



BATHOS

• • • • • *N*ow there is no sound in the room save the soft hum of the crowd and the reassuring tone of Pat's voice. Joe does not move or reply. He stares straight ahead and sees the wall; he sees the only obstacle between him and his fortune. He reads a jumble of confused letters as an infant reads a newspaper, his palms moistening, feeling the loud silence. But the silence is broken by his utterance, a single syllable, a fateful sound that he regrets uttering the moment that it irrevocably leaves his lips and fills the room. *It is over* he thinks *I have failed and it is over* The silence is further broken by the strident, raspy, grating buzz noise that confirms his thinking and abruptly drops him back into silence.

They had come to town months ago. And the town came to them: people of all histories flocked to the place of their stay, attracted like so many flies to the sticky sweetness of the glamour, the glitz, the perpetual notoriety that accompanied the visitors. All who were enveloped in the sweet syrup were thinking, 'Maybe I will be selected,' knowing *It will not be me, cannot be me* Joe too thought and knew as

he heard of the arrival on the radio. But knowing never severs hoping: he joined the town and said, "I have only to gain," as if justifying his action by insisting that there was no other alternative. He would later commend himself on this faultless logic, but now he was hesitant and still uncertain. Then he heard himself answer the questions he was asked, but he was so anxious that he was not an active member of the interview: he was hovering over the room, observing, sweating, wincing. Weeks later he was chosen.

The reprimanding buzz noise once again jolts his senses. And he realizes what has happened as he glances to his side: he sees a man as nervous and as defeated by the buzz noise as himself, as if he is staring into a mirror. "Back to you, Joe . . .," comes Pat's voice, reaching into Joe's chest and accelerating his heart with the false sweetness, the implication that something had to happen. A moment of silence passes, and Joe again makes an utterance; no grating noise follows it. His ears are instead bathed in a pleasant melodious note, and Vanna slithers across to reveal his fortune. He thinks, 'It is finally over,' thinking *I have won. I have done it, I have won*

—Joshua Winn

DID YOU EVER HAVE A SISTER?

• • • • • *D*id you ever have a sister? asked Lena as they swished through the Grove. The savage light of the August dusk shimmered against their shynyslick neon flesh bicycle shorts as the two girlshe women abandoned the wisteria womb fertile fragrance to stride down Sorority Row. She the honeyblond perfect innocent the career virgin active i the unspoken dark evilness the corrupted rushee she the pristine Delta lineage the triple legacy sheen i the nouveau Metarie car dealer the status grasping gleam she the new convertible BMW i the shared '83 Cadillac *No No a brother* Did you? *No* Because from now on mine and my sisters' house will be your house and mine and my sisters' lives your life And passing the parade of looming columns i saw a temple of cash and jewels a sanctuary from my secret suburban putrefaction a high tower of shelter from the black burden of middle-class blood Oh thats right I know your brother *Yes* He drives that Caddy *Yes A Caddy* Theres nothing quite like the love between a brother and a sister *No no a brother* I just know youll love our brother fraternity *Yes* In fact you can be a little sister *Yes* And as they turned into the square the fireflies winking in silent conspiracy