Robert followed the landlady into the room with his parka and suitcase. After snapping on the light by the door, the landlady turned on a small heater in the corner of the room, then she went to the window to raise the shade. She was a big woman, but her moves were quick and jerkily. Her hair was very short, and Robert could tell by the way it shined and from its burnt smell that it had only recently been straightened. The landlady stood at the window shaking her head a moment, then she turned to Robert again.

"Been falling like this two weeks," she said.

Robert looked out at the rain falling against the window-pane. The rain, at present, was not much more than a heavy mist. Robert's green parka, which he had thrown over the foot of the bed, had gotten very wet when he had to walk from the bus station to the roominghouse back of town.

"People round here call it trouble weather," the landlady said. "I s'pose up North people don't pay too much 'tention to that kinda talk, though?"

"They have their superstitions," Robert said. "Mind if I smoke?"

"No, go on," the landlady said. "Ash tray there side the bed."
Robert lit a cigarette and went to the small table beside the bed to get the ashtray. The landlady was watching him all the time.

"Beats me why somebody like you would come to St. Adrienne," she said. "You got Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Alexandria--many town bigger 'an this one."

"I'm a writer," Robert said. "I like the name St. Adrienne."

"That's 'bout all it got left now, a name," the landlady said. "Everybody leaving little towns like St. Adrienne, going to the city. They ain't got no work here no more. People leaving, searching for work."

"What kind of entertainment do you have?" Robert asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all," the landlady said. "A few bars, a dance every now and then. Other than that, nothing. Sorry now you come?"

"No," Robert said, knocking some ash into the small metal ash tray.

"Church gives little something every now and then," the landlady said. "But that's mostly for old people and children."

"Do you have many churches in St. Adrienne?" Robert asked.

"You a Christian?" the landlady asked.

"No." Robert said.

The landlady who was a devoted Christian had looked at Robert hopefully a moment. But his unhesitating and straight forward answer soon caused all hopes to vanish. Not unlike most the rest of them, the landlady thought. They all turning they back on Him now.
"We have three--four, counting the white one up town," the landlady said, after she had looked at Robert a moment longer. "It's Catholic--I never been in there."

"Do any Colored people go in?"

"They go in, but they have to walk down a different aisle, and they have to sit on the left. They can't sit in the middle or on the right."

"Suppose they fill up the left?"

"They just stand up, I s'pose, or sit in the back, I s'pose. I ain't never been in there, I don't know."

Robert drew on the cigarette and looked at the landlady as he let the smoke out through his nostrils and his mouth.

"And back here, you said you had three?"

"Yes," the landlady said. "One Catholic and two Baptist. The Catholic one's farther back," she said, waving her hand as though she cared very little for the Catholic church.

Right outside and little to the left is my church. Reverend Martin, Pastor. Reverend Mack's church is farther back," she said, waving her hand again. "His ain't too big--a little bitty thing. A shack."

"If I get lonely I'll go to church," Robert said, knocking the ash off his cigarette.

"We'll be more than glad to have you," the landlady said. "With so many young people leaving the church today, we want all we can get. Right cross the street--Reverend Martin."

"I'll remember that name," Robert said.

"Don't know how long you'll be staying in St. Adrienne?"

"No," Robert said. "Just using it as a rest.""

"Till you finish your mission, I s'pose?"

"Stay long enough to get your mission done, huh?"

"Yes, to get my mission done."
The landlady shook her head.

"I don't know nothing 'bout writing," she said. "But God knows I can't see what anybody can write 'bout in this place."

Robert did not say anything. He shut his eyes a little as he drew on the cigarette. The landlady could see that he wanted her to get out.

"Well," she said. "You ought to be tired."

"A little," Robert said.

"If you need anything else, I'll be in Number One or the office," she said, going to the door. "She stopped before reaching the door and turned to him again. "Yes, another thing," she said. "I don't mind company. We realize a young man must have company--but noise..."

"I understand."

"This is the only roominghouse in St. Adrienne for Colored, and we try to keep it, you know, in good standing."

"I'll remember that."

The landlady nodded her head and smiled.

"Yes," she said. "I can see you come from good people."

Robert drew on the cigarette again.

"Well," the landlady said, seeing that he wanted her to get out, "you ought to be tired."

After she had left the room, Robert went to the window. The heavymist-like rain was still falling. The sky was darkish gray, the color of muddy water. Robert looked down at the street below his window and at the row of cottages across the street. The little cottages, setting close together, all had the same dark gray, dirty color. Almost everyone of them had a screen-in porch to keep out mosquitoes in the Summer. Robert looked from one to the other, he could see about five, then he looked
the other way. An automobile was passing on the street that
crossed the one below his window, and he could hear the sound that the tires made on the asphalt.

He turned from the window now and looked across the room. It was a small room with a single bed, a chair, and a chest of drawers. To the right of the bed was a little white lamp setting on a three-legged mohorgany table. On the other side of the bed was an opened closet with several wire clotheshangers. The bathroom was no more than a face bowl and a toilet; the landlady had told him that he would have to use the shower down the hall.

Not much, but what does it matter, he thought. It'll only be for a little while.

He crushed out the cigarette and lay down on the bed. He was tired, he was very tired, but it was impossible for him to sleep. After it is done, I'll sleep, he thought. I'll sleep, then. But first I better forget about sleeping and get used to this name. It's Robert James, it's Robert James. It's not Gerald Martin, not Gerald Martin, it's Robert James. And you are a writer. That's why you are here, you know. You're a writer. And only one person will ever know the difference. And even he won't know until the time comes. And then, then you'll sleep. Sleep. How beautiful sleep is.