

'What are we waitin' for, big daddy? If you don't ball me quick, I'll go out of my cotton-pickin' mind.'

He regarded her for a second with thoughtful dark grey eyes. 'Haven't you got enough trouble?' he asked mildly. 'You can't help being born a Negro, but who told you you had to be a black dropout pot-smoking sixteen-year-old whore?'

She stared at him, baffled, wondering what she had said wrong. Maybe he had to get himself worked up and whip her first to get his kicks. Or maybe it was the Reverend Davidson bit. He was going to pray over her black ass, reform her, and then lay her. She tried again. She reached between his legs and stroked him, whispering, 'Go, baby. Sock it to me.'

He gently disengaged himself and sat her in an armchair. She had never been so puzzled. He didn't look like a fag, but these days you never knew. 'What's your bag, baby? Tell me how you like to freak out and I'll give it to you.'

'All right,' he said. 'Let's rap.'

'You mean - *talk*?'

'That's right.'

And they talked. All night long. It was the strangest night that Carol had ever spent. Dr Stevens kept leaping from one subject to another, exploring, testing her. He asked her opinion about Vietnam, ghettos, and college riots. Every time Carol thought she had figured out what he was really after, he switched to another subject. They talked of things she had never heard of, and about subjects in which she considered herself the world's greatest living expert. Months afterwards she used to lie awake, trying to recall the word, the idea, the magic phrase that had changed her. She had never been able to