

1975

To John Oliver Killens in 1974

Gwendolyn Brooks

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brooks, Gwendolyn. "To John Oliver Killens in 1974." *The Iowa Review* 6.2 (1975): 10-11. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1827>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

But jit black dogs and carancros are none too plentiful.
They come to see their docteur when these fail.

They like him: young, good-looking, easy laugher.
As brown as they and one of theirs forever.
The women call him *cher*, tender but embarrassed,
Their good men pass sly glances at his clipped mustache
They think he lies about the conjuh knowledge.
But still he got sharp eyes, you never know.

They pay him off with garden truck, and cane-juice,
One auntie brought him six hens tied together
Squawking and screaming enough to wake a graveyard,
One hen was jit black to help him fix his medcins.

One night, past midnight, we jolted twelve miles to a cabin.
It seemed as if the Ford would never make it.
“Tank Gawd, you’s here. I tole ’em you would git here.
He’s hurted bad. He caught a bullet in his laig.
Tank Gawd, you’s come.” In the dull light of the lamp,
I watched his skillful probing for the slug.

Outside the rim of light, dark faces watched us.
His fingers were deft and gentle. The woman’s sobbings
Quieted; the man on the table lay there sweating,
Breathing heavily, but trusting; his eyes rolled,
Following the hands.

To John Oliver Killens in 1974 / Gwendolyn Brooks

John, we are marvelous monsters.
Look at our mercy, the massiveness that it is not.
Look at our “unity,” look at our
“black solidarity.”
Dim dull and dainty.
Ragged. (And we
grow colder: yea, we grow colder.)
John, see our
tatter-time.

You were always a mender.

You were always a sealer of tremblings and long trepidations.
And always, with you, the word kindness was not
a jingling thing but an
eye-tenderizer, a
heart-honeyer.

Therefore we turn, John, to you.
Interrupting self-raiding. We pause in our falling.
To ask another question of your daylight.

Deep Song / Gayl Jones
for B. H.

The blues calling my name.
She is singing a deep song.
She is singing a deep song.
I am human.
He calls me crazy.
He says, "You must be
crazy."
I say, "Yes, I'm crazy."
He sits with his knees apart.
His fly is broken.
She is singing a deep song.
He smiles.
She is singing a deep song.
"Yes, I'm crazy."
I care about you.
I care.
I care about you.
I care.
He lifts his eyebrows.
The blues is calling my name.
I tell him he'd better
do something about his fly.
He says something softly.
He says something so softly
that I can't even hear him.
He is a dark man.
Sometimes he is a good dark man.
Sometimes he is a bad dark man.
I love him.