

darkies who needed money on any terms and didn't have collateral satisfactory to licensed pawnbrokers. Semore handled any collateral cheerfully, willingly lending on such stuff as came his way as much as fifteen per cent of the forced-sale value. Of course a diamond was different. That was high finance.

And so darktown hated Semore Mashby: hated him passionately and single-mindedly. If there was any unanimity of feeling among the negroes of the community it was in the desire to sting Semore for even a modest portion of his bankroll. "If'n I could once do Semore Mashby out'n a dollar," Urias had often articulated, "I'd be buried smilin'."

For the man who succeeded in parting Semore from any of his coin there was waiting a universal acclaim. Several had tried it — with results disastrous to themselves. But it was understood that there was open season on Semore's bankroll three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

So much the public knew of Semore Mashby: so much and no more. He was looked upon as a dried fig of humanity, a bloodless entity from which all semblance of softness had been squashed. Above all, he bore reputation as a misogynist. And of all things in the catalog, Semore Mashby was not that.

Vistar Goins was her name, a delectable creamy-brown creature of luscious curves and full red lips; a vivacious, pert-tongued little thing whose *élan* set Semore's heart to thumping madly beneath his threadbare shirt.

Vistar was a woman of keen perception and nice