

THE OLD SWIMMING HOLE

I cleared my throat. "Come, lad, you will be well in a few days—up and around in the woods, feeding the squirrels."

"Yes—but if I ain't!" Tender, wistful, questioning, his loyal brown eyes sought Wanza's. "You got to, Wanza. Say yes."

The girl's voice whimpered and broke. "I can't!"

"Why, yes you can! They's no one can cook like you, Wanza. Mr. David can't live here alone when he's old—he can't live here alone no more—say you'll come and take care of him. Why, you like the birds and the squirrels—you know you do, Wanza—and you like Mr. David, too. Will you, Wanza?" The soft wheedling accents wrung my heart.

At the girl's head-shake he whispered to me, "You ask her, Mr. David."

My hand groped for hers, closed over it, gripped it hard.

"If I ask her now—if she says yes, lad—it will be for your sake—all for your sake, Joey."

The big eyes were understanding. "Go on, ask her."

"Will you, Wanza?"

She was weeping.

"Because Joey asks it—because it will ease his