

Uncle Mose's dream

by [Philip C. Kolin](#) in the [January 9, 2013](#) issue

What if that brave Emmett
had somehow managed to escape,
my boy who had done all that talking,
a word or maybe two before those
thirsty fists demanding
to be quenched in his blood
slammed my door down looking for him.

Say he heard their pickup truck.
Say he jumped out the window
of my clapboard house and ran through row
after row of burly-cheeked cotton
until even the lily-white moon
could not follow him.

Say he made it to that line
of loblolly pines and hid
in the colored cemetery; no whites allowed
their children or their womenfolk to go there
where the haints of lynched men lurk,
hate messages singed into their chests.

Say he made for the river
seeking safety in the bulrushes,
the final resting place of so many slaves
who ran for freedom, hoping his battered
breath might last long enough under
the cesspooling water, stringy-fingered
weeds and copperheads
grabbing for his ankles.

Say the Tallahatchie had not turned
vengeful, angry that some black boy
would pollute the waters where white men
feed their families and their lusts.

Say, too, from the river he searched
for a ditch to lie in, confining him
from the burlap-hooded vigilantes
swooping over the countryside.

Say a thunderstorm struck that night,
as they screamed to God
to let them catch the boy before
the lightning or the buzzards did.
Say, too, they scattered black
and white posters all over
Mississippi vowing to bury him.

Then say, just say, how he almost
found the train tracks which might have
led him out of the Delta,
out of Egypt, I called my son.