Morrison, Toni. 1931-

"TR to Stamp Paid"

1 folder

Contact Information

Download Information

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 12:40:21 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/td96k708p>

TR To Stamp Paid

"Howdy."

Stamp Paid was still fidgeting the ribbon ~~in his~~ pocket and ~~the~~ little motion it made in his pants pocket.

Paul D looked up, ~~saw~~ noticed the ^{side pocket} agitation, and sighed (snorted?) "I can't read. You got any more newspapers for me, just waste your time."

Stamp withdrew the ribbon and sat down on the steps. "No. This here's something else." He stroked the red silk between forefinger and thumb. "Something else."

Paul D didn't say anything, ~~and~~ the two men sat in silence for a few moments.

"This is hard for me," said Stamp. "But I got to do it. Two things I got to say to you. I'm take the easy one first."

Paul D chuckled. "If it's hard for you might kill me dead."

"No, no. Nothing like that. I come looking for you to ask your pardon. Apologize."

"For what?" Paul D reached in his coat for his bottle.

"You pick any house, any house, where ~~Negroes~~ colored live. For all of Cincinnati. Pick anyone and you welcome to stay there. I'm apologizing because they didn't offer or tell you."

But you welcome any where you want to
be. My house is your house too.
John and Ella, Miss Lady, Stan Kin,
~~Reverend~~ Willie Pike - anybody. You choose.
You aint got to sleep in ~~no~~ no
cellar, and I apologize for each and
every night you did. I dont know how
that preacher let you do it. I knowed
him since he was a boy.

"Whoa Stamp. He offered."

"Well?"

"Well. I wanted, I didnt want to,
I just wanted to be off by myself a spell.
He offered. Every time I see him he
I fess again."

"That's a load off. I thought every
body gone crazy."

Paul D. shook his head. "Just me."

"You planning to do anything about
it?"

"Oh yeah. I got big plans." He
swallowed twice from the bottle.

TK?

~~Beyond them in the road~~
young riding by looked at them and suddenly, a
man ~~and a~~ reigned his horse
He sat a high Eastern saddle, but
everything else about him was Ohio
Valley. He turned his horse around
and leaned forward

"Hey," he said.

Stamp put his ribbon in his

-white
-name

Pocket. "Yes, Sir?"

"I'm looking for a gal name Letty. Works down by the slaughterhouse."

"Don't believe I know her. No, Sir."

"Said she lived on Plank Road"

"Benson ^{Yes, Sir.} That's up a ways. Mile maybe."

"You don't know her? Letty. Works in the slaughterhouse."

"No Sir. But I know Plank Road Bout a mile up."

Paul D. lifted his bottle and swallowed. The rider looked at him, and then back at Stamp Paid. Loosening the ^{right} reins ~~the horse~~ he turned ~~the~~ his horse toward the road, then changed his mind.

"Look here," he said ~~the~~ to Paul D. "There's a cross ~~over~~ up there, so I guess this here's a church or used to be. Seems to me like you ought to show it some respect, you follow me?"

"Yes, sir," said Stamp. "You regret about that. That's just what I come over to talk to him about. Just that."

The rider clicked ^{his tongue} and trotted off. Stamp ^{made small circles in} ~~brushed~~ the palm of his left hand with two fingers of his right. "You got to choose," he said, Stamp.

"Choose any one. They let you be if you want 'em to. My house. Ella. Walter Pike ... Anyone I am take you."

"What about Letty? ^{Will} ~~Then~~ she take me?"

"None of us got much, but ^{all of us} got rooms for one more. Pay ^{a little something} when you can, don't when you cant. Think about it. You grown. I cant make you do what you want but think about it."

Paul I said nothing.

"If I did you harm, I'm here to rectify it."

"No need for that. No need at all."

A woman with four children walked by. She waved, smiling "Hoo-oo, I Cant Stop. See you at meeting."

"Here there," Stamp returned her greeting. "There's another one," he said. "Scripture Lawkins. Works at the envelope factory. You'll see. Stay round here long enough you'll see aint a sweeter bunch of colored anywhere than what's right here."

^{Alexander}
"What you got in mind?"

You know Letty?

I know everybody.

Out on Plank Road?

Everybody

Will?

Well?

She take me in?

TK

Let me tell you how I got my name.

Stamp leaned down ^{and} ~~and~~ untied ~~and~~
~~his~~ his shoe. ^{Philue} black buttons
led up to 4 pair of eyes. He loosened
the laces all the way down, adjusted
the tongue and ~~he~~ carefully wound
them back again. When got to the
eyes he ~~rolled~~ ^{tape} the ~~tips~~ ^{tips} with his fingers
before inserting them.

The knot was tight and so was the bow.
"I ~~wasn't~~ ^{They called me} called Joshua," he said "I re-
named myself," he said. "And I'm going to
tell you why I did it." [Slowly, in short
sentences] he told him about Vashti. "I never
touched her all that time. Not once. Almost
a year she ~~was~~ ^{was} planting when it started and
chopping picking when it stopped. Seemed
longer. ~~She came on~~ I should have killed him.
She said no, but I should have. I didn't have
the patience I got now ~~but~~ ^{maybe} I figured some-
body else didn't have much patience either -
his own wife. Took it in my head to
see ~~how~~ ^{if} she was taking it any better than I
was. Vashti ^{& me} was in the fields ^{together} ⁱⁿ the
day, ~~wasn't~~ ^{wasn't} Had the night she was with

But Every now and then she be gone all night.

~~him. The other half with me. But~~
I never touched her, and damn me if I
spoke 3 words to her a day. I ~~managed~~
took any chance I had to get
near the great house. ~~So I could catch~~ ^{to see}
~~sign of her - the boy's~~ ^{his} wife. Nothing
but a boy. ^{Sometimes} maybe. I caught
sign of her finally, standing ^{in the back yard}
the fence with a ^{glass of water} ~~parasol~~. I
went over. Stood back a ways and
took off my hat. "Scuse me, Miss.
Scuse me?" She turned to look. "I'm
Scuse me. You seen Vashiti? My wife
Vashiti?" A little pretty thing, she was.

Smiling

She say "What? Vashiti?" I say "Yes'm."

Vashiti, my wife. She say she owe
you ^{all} some eggs. You know if she bring em?
You'd know ^{her} if you see her. Wear a
~~gold~~ ^{black} ribbon on her neck." She
sat cozy and. I knowed ^{she knowed}
he give ^{Vashiti} ~~her~~ that to wear. ^{A cameo on a black ribbon} ~~and she~~
used put it on every time she went to him.

I put my hat back on. "You see her
tell her I need her. Thank you.
Thank you, Ma'am." I backed up
before she could say something. I
thought it would give me more satisfaction
than it did. But it went right on,
watching her face, ~~out the side~~

Though. Till one morning she came in
and sat by the window. A Sunday. We
worked our own patches on Sunday. She sat
by the window looking out. I'm back
she said I'm back Josh. I looked at
the back of her neck. She had a real small neck.

I decided to break it. ~~Snap it~~ You know
like a twig - just snap it. ^{I been} ~~That was as low~~ ^{low} ~~but~~
as I ever got."

"Did you? Snap it?"

"~~Yeah~~ I changed my name. ~~and~~
started looking for liquor.

TK>

How you get out of there?

Boat. ^{up} the Mississippi to
Memphis. Memphis ^{walked from} to _____.

Wacht's too?

No. She ~~wanted~~ ^{did} by there.

An man. Tie your other shoe!

What?

Tie your goddamn shoe! It's
sitting right in front of you! Tie it!

That Make you feel better?

"No." Paul I tossed the
batle on the ground. ~~Stamps~~

I said I had two things to say to
you. ~~That's one~~ I only told you
one. I have to tell you the other.

No, please. I don't want to know
nothing. ^{Just} ~~except~~ if Betty will take me
in or won't she?

I was there, Paul.

You was where?
there. In the yard. When she did it.

label
picture

Letty?

Sethi?

Jesus.

It wasn't what you think.

You don't know what I think.

She was trying to ^{out} hunt the hunter.

Leave off.

And spread it.

Stamp, let me off.

Hunter. I don't know what she owe.
But you can pay it up for her.

Me?

Yeah, you. You owe it too.

Me?

You ~~me~~. We all do. Each and
everyone of us. We pay ~~for~~ ^{for} the each
other's debts anyhow. Might as well
pay it in seed ~~rather~~ ^{rather} instead of sand.

Sethi scares me.

I don't believe you.

No. I scare me. I scare me and
that girl in her house scares me.

Who is she.

I don't know. Just shot up one day
Sitting on a stump

Huh! Was a girl locked up
in the house with a white man
over in _____. Found him dead last
summer and the girl gone. Maybe
that's her. Folks say he had her
in there since she was a pup

Well now she's a bitch.

That's what run you off? Not Settle?
Not what ^{I told you} Settle did?

"Tell me something, Stamp." Paul
D's eyes were wet. Tell me this one
thing. How much is a nigger supposed
to take? Tell me. How much?"

All he can.

Why? Why? Why? Why?

I told
you about
what