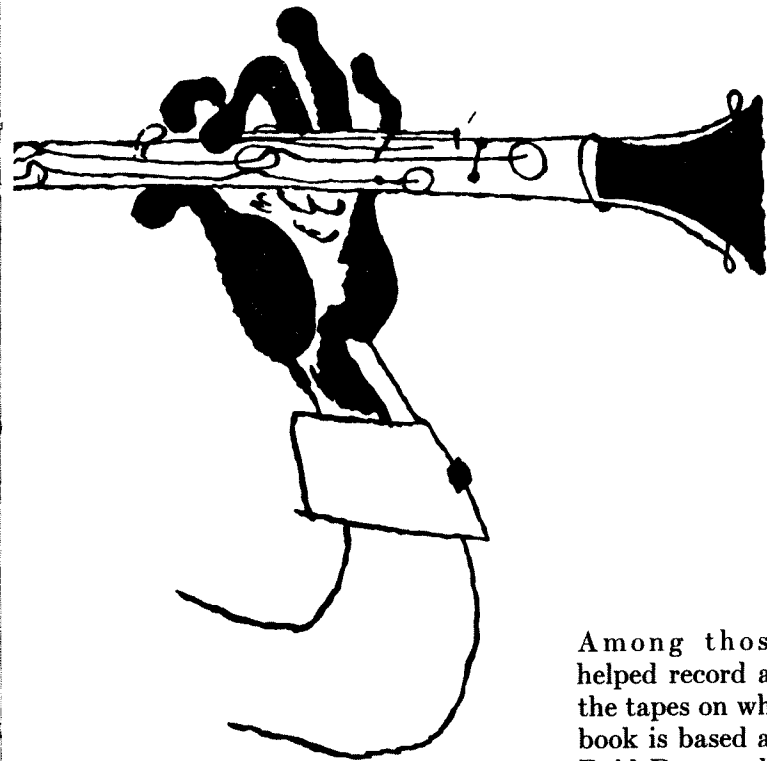


Treat It Gentle



by Sidney Bechet



Among those who helped record and edit the tapes on which this book is based are Joan Reid, Desmond Flower, and John Ciardi.

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1. A Bend in the Road

You know there's people, they got the wrong idea of Jazz. They think it's all that red-light business. But that's not so. And the real story I've got to tell, it's right there. It's Jazz. *What* it is—how it come to be what it is.

People come up to me and they ask me, 'Are you going to play *Tin Roof Blues*?' They ask me, 'What's be-bop?' or what do I think of some record Louis Armstrong put out. But if I was to answer that, I'd have to go back a long way. That's why I have to tell a lot more than people would expect.

They come to tell me they like this record or that, and they ask me what I'm trying to do by my music. They ask me what's going to happen to Jazz? Where's it going? One night a man came to see me when I was playing in Paris; I'd known his son in New York. He came in with this party, and after the band had finished playing I got to talking with him. He started to tell me it meant a lot to him to hear me play; he'd had an experience he'd never had before. I told him I played like I always played. That's really all I can say.

But he was in a kind of feeling he wanted to talk. He was coming to me because there was something he wanted to know. So he told me he wanted to tell me a story, how he hadn't planned on coming to this place, this Vieux Colombier. He'd been off somewhere, very happy; his people, they had been enjoying themselves. And then someone suggested they come to hear me, that's what he said. And this man, he'd heard me, and I was still playing the old music, I was still playing New

Orleans. That's what he told me. 'This music is your music,' he said.

But, you know, no music is my music. It's everybody's who can feel it. You're here . . . well, if there's music, you feel it—then it's yours too. You got to be in the sun to feel the sun. It's that way with music too.

But what that man said started me thinking. I began to think there's a whole lot of people, all they've been hearing is how ragtime got started in New Orleans, and as far as they know it just stopped there. They get to think in a memory kind of way all about this Jazz; but these people don't seem to know it's more than a memory thing. They don't seem to know it's happening right there where they're listening to it, just as much as it ever did in memory.

This man that come to see me in the Vieux Colombier went on to tell me about the band, about the French kids. 'You gave them the spark,' he said. 'They didn't have it until you played.' And then he wanted to know what was going to happen to Jazz when people like me weren't around any more.

But you know, Jazz isn't just me. It isn't just any one person who plays it. There'll always be Jazz. It doesn't stop with me, it doesn't stop anywhere. You take a melody . . . people can feel a melody . . . as long as there's melody there's Jazz, there's rhythm. But this man didn't stop there; he went on to say it was me who made the music—me and the old bunch: Buddy Bolden, Kid Ory, La Rocca and all the others. That's where I tell him no. People's got an idea, I tell him, but it isn't like that; they think it started with one person—Bolden, Oliver, someone—but it wasn't like that.

I'm trying to explain it to this man, how it got started way back. I told him how my family beat time with their hands on drums . . . how that's Jazz too, how you can just beat on the table and it can be Jazz.

But what that man was saying . . . he was worried that if people like him don't hear about it, stumble on to it, just like he did that night when he was persuaded to come, it wasn't going to be around. 'Jazz comes out of an environment,' this man said. 'Something makes it. We don't have today what we

should have to make it and keep it going. All we have to go on is a lot of legends. We'll remember river boats and never know how they were. We'll read about all those early days, and all we'll have is some bigger mystery except for maybe getting together with some friends from time to time and playing over all the records. We won't have anything of our own to add to it. The kids who take it up now, where are they going to go when they're looking for their background in Jazz? When they can't just walk down the street and hear it anywhere?'

'Maybe it stopped in New Orleans,' he said. 'Maybe there's no more of it except for a few of the old ones. Maybe its gone except for those who can remember it.'

Well, that's what this man had in his mind. But let me tell you one thing: Jazz, that's a name the white people have given to the music. What does Jazz mean to you when I come up behind you: 'Jazz,' I say, 'what does that do to you?' That doesn't explain the music.

There's two kinds of music. There's classic and there's ragtime. When I tell you ragtime, you can feel it, there's a spirit right in the word. It comes out of the Negro spirituals, out of Omar's way of singing, out of his rhythm. But Jazz—Jazz could mean any damn' thing: high times, screwing, ball-room. It used to be spelled *Jass*, which *was* screwing. But when you say ragtime, you're saying the music.

But here's what I really mean. All God's children got a crown. My race, their music . . . it's their way of giving you something, of showing you how to be happy. It's what they've got to make *them* happy. The spiritual, that's sad; but there's a way in it that's happy too. We can be told: 'Maybe you don't belong in Heaven, and you haven't got a place on this earth; you're not in our class, our race.' But somewhere, all God's children wear a crown, and someday we're going to wear ours too.

You know, the Negro doesn't want to cling to music. But he needs it; it means something; and *he* can mean something. He's always got to be honest, and people are always putting him to music. 'That's your place,' they say. How can you be

honest to something when people are trying to make it unnatural for you?

But if you have a feeling for the music, you can understand him, and that's why he keeps it so important to himself. And he's always been trying. The black man, he's been learning his way from the beginning. A way of saying something from inside himself, as far back as time, as far back as Africa, in the jungle, and the way the drums talked across the jungle, the way they filled the whole air with a sound like the blood beating inside himself.

My story goes a long way back. It goes further back than I had anything to do with. My music is like that . . . I got it from something inherited, just like the stories my father gave down to me. And those stories are all I know about some of the things bringing me to where I am. And all my life I've been trying to explain about something, something I understand—the part of me that was there before I was. It was there waiting to be me. It was there waiting to be the music. It's that part I've been trying to explain to myself all my life.

I want to tell you about this music before I go. A man don't have all the time in the world, and there's things he has to do before he can go happy.

That's two very different things you know. Just going—that happens to everyone. But getting so you can go happy, getting so you can get done some of the things you meant to get done—that's something else.

It's like a man being born in a little place, just a bend in the road somewhere. After a while he begins to travel the road. He travels all the road there is and then he comes back. That man, he understands something when he gets back. He knows the road goes away and he knows the road comes back. He knows that road comes back just the same way it goes away.

But you take another man. He's been there in that bend in the road, and he never goes away. Time goes by and he's coming to the end of his days. He looks at that road and he doesn't really know what it is. He's missed it. That road, it got away from him. All he knows is how it starts off. He never gets to know where it goes and how it comes back, how it feels to

come back. He could be a good man, but there's something he hasn't been understanding. It's the road, or it's himself, or it's something else, but whatever it is, there's something he hasn't been trusting.

I can remember when I was young. I didn't have toys like others. I never had a toy to play with. I wouldn't have known what to do with a toy if you gave me one. I started once to write a song for a boy like that. The song, it was called *Sans Amis*. He had nothing to play with and no one to play with. But he had a song. He kept making that song over and over out of himself, changing it around, making it fit. That boy, he had this song about being lonely, and as soon as he had the song, he wasn't lonely any more. He was lucky. He was real well off; he had this thing he could trust, and so he could trust himself.

Oh, I can be mean—I know that. But not to the music. That's a thing you gotta trust. You gotta mean it, and you gotta treat it gentle. The music, it's that road. There's good things alongside it, and there's miseries. You stop by the way and you can't ever be sure what you're going to find waiting. But the music itself, the road itself—there's no stopping that. It goes on all the time. It's the thing that brings you to everything else. You have to trust that. There's no one ever came back who can't tell you that.

And when you get back, there's the river by the road. You're back where you started from and you're looking across the river, and you're getting yourself ready to go. I'm feeling I almost got myself happy enough inside now. I'm feeling I'm almost ready.

10. From Harlem to Europe

When I was in London in 1921 there was a fellow by the name of George, and we used to go around a lot of those pubs there together. And back in America he used to remember those good times we had together; and I met him again when I was still with Duke at the Kentucky Club. One day he said that he'd like to open a cabaret with me. Well, with this discomfort like I said, I had been thinking anyway, so I said, 'All right, George. Let's see about it, if we can find a good place.'

So we went out all ways looking around, and we ran across a cabaret that was closed called the Hermit's End that was on 155th Street and 7th Avenue. And we went to look at the place and it was all right, so we took it and we got the decorators in. I had some money due to me from some records, and I sent Wellman Braud over to the Kentucky Club to get it. The owner of the Club, Bernstein, he was a hell of a grand fellow; he sent Braud over to get me to come over as he wanted to talk to me. So we was talking, and I told him I was fixing to leave as I had a place of my own. And he wanted to know if it was on account of those two fellows; but I didn't want to tell him the real reason, so I just said no, I just had this money and it was my idea to have this cabaret. Then he shook hands with me. 'Any time you ever want to come back, there's always a place for you,' he said. 'Bring in your own band if you want; you know there's no asking even. Now where is it you're going to have your place?'

So I told him, and he said, 'I'll be there your opening night when you start,' and he was.

When the decorators were all through we were about ready to open; we called the place the Club Basha. We had a lot of liquor because George made it; he was a bootlegger, you know. So we had a lot of gin, and we had the band playing. But in those days it was hard to get people in cabarets unless you were very well known; so for the first three nights we just had a few people in there, a few friends, and we had the hell of a time. And like I said, Bernstein was there and he sat at my table with me the whole evening. But around the fourth night, I'm telling you the truth—we really didn't have place enough for the people that came downstairs for the cabaret. So we had a swell time.

Just after we opened up, too, I worked a short while as a staff writer for Fred Fisher. I wrote several numbers at that time, like *Do That Thing*, and *Pleasure Mad*, and *Here It Is Daddy, Just Like You Left It—No Hands Have Touched It But Mine*. And another one was *Street Department Papa, Mama Wants Her Ashes Hauled Today*. I had a fellow with me who wrote songs and lyrics too, and we did all this at the Fred Fisher place.

At this time Will Marion Cook wanted to write a show with Jimmy Johnson, and he wanted me as well. We used to meet every day to get this show going. It was called *Negro Nuances* and it was a wonderful thing, but we just couldn't get it started. I had done quite a few numbers there with Will Marion Cook, but nothing happened, so I had to stop.

And I was making a whole lot of records around this time, with all sorts of bands and using all sorts of names. Like I said, in those days people, musicianers and singers would have a contract to record with one company and maybe there was a band coming together to play a date for another company and you just called yourself something else and everybody was satisfied. Like at this time Louis Armstrong and I made a lot of records with Clarence Williams, the Blue Five, and these were made for the Okeh Company. And Alberta Hunter, she was under contract with the Paramount Company. But at

this time, this would be getting on late in 1924, the Gennet people said how they would like her to record some numbers for them; so she did—*Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Mornin'*, that was one of them—and she used her sister's name of Josephine Beatty, and Louis and Lil Armstrong and I, we played with her and called ourselves the Red Onion Jazz Babies. Louis and I played some other numbers, too, under that name through 1925. But we made more records 'as Clarence Williams's Blue Five than any other, and we played with a lot of singers, too, like Virginia Liston, Margaret Johnson, Sippie Wallace and Eva Taylor. But the trouble with Clarence was that he would never give any of us credit on a date. I spoke to him about it and in the end he put my name on two dates: one of them I never played on at all, and the other—that was a date with Virginia Liston—he put down I played guitar! That's the reason why I left him in the end; and Louis, he had the same trouble and he left too.

After a while we started to have trouble in the cabaret. We had a girl named Bessie Desacheux there, and she was sort of floating around with George. So I told George, I said, 'Look, the girl likes to dance for some people, and there's some people she doesn't like to dance for. And if she's working in a cabaret she should dance with everybody.' So he said, 'Sidney, what do you want me to do?' So I said, 'Well, if you don't want to talk to her, I will.' So we always seemed to be having a discussion about this girl.

Then one night she had been out with a friend of mine, a fellow by the name of Terry Preston that owned a cabaret. So the following night Terry came to our cabaret and he wanted Bessie to dance, and she wouldn't. So that was really tough, and I wouldn't stand it. So I went to George and said to him that we would have to get rid of her. But George didn't want to, and it almost came to blows. And this guy George, he had some friends in there who were in the bootlegging with him. But I had some friends too, and one of them, Jack Diamond's brother, was a very good friend of mine. He knew all about the story, and he said to me, 'You go ahead. I'll clean the whole joint out if you want.' So I said, 'No, no;

don't do nothing like that, because he's my partner. When you take a man as a partner, naturally you must like him, or care something about him, or have confidence in him, otherwise you really wouldn't take him into partnership.' So that just ran on.

So the next thing George did, he opened up a numbers racket in the place. And one of the badest men in New York hit the numbers. His name was Bob Ewley. He really hit the numbers, and George couldn't get the money up; it was something like eight or nine thousand dollars which at that time was a whole lot of money. Bob Ewley was a friend of mine also, and when his fellows came to break the place up I went and spoke to him and told him about it. He said, 'Listen, you better get rid of that guy.' But I said, 'Well, I think I am the one who's going to go.' So I engaged a lawyer, a brother of George Lattimore he was; I got him to run the place and see that all the debts were paid up. And that was the end of it for me.

It was the summer of 1925 by now, and Spencer Williams and Louis Douglas they were getting together a show that was to come to Europe with Josephine Baker in it. Josephine Baker, she was an understudy then at the Plantation Club and this was her first real break. Spencer Williams wrote the numbers, and Claude Hopkins's band was along. And we all sailed in the old *Berengaria* mid-September and opened the *Revue Nègre* soon after at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. The show was a great success. Josephine and Louis, I remember, danced the Charleston and nobody in Europe had seen that dance before, and that really started something. That show really had Paris going. All the critics and all the papers were writing it up, and the house was full every night.

After we'd had this great success in Paris we took the whole show on to Brussels, and then to the Nelson Theatre in Berlin. It was while we were there that Josephine Baker got an offer to go to the Folies Bergères, so she left to go back to Paris and was replaced by Maude de Forest. And not long after that I left too, and went to Russia.

There was a number of musicianers going to Russia at that

Treat It Gentle

time, and that's when I first met Tommy Ladnier. The way it came about was like this. I had a projector but something had happened and I didn't have no camera. So I was inquiring about how I could get me a camera and some friend of mine said, 'Do you know this orchestra of Sammy Wooding?' And I said, 'Sure, I know Sammy Wooding very well.' 'So he's got a trumpet player named Tommy Ladnier who's got a camera to sell.' I said, 'Well, I know of Tommy Ladnier; I'd like to meet him.' So when I got to Tommy we had a lot of fun. Tommy reminded me that in Chicago he used to go and see me playing pool with different people and he wanted to speak to me but he was afraid. I said, 'Why were you afraid?' 'Well, I wasn't playing so good at that time,' he answered, and I said, 'Well, that's funny. You don't have to play good or wonderful to speak to somebody.' But he said, 'Well, I just felt that way.' Right away we got to know one another, and I bought that camera. We've always been close. It was always good.

11. Trouble in Paris

Some of what came to me, there was a good feeling to it, and some, it was poor. When I was playing at Chez Florence the second time, after Noble Sissle had gone back to America, I got myself into real trouble on account of bad feeling. I got into a gunfight and I went to jail for it.

In those days it was really something the way things went on. Times just aren't like that any more. Any time you walked down the street you'd run into four or five people you knew—performers, entertainers, all kinds of people who had a real talent to them. Everywhere you'd go you'd run into them; you couldn't help yourself. And everybody had a kind of excitement about him. Everyone, they was crazy to be *doing*. Well, you'd start to go home, and you'd just never get there. There was always some singer to hear or someone who was playing. You'd run into some friends and they were off to hear this or to do that and you just went along. It seemed like you just *couldn't* get home before ten or eleven in the morning.

It was almost like Prohibition up there in Montmartre in those days. It was almost like back in the days when you'd get a bottle of essence of garden gin and some seed alcohol and some distilled water and pour it into your bathtub. You'd start out with four people waiting in the other room and when you looked out again there be ten or a dozen. One of them, he'd come into the bathroom. 'Here let's taste some of that,' he'd say. Then first thing you'd know you'd have a consultation. 'No, it's not right yet,' somebody would say when he'd tasted

it. 'Not enough gin.' And there'd go some more of the Gardens. Somebody else, he'd try it, and he'd decide it needed some. There'd go the rest of the Gardens. By that time you were gone too. When you come out of the bathroom with a jug of that stuff, there wouldn't be more than room enough to stand up for the crowd, everybody playing the piano, talking, drinking, fooling around, everybody full of a kind of excitement, a kind of waiting for something big to happen.

That's the way it was in Montmartre in 1928, except that there wasn't any need to be making your own gin. And just like there was the Prohibition mobs in New York, there was that kind of mob around Montmartre, too. There were always men there who had rackets. They were making a lot of money by getting paid off by the owners of the clubs and cabarets, just so they could stay open. It was a kind of protective association they called it, but it was really just a shakedown. And to run a racket like that, you need a certain kind of person, a thug like. There were a lot like that around in those days and sometimes when one of them got drunk, it wasn't safe around them. So what happened as a result of things like that, nearly everybody, he carried a gun. You could be surer if you had a gun on you. There was tough times back there.

We musicians, the ones I knew the most about, we'd meet when we were off work. We had regular places where we could expect to find one another. Mostly it was in one little café off rue Fontaine. We'd sit in the back room of this café and we'd joke, play a few cards, or someone would take out his instrument, or we'd just talk. Pretty soon you'd begin to see those saucers piling up.

One night a fellow named Mike McKendrick was there. He was the one I had the trouble with, and the trouble was really brought on by a fellow who was supposed to be his friend, Glover Compton. Glover was a piano player. He was from Chicago and he was always talking about being a Northerner. He really liked to talk big; whatever he had to say, he talked like he expected everyone else to listen and be mighty ready to shake in their boots while they was doing it. It was like he was looking for a reputation as a bad man, as someone

really evil. He wasn't no one in any big-time way, but he was trying to cut in as much as he could. He was always acting like he wanted to stir up trouble, like he wanted to be known as a place where trouble started.

For some time before this night he'd been getting after Mike, telling him this and that about me, getting to see if he could start an argument between us, get some kind of a feud going. Mike was just a kid then. He was playing banjo somewhere in one of those cabarets. I don't know nothing about his wanting to be any trouble-maker; but this night he started coming at me with a lot of stories he told me this Glover had passed on to him, and I wasn't in any mood for that kind of thing. So finally we had an argument. It didn't really amount to anything right then, and we both had to leave to go to work after a while; but all the same there had been this argument.

The same night—it was morning by then—I was walking home from work and I passed this cabaret. I was about to go inside, but just as I got to the door I saw Glover. He had a whole party with him and I knew if I went in there he'd be only too happy to start some more trouble, so I stayed out. I just turned around and started to walk off, but Glover had seen me and he sent Mike out after me. That was his way, that Glover . . . he wasn't the kind to do anything himself if he could get someone else to do it for him, especially when it was trouble he was wanting.

So Mike came hurrying up after me and he said, 'Sidney, come on inside. My friend wants to see you.' Well I knew better than that; that was only a ruse like. If I went in there and sat down at their table, there'd be a whole lot of baiting and there was only one way that could end up. So I said, 'You tell your friend I'm not special about seeing him.' But Mike started insisting. He'd drunk some—quite a bit, in fact—and he wouldn't listen to anyone saying 'No'. Finally I just told him, why didn't he smarten up some? 'What you doing getting mixed up in something like that Glover?' I said. 'Don't you have anything better to do?'

Right away he started in talking like this Glover. Mike, he was from Chicago, too, and he'd picked up these big ideas

about being a Northerner. 'I don't think I like you,' he said. 'I don't think I like the way you look, Dixie-boy. You want to see what we do to people like you in Chicago?'

Well, it's one of those things I know something about. I'd heard that all before. Northern musicianers, they start themselves going sometimes. There's something jealous-like about them when another musicianer, he's from the South. So now this one, he's going to show me some of Chicago!

I didn't want to mess with him. I didn't want any trouble and just so long as he didn't go too far I didn't want anything at all to do with him. So I turned to go on, and just as soon as I turned my back he began to shout out, all excited. Maybe it was just that he was waiting for me. 'My friend won't like that,' he said, and he pulled out a gun and fired two shots at me. I pulled out my own gun then—he hadn't hit me—and my first bullet grazed his forehead. Then Glover heard the shots and he came running out, and one of my bullets got him in the leg, and another hit a girl, and one ricocheted off a lamp-post and, what's really unfortunate, hit some Frenchwoman who was passing on the other side of the street on her way to work.

It was something, the way it happened . . . something hard to make it clear. It's like there's somebody else inside a man, somebody that's not really that man, and when a thing happens, an anger like I had then, that other person takes over. That's not to make excuses. I know well enough it's me all the time. That's just to try to tell you what feeling there was to it, standing there on the street, not even giving a goddamn' how many shots they're sending back at me, not even seeming to know whether or not they're shooting at all, just standing there pumping my gun and wanting to see everyone of them dead in front of me.

And all the time, I don't like it. There's a kind of disgust to it. I'm not for covering up any part of what's true: I can be mean. It takes a awful lot; someone's got to do a lot to me. But when I do get mean, I can be powerful mean. That's the way I was right then on the street outside that cabaret. I'm busting mean. If someone was to change the world into glass and throw it up in front of me, I was in a mood then to just

smash it right there. I would have smashed any damn' thing.

And then, after it was over, the mood was gone from me. All I'd got left was disgust. I started walking away then. I was on my way over to the police, to give myself up and explain to them what had happened. But before I no more than got started, I was identified by some bystanders who pointed me out to a policeman who came up from behind me. He wanted to know what the trouble was. He told me the people had pointed me out. Right off I told him I wasn't denying any part of it; I told him exactly what had gone on. I wasn't afraid of anything serious happening. I'd had nothing to do with starting it; all I did, I was acting in self-defence. There was that girl who had been with Glover, she'd gotten a scratch, but I didn't give a damn about her; and at that time I didn't know about the Frenchwoman. But it was right there that the real trouble started. That Frenchwoman had had to go to hospital, and just the fact that she *was* a Frenchwoman and I a foreigner and I had sent her to the hospital—that put it into a whole new jurisdiction like.

The police took me and Mike McKendrick in, and right away our friends started raising some money for us. Mike had got some very influential friends who got him a lawyer, and a lot of people pooled some money together and got a lawyer for me. Gene Boulard put out a lot of money to help me. Gene was a real man about Paris; he had a way. He was a man—well, the only way I can say it, he was what Glover Compton would have liked to have been in regards to making a name for himself. Except Gene had no meanness in him. If someone needed help, he did more than any Salvation Army could do with a whole army; and what he wanted to do for himself, he could do in a smooth, smart way. He'd made himself the kind of man people around Paris had a need for. The cabarets, the clubs, the musicianers—when there was some trouble they couldn't straighten out by themselves, they called on Gene. He was a man you could count on.

Gene could almost have fixed this. It would have been just a fight among musicianers. But this Frenchwoman who was hit, that took it out of the law of being simply something that

Americans were involved in. Gene just couldn't get it quieted down and Mike and I both had terms to serve; we both got sentenced.

So there we were off to prison together, and when we got to the prison they put us in the detention cell while they're fixing up our regulations, making out papers for what cells we're to have, and all that official business. We were locked up together there for a while. Mike kept coming over to tell me how sorry he was. 'I wish it had never happened,' he told me. 'I'm sorry for the whole business, Sidney. If it hadn't been for that Glover it never *would* have happened. He's the one who told me to get after you. If I hadn't listened to him. . . .'

He went on like that all the time we were together. What could I answer? You know what you'd think. There's only one thing you can answer: it's happened and it's too late. There's nothing left for it but just to forget the whole thing.

But that Glover, he *still* wasn't ready to forget it. It was in 1928 I went to prison. I was in jail for eleven months, and when I came out I had no rights, it wasn't even legal for me to stay in France. And yet even then, I found out later, this fellow Glover was working at his lawyer, planning some way he could arrange for me to have more time to serve, some action he could bring. The day I was coming out of prison, he was still trying to get up an action to keep me there, trying to get his lawyer to put out a warrant for me, urging him to figure out some case he could bring against me. When I ran into him later, I told him he'd better watch out for that other leg; I was tired of the whole thing, and I wasn't fixing to take any more of what he was giving out. I was really close to getting God-almighty sick of it all and of him too. But this Gene Boulard, he could see there was maybe trouble coming. He took this Glover aside. 'You stay away,' he told him, 'you really better stay away.' And he made him do it. I never had any bother from Glover after that.

That was all a long time ago, but it's not a thing a man can forget. Twenty, twenty-one years later, I was in Paris at the Préfecture, getting my visa arranged, and the Commissioner started talking about it. 'That wasn't your fault,' he said. 'If

that had been your fault, you couldn't have come back to France. That was self-defence; it was your right.'

I couldn't very well tell him it was a little late for figuring that out, but that trial I got was a hell of a thing. Even that eleven months I spent in a French jail made less impression on my mind than what I kept thinking about that trial. I had that inside me for a long time.

There was two things about it. The first, it was that Frenchwoman. That part of it, it's still the same today: I don't care who you are, if you go to France and you get into some trouble where there's a Frenchman mixed up in it, that court don't care what's right, it don't care what's wrong. If there's a Frenchman and a foreigner mixed up in it together, the foreigner, he's in the wrong. Whether it's justice or injustice don't matter: the Frenchman, he's the one that counts.

But there was another thing, too. I sat there in that court watching my lawyer, watching the judge, watching the people. My lawyer was supposed to be representing me, but after a while you'd have got the impression that it was not a man that was being represented, but his money. It really came right down to that: there wasn't enough money. A deal had to be made.

Like I said, my lawyer was supposed to be representing me, but he was so busy working with Mike's lawyer, it's as if I've just been forgotten. To save themselves trouble, those lawyers decided they'd make it easier on *both* of us by kind of sharing the guilt. They had it all figured out: it was just a couple of foreigners mixed up in this thing and somebody had got to pay for hurting a Frenchwoman, so they'd work it for both of us to pay up some time and that way it would all be cleared up. No question of right or wrong or who shot first or who shot in self-defence: just a question of a couple of foreigners. The easy way was to treat them all alike.

So they got together and they told us to say what they had prepared. We were to tell the court it was just an argument that had got started somehow, that we were very sorry about it all but we had been drinking and we hadn't known what we

Treat It Gentle

was doing. All that kind of talk. Instead of having me cleared and one of us going free, they fixed it so that both of us should serve time, and that way Mike would get less and neither one of us would get a whole lot, and the whole business would be cleared up.

The day they had that all fixed, my lawyer got up and began saying that to the jury. 'Here's a man,' he says, 'who admits to doing wrong. You who are in the jury, you can feel how that is; give this man your understanding. He knows he's done wrong. He recognizes his mistake and asks for sympathy. . . .' There was a whole lot like that.

And all of a sudden Gene understood what they were doing, and he jumped up right there in court where he was with the spectators. He called out from where he was and then he came hurrying up before the court and he told them no, that wasn't the way it had happened. He explained all he could . . . what he knew about it, what the witnesses had said.

Well, it was like he'd gone crazy. It was like the whole court had gone crazy. There was one lawyer shouting one thing and another lawyer shouting something else, and this court official pounding here and that court official pounding there and before anybody understood what-all was going on, the court got recessed.

After that Gene, my lawyer and me talked for hours about what was to be done, and what it all came down to was that Gene and me, we just couldn't raise the money. It would cost a certain amount more to present the case the way it should have been, and we just couldn't get that much money together.

That's the thing. Not being able to stand up the way you are to have the right to say what's the fair thing, what's the real thing that happened. That was the wrong.